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What It Means To Become Real Series

Contributed by Larry Thompson on May 29, 2002

Scripture: Proverbs 16:31

Tags: Communication General

Denomination: Baptist

Summary: Using the Velveteen Rabbit as a moral this message examines the importance of merging old and young generations together in the Body of Christ to reach the greatest effectiveness.

i§Happily Ever After iKi" iV Part Two - The Velveteen Rabbit

Something Old/Something New

Introduction: Read from, i§The Velveteen Rabbit - How a Toy Becomes Real i"

i§The Skin Horse had lived longer in the nursery than any of the others. He was so old that his brown coat was bald in patches and showed the seams underneath, and most of the hairs in his tail had been pulled out to string bead necklaces. He was wise, for he had seen a long succession of mechanical toys arrive to boast and swagger, and by-and-by break their mainsprings and pass away, and he knew that they were only toys, and would never turn into anything else. For nursery magic is very strange and wonderful, and only those playthings that are old and wise and experienced like the Skin Horse understand all about it.

"What is REAL?" asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room. "Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?"

"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real."

"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.

"Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are Real you don't mind being hurt."

"Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit?"

"It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in your joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand. Once you are real you are always loved."

The Rabbit was concerned because he felt he didn't have what he needed to be accepted by the BOY. He misunderstood that it was not something he was supposed to DO but it was solely because of who he WAS. The Rabbit thought because some toys were NEW and he was OLD that he was of no value.

Sadly, we often make the same mistake with one another based on putting the NEW/OLD spin in our vocabulary.

„X People of Faith: i§Give me the i¥Old Time Religion! while others would say, i¥I want the New Contemporary style!i;

„X People in Marriage: i§Me and your grandma are an old married couple.i” i§Hello, wei;re Newly weds!i”

„X People using different Methods: i§The OLD school suggests this is what is needed.i” i§The NEW school of thought isiKi”

„X People discussing age: i§He is just in that OLDER generation.i” i§Hei;s nothing but a NEW pup, not wet behind the ears.i”

i§Something old, something new;

Given the feeling we hold for new and old, we make judgments and usually arrange them in a given way according to our personal preference, not by biblical principle; so we left in life and even the Church with two schools of thought.

I. The Old is Always Better than the New (Proverbs 16:31)

i§Gray hair is a crown of splendor; it is attained by a righteous life.i”

Illustration: If you were born prior to 1945 the following items followed you:

„X Television set

„X Contact lenses

„X Credit Cards

„X Ballpoint pens

„X Dishwashers

„X Computers

„X Copy Machines

„X McDonalds

„X Day Care Centers

„X Group Therapy

„X Birth Control Pills

Also Consider:

„X Buy a Coke for a nickel

„X One nickel would buy stamps for one letter and two postcards

„X \$600 would buy you a new Chevy

„X 11cents would buy one gallon of gasoline

„X 1930 Social Security said retirement age is 65 and only 7.5 million Americans fit into that category. Today almost 65 million are at age 65

„X Grandma Moses, famous painter, late bloomer. Didn't paint until age 75, no formal training and produced more than 1,500 works of art considered masterpieces. More than 150 of them after age 100!

„X Ben Franklin was 81 when moderating the adoption of the Constitution of the United States of America

„X Caleb was 80 years old when he asked to go to war to take a Mountain that was promised to him as an act of his obedience when he was 40!

„X Moses was 80 years old when God really began to use him mightily for all of history to review.

Let's listen to the Word of God and see if we can answer the debate from scriptures:

Leviticus 19:32

„Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the Lord.“

God commanded the Israelites to honor their elders and respecting those who are older. God knew the wisdom gained from their experience can keep us from many pitfalls.

Comparison of the two Mickey Mouse watches: Obviously the old is much more valuable than the new.

CONDO ILLUSTRATION: When we downsized from our home to our condo we bought in a building that is the oldest condo in Fort Lauderdale. We don't have many of the amenities that the newer buildings have but we love the location and close proximity to the church. However, much to our surprise our insurance agent informed us that when they did the structure study of our building to rate our insurance that our rates would actually be lower than in the newer buildings. The reason? Our building was built with construction methods that even far exceed the high standards of today. In that obvious example the old is better than the new.

So the great debate will continue: Is the OLD IS BETTER THAN THE NEW!

II. The New is Always Better than the Old (John 6:8-9)

„Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, [9] "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"“

In this particular illustration it was a small boy, a young man that exercised more faith than the older followers of Christ. There was the innocence the trust the faith that believed God could use him in this situation.

1 Tim. 4:12

“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.”

Now we see Paul admonishing a much younger pastor than many in his church to set the example in speech, life, love, faith and purity. The leadership was entrusted to the youth of this church.

1 Samuel 2:18

“But Samuel was ministering before the Lord--a boy wearing a linen ephod.”

Another illustration of God using YOUTH simply because this young man’s heart was willing to learn from God and to trust and serve Him.

2 Kings 22:1-2

“Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. His mother’s name was Jedidah daughter of Adaiah; she was from Bozkath. [2] He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left.”

He served faithfully for 18 years then at age 26 began to make sweeping spiritual reforms based on God’s word!

So many will say the New is better than the Old!

Here is the danger of this comparison: These first two schools of thought see old and new constantly locked in competition. This must be judged erroneous. We have seen that neither old nor new consistently has the upper hand. The third school of thought regarding something old and something new is the Biblical perspective.

III. Old and New are not Competitors but Partners (Titus 2:1-8)

“You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. [2] Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. [3] Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. [4] Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, [5] to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. [6] Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. [7] In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness [8] and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.”

With this understanding we will realize that old and new each has its place in the shaping of our life. Three observations will help us understand this principle.

1. First Observation: We Benefit from a Partnership with the Old

„X As a congregation, we have a history, ours is traceable 100 yrs.

„X As individuals we have personal family histories that carry us back to England or France, to Africa or to Sicily

„X We have history in personal and professional relationships

„X We all feel that history holds something very special for us

„X We have a heritage that we trace to the first couple, Adam and Eve

„X History defines us. We didn't just appear. We have more depth.

Example of this partnership with the old: Our Daily Quiet Time

My daily quiet time and yours is really a way of abiding with a living past while looking for direction in the today's and tomorrows of our life. The Scriptures are obviously old. They have been with us for thousands of years, but they have a vibrancy that is growing stronger in their longevity. Through the Bible we encounter historical men and women who faced the same problems we face and if we are wise we will realize that their God-directed solutions can become our God-directed solutions.

Example: THE LIFE OF MOSES: One of the great illustrations of this truth is found in Deuteronomy 34:4-12.

Remember that Moses is one of the key figures in the Bible. One of the few individuals that the Bible records his entire life from birth to death. We have the ancient record of God's word that tells us about Moses but within the Word of God we also see the "old/new" principle applied to his life and how it can be applied to ours as well. [Deut. 34:4-12]

Then the Lord said to him, "This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when I said, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have let you see it with your eyes, but you will not cross over into it." [5] And Moses the servant of the Lord died there in Moab, as the Lord had said. [6] He buried him in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is. [7] Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone. [8] The Israelites grieved for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days, until the time of weeping and mourning was over. [9] Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the Lord had commanded Moses. [10] Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, [11] who did all those miraculous signs and wonders the Lord sent him to do in Egypt--to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. [12] For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel."

Moses was a great man of God in strength and spiritual stature. His spiritual accomplishments were absolutely amazing. The only prophet of whom it is said, "The Lord knew face to face."

However, take a closer review

„X Born a condemned baby boy but by God's providence went from condemned to potential future King of Egypt.

„X Lived with the best education in Egypt and the life of opulence for 40 years

„X Attempted to do something right at age 40 but did it the wrong way and spends the next 40 years in isolation of the desert taking care of his father-in-law's sheep. If Moses had died at age 80 we wouldn't know him.

„X At age 80 Moses meets God in a burning bush and God changes his life.

„X He is the deliverer of God's people from the bondage of Egypt, he is God's messenger to the people of Israel, and he leads them through the Red Sea and through the wilderness for 40 years until he leads them to the very door of the Promised Land.

„X He dies at 120 but his eyes are not weak and his strength is not gone.i”

Thus we take the ancient, but ever alive Bible and we take an historic figure that lived several thousand years ago and we watch his life and we see that he makes the same mistakes that I make and we see that when we walk in obedience to God's word he enjoys the same victories that we can enjoy. We allow God to make that new application to our daily lives by partnering with the old truth!

This is precisely why the Scriptures are important for your FAMILY. This is why biblical tradition is important. This is why biblical history becomes living history to each of us as believers. As I watch how men and women of the Bible dealt with the same issues I deal with today, they either have victory or defeat depending on their obedience or rebellion. I realize the VALUE AND THE BENEFIT OF THE OLD AS IT IS NOW APPLIED TO THE NEWNESS OF MY DAILY WALK.

Illustration: i§We Were Soldiersi”

I saw a movie recently that was a reenactment of the Army Col. who led the first combat mission to Viet Nam. He had studied General Custer's last stand and he saw the similarities to the mission he was given and he learned everything he could from Custer's history to avoid the same massacre of his division. He learned the value of yesterday in order to benefit today.

„X Second Observation: We Benefit from a Partnership with the New

Think about how the legacy is even left if there is no partnership. As you consider your own vocation you should remember that many times your new position is one that has grown out of an old position. For instance: I was raised in Oklahoma and had a solid spiritual foundation in that I enjoyed a family that made it a priority that we went to church. I enjoyed going to church, participating in church as a child and student and in college I began teaching children and helping with productions that were done by our fellowship. Later I was married, involved in the insurance industry and there God called me into full time service. I worked with student ministry, evangelism, education, associate pastor and then pastor. In this sense the old is a partnership with the new and the new continues to build on the foundation the old has given me.

The newness of being a toddler rests upon the oldness of being an infant; the newness of late childhood rests upon the oldness of being a toddler; the newness of adolescence rests upon the oldness of late childhood; the newness of young adulthood rests upon the oldness of adolescence. Continually throughout our days, the new is being built upon the old.

The strength of the legacy of the old is the scaffolding for the emergence of the new. However, there is this one final KEY to victory.

„X Third Observation: In Partnership the Old Equips the New for the Future

In our scripture from Deuteronomy we find this principle is true again in the life of Moses and Joshua. Deut. 34:9

“Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the Lord had commanded Moses.” Moses prepared the way and then gave way to Joshua.

Joshua can never be Moses, however, he can build on the tremendous foundation that Moses has provided for him. Moses not only provided the foundation but he intentionally equipped Joshua for almost 40 years to be the new leader. This biblical principle has application to every family and individual today. Look at the equipping model that we have for our family from Deuteronomy.

Deut. 4:9-10

“Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them. [10] Remember the day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, when he said to me, “Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children.”

Deut. 11:19

“Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”

WE MUST OBSERVE THAT GOD IS BOTH OLD AND NEW. Scriptures refer to Him as the "ancient of days" and yet He is the author of the life in which the New Testament calls "new creation." God is both old and new. God is both established and always establishing. There is His eternal newness at work that fills our life and our church with enthusiasm and delight. If we fail to treasure both old and new we will fail. If we fail to understand the responsibility each has to the other we will fail.

Conclusion:

The way we have victory in our family, our church and our nation is for the NEW to not look with skepticism as “THE TYRANNY OF THE PAST” and for the OLD to not view the New as, “THE TERROR OF THE FUTURE.” Instead we must follow the biblical pattern of equipping, a pattern in which the old and new must partner BEFORE THE TRIUMPH OF TODAY BECOMES A REALITY.

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