

Doing Good

By Bill Scheidler

*“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about **doing good...**” Acts 10:38*

Read Acts 10: 34-48

God is interested in **the world!** God so loved **the world** that he gave his only begotten son. Jesus came with the world in His heart **“to seek and to save that which was lost”**. He came to put a face on God and to reveal to the world the love of the Father. He came to love the people of the world the way the Father would. He came to bring light and life to the heart of every man.

Jesus Method

Jesus method of showing the love of the Father was to lay His life down for those who had need. He went about “doing good”.

Our Method

The Church of Jesus Christ has been given the same commission to seek and save those who are lost. It is a commission that we all acknowledge, we write about it, we discuss it among ourselves, we teach seminars on it, we pray about it, we sing about it, but we don't really do it!

Present Move of the Holy Spirit

The last few years in the church have been characterized by a fresh moving of the Holy Spirit among the people of God. Some have referred to it as visitation, renewal, revival or refreshing.

There is no doubt that the Church has needed a breath of fresh air. There is no doubt that we needed renewing. There is no doubt that we needed a fresh relationship with the Spirit of God to insure that the Church which began in the Spirit would not be completed in the flesh.

What is the Purpose of Outpouring?

But what has been the purpose of this outpouring of the Spirit? Why has God so graciously given us so freely of His Spirit?

God has a **higher purpose** than just our personal blessing or renewal. Our renewal is critical, because if we are not refreshed and renewed, we cannot be used of the Lord to fulfill our purpose and destiny.

But the **purpose is not us, the purpose is the world.**

Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit so that he could preach the gospel to the poor, heal the broken hearted, and minister deliverance to the captives. God anointed Jesus to go about and “do good” and to heal all that were oppressed of the devil.

We Fulfill the Ministry of Jesus

God wants us to carry on and fulfill the ministry of Jesus. We have the Spirit of the Lord upon us and we are to channel that divine anointing and energy to be used toward touching the world through acts of love and kindness so that the people of the world can see the Father’s heart of love.

We Have Lost Our Way

Somehow we have lost our way from the original purpose. **We have separated ourselves from the world to such a degree that we have no influence.** We have begun to view the world as our enemy and as such we have lost much of our ability to relate to sinners and those in need of deliverance.

We Have Changed the Commission

In addition, we have changed the great commission to something that no longer resembles the pattern that Jesus gave to us. His challenge was **to go into the world** and bring the light of the Gospel to those held captive by Satan. Instead we have built fortresses, polished our theology, debated doctrine, perfected our singing and worship and **invited the world to come and join us.**

Jesus did just the opposite. He came to us when we were not inclined to come to Him. He came to where we were, living among us, showing us the light of God’s love. It is a good thing that He came to us because the gap was too great for any of us to get to God on our own. We could never bridge it.

The Greatest Commission

The challenge for us today is to pattern ourselves after Jesus, the greatest evangelist of all time. The New Testament **great commission** or command to us that is found most often in the Bible is that we are to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength, and we are to **“love our neighbor as ourselves”** (See: Mt. 19:19; 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-37; Rom. 15:1-2; Jam. 2:8). This is the Royal Law of love.

We Have Done Well in Our Loving God

By and large, most Christians have worked extra hard on the first commandment to love God, but we have not done nearly as well on loving our neighbor or we have simply been confused over what it means to love our neighbor.

The whole story of the “Samaritan” was to help us to define who are neighbor is. Basically, it is anyone who has a need that we happen by.

At times we have misinterpreted this command to “love our neighbor as ourselves” to justify self-love.

Love in God’s mind is an active thing, not a passive thing. Love is something that is demonstrated not just discussed. It isn’t something that we sing about inside the walls of the Church. Jesus “loved His neighbor” by going about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil.

As Christians we seem to have lost this aspect of Christianity. Somehow we have felt that if we truly serve the lost that somehow we are approving of the lifestyle of the lost.

But the New Testament is very clear. We are to love our enemies (Luke 6:27-36). We are to feed and bless them (Mt. 5:43-48). We are to do good to all men. We are to overcome evil with good. We are to let our light shine (I Pet. 3:8-12).

What is this light that we are to shine upon those who sit in darkness? Matthew tells us very specifically. He says, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven.” (Mt. 5:16)

The light is “good works”. Like Dorcas we are to be “full of good works and charitable deeds” (Acts 9:36). The people of the world will see these works and they will be drawn to the Lord.

Good Works

Perhaps we are too much the products of grace to focus on “good works”. Martin Luther was strong on grace. The battle cry of the reformation was “*sola gratia, sola fidei, and sola scriptura.*”

Luther was reacting in his day to a man working his way to heaven by works of righteousness. For this reason, he did not like the Book of James. He called it the “straw epistle” because of its emphasis on works.

But the Book of James in the Bible was written by a pastor who was tired of hearing about how much faith people had. He wanted to see their “faith” in a more tangible way. He felt that if people had the faith that they claimed to have, there ought to be a visible demonstration of that faith.

Perhaps the world is looking for the same demonstration from the Church. Perhaps they are tired of empty statements concerning God’s love and they are looking for a living demonstration. Maybe they are tired of tracts that say God loves them and has a wonderful plan for their lives and they would like to see that love in action. Maybe they need to see some “living epistles”.

As Christians we must be careful that we love not just in word or in tongue but in deed and in truth (I John 3:18). We don’t want to deceive ourselves into believing that somehow we can love God who we have not seen and yet hate our brother who we have seen. John says, “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar” (I John 4:20).

Actually, if we understand God's grace properly, we would understand that God's grace has come to us so that we can pass on that which we have received (Eph. 2:8-10).

Ten Sacred Cows

There are many areas where our thinking needs to be challenged concerning our true emphasis as believers and the power of "doing good" as a Gospel witness.

These are areas that can be strongholds in our thinking that keep us from what God wants us to do. Our thought process and traditions can become a barrier to us.

Sacred Cow #1: Prosperity and Faith for Abundance

We like to believe that God wants to bless us and that, as we exert our faith, we can tap into God's abundance and experience miracle supply.

There is a truth to this, but II Corinthians 9:8 helps us to understand that God gives us extra grace, extra supply and abundance **for the purpose of doing "good works"**.

"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, have an abundance... for every good work." II Corinthians 9:8

Often we pray for abundance so we can increase and get bigger and better. God would feel much better about blessing us if He knew that we would use it to be channels of that blessing to others (Gen. 12:1-3).

Those who are rich in this world's goods are to be **rich in good works**, willing to give and to share with those in need (I Tim. 6:17-19).

Sacred Cow #2: Theological Exactness

We have done well in the theological arena, splitting hairs and debating over issues at times of little or no consequence (much like the Pharisees who strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel). The Pharisees were accurate in their teaching, but their life demonstration was weak. This is why Jesus instructed people to listen to what they said but to not follow what they practiced (Mt. 23:1-2).

All of our great theology, however, has done little to win the world to Christ.

Paul wrote to Titus to remind him what is more important. He said, *"This is faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are profitable to men. But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless"* (Tit. 3:8-9). The "law" was their scripture.

We can debate the meaning of this and the meaning of that. Sometimes I wonder how Paul would react to our preaching of his verses. I often wonder how much of what we spend so much energy debating would be considered by Paul to be useless.

Why do groups like the Mormons do so well? Are people drawn to them because of their doctrine? I don't think so. Most people know nothing of their doctrine. They are drawn to their open display of good deeds.

Sacred Cow #3: Praise, Worship and Spiritual Sacrifices

We have had a great understanding of our New Testament role as priests unto God. We have focused on perfecting the God-ward aspect of our priesthood. We have worked hard on the spiritual sacrifices of praise, worship, thanksgiving and joy.

But the writer to the Hebrews gives us a more balanced view of our priesthood. The priest had a God-ward ministry to stand before God as a representative of the people. But the priest was to come out of the presence of God and represent God to the people.

Spiritual sacrifices have a God-ward aspect, but they also have a man-ward aspect (i.e. our time, our talents, our substance and our good works).

*“Therefore by Him let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is , the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. [We tend to stop here] But **do not forget to do good** and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”* Hebrews 13:15-16

We need to work on the man-ward aspect of our priesthood and become just as perfected in the area of good works as we have in our worship.

Sacred Cow #4: Church Attendance

We have worked hard to establish in our people's minds that if they are going to be good Christians, **they need to attend meetings**. They are not to miss church or “forsake the assembling of themselves together”.

We have at times done this to the extent that our Christianity can be measured by our church attendance alone. If we attend church we are good Christians. If we fail to attend regularly we are poor Christians.

In this concept, the only difference between believers and non-believers is what they do on Sunday mornings. Leading people to Christ has become synonymous with inviting people to church.

Hebrews 10:25 is a passage that we use to get people to attend services. But when you read this entire passage you come up with a more balanced picture.

“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some.” Hebrews 10:24-25

We have developed a Christianity that **needs meetings** rather than a Christianity that **meets needs**. The purpose of our meetings should be to stir us up toward good deeds.

Sacred Cow #5: True Spirituality

We have tended to judge a person’s spirituality by the “Mary Model”. People that sit at Jesus feet, who pray hours a day, who prophesy in believer meetings, who “speak in tongues more than you all” and who fall out under the power are deemed more spiritual.

While the “Mary Model” is the most important part, there is another aspect of Christianity that “Martha” modeled. It is the model of service and selfless giving. Martha has gotten a rather “bad rap” in most Christian preaching. Our Christianity does not have to be an “either/or” situation. It should be “both/and”.

James defined true spirituality or “pure religion” as visiting “orphans and widows in their trouble, and keeping oneself unspotted from the world.” (Jam. 1:27)

Sacred Cow #6: Studying the Bible

We can spend a great deal of time as Christians studying the Bible and getting to know the Word. This is good, but not for the purpose of getting puffed up in relation to our Bible knowledge. The purpose of our study and preparation in the Word is to thoroughly equip us for every good work. The fruit of our Bible study should be **good works**.

“All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, [Why?] that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” II Timothy 3:16-17

Sacred Cow #7: Government Involvement

Our relationship to governments has sometimes been more like the Jews relationship to the Romans in New Testament times. We have been a difficult people to rule over at best. We have become quite good at criticizing, picketing, boycotting and attempting to win people over through the ballot box. But how much have we served our governments and helped them meet the needs of our communities.

We have been good at criticizing leaders and those in authority, but have we been willing to serve them. If we will “do charitable acts” and “good deeds” we may find a place of favor with government leaders in society (i.e. volunteering to help with schools, community needs, homelessness, etc.).

Paul makes our obligation clear when he says, “*Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work.*” Titus 3:1

*“For rulers are not a terror to **good works**, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise of the same.” Romans 13:3*

We win governments over not by organizing rallies and voting out bad politicians. We win them by “doing good”.

Sacred Cow #8: Dressing for Success

Sometimes we focus on outward appearances in the church. We have become “good dressers” and quite fashion conscious. We have gone to the point that at times the unsaved feel uncomfortable around us because they cannot compete with our dress.

Certainly we are to show respect for God and His House in the way that we dress, but the Bible is far more concerned about how we are adorned spiritually. Women were instructed to adorn themselves with “good works” (I Tim. 2:10). When we adorn ourselves with good works, we will look real good to the world.

Sacred Cow #9: Faith and Works

While believer are saved by faith and grace, they are saved for the purpose of good works (Eph. 2:10). It is not an either/or situation. Every believer or person of faith should be fruitful in every good work (Col. 1:10), zealous for good works (Titus 2:14), and rich in good works (I Tim. 6:17-19)

Titus 3:14 says, “And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs that they may not be unfruitful.”

Fruitfulness for us has meant winning souls. But that fruit will not come without our ministry of good works.

Sacred Cow #10: The Anointing

We have tended to put the concept of the “anointing” into a very mystical realm. We have referred to the anointing in the context of prophecy and operating spiritual gifts. We talk about “anointed preaching”, “anointed services” and “anointed prayer meetings”.

The anointing in Jesus life was not limited to prayer, prophecy and preaching. The anointing was upon Him to break bondages, set captives free, minister to the poor and to go about doing good deeds (Luke 4:18-19).

Arise and Let the Light Shine

God has touched each one of our lives in a powerful way. He did not bless us so that we could be inflated, proud or isolated from the real world. He blessed us to be a blessing and to reach out and serve humanity for whom Christ died.

*“Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, **by your good works** which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.”* I Peter 2:11-12