

Picking Your Battles

LESSON BY LUKE REYNOLDS (April 25, 2011)

There was a congregation a few years ago that had a few problems. The minister and the song leader didn't get along very well. Their emotions spilled over into the worship assembly. After a big blow up they barely spoke, but their actions spoke louder than words.

One Sunday morning, the first week after their big blow-up, the minister's lesson was on "Commitment & Dedication to God." The song leader led the song, "I Shall Not Be Moved." The next week the minister's lesson was on "Giving & Laying By In Store." The song leader led the song, "Jesus Paid It All." Again, the next week, the minister's lesson was on, "Controlling Our Tongues." The song leader led "I Love To Tell The Story."

With all this going on, the minister was getting very upset. The very next Sunday the minister addressed the problems and said that he felt like resigning from the congregation. Immediately following the lesson, the song leader led "O Why Not Tonight."

Eventually the minister of this congregation did resign. The elders read his resignation letter for the congregation. The letter said that Jesus had brought him to that congregation, and it was Jesus who was leading him away. In one last good-bye, the song leader who had caused the minister so much grief, led "What A Friend We Have in Jesus."

In this story we find a subtle reminder that we have to be careful in picking our battles. Sometimes we get so caught up in issues that are not related to our salvation. We get worried about another person's opinion or traditions of men. We worry about the speck in our brother's eye while there is a plank in our own, which Jesus condemns in **Matthew 7**. We often fight over things that don't really matter.

Why can't we follow Jesus' teaching in **Matthew 18** and simply go to our brother if they have offended us? Paul repeats this same teaching in **Galatians 6:1-2**. Why would we want to fight with our own brothers and sisters when they are not our true enemy? Satan and his demons are after us! We need to draw closer to our church family, not push them away. We need every soldier in this spiritual battle.

When we read the Bible we find that many times the church struggled with these same problems. Read through the gospels and you will see how the apostles struggled with Judas. Matthew was a tax collector. James and John wanted a place of authority. And, what about Simon the Zealot? After walking with Jesus for about three years they changed. They learned to love each other, and we have to learn to do the same. They worked through their problems. And, that is a good lesson for us today.

Before you start arguing and fighting, ask yourself: "Why am I fighting?" "What do I plan to win?" And, more importantly, "Who is my enemy?" We need to pick our battles carefully! Are you on the Lord's side? Have you been baptized? Are you fighting with the Lord? Or are you fighting with your brothers and sisters? As we offer this invitation we encourage you to come to Jesus.