

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XXII

October 7, 2012

No. 41

Receive Them Now-Teach Them Later?

(Jerry Fite)

The young preacher was seeking guidance among his preaching peers over lunch. In studying with a couple, he learned from them they had been married before. They wanted to be baptized. Should he go ahead and baptize them without pursuing the cause for ending the previous marriage? I waited for others around the table to speak, and heard one preacher say words to the effect, baptize them now, and you can deal with the marriage issue later. Others remained silent.

Since the young preacher was aware the couple had been married before, I suggested he let them read *Matthew 5:32* and *Matthew 19:9* to determine if the previous marriage had been dissolved for the cause of fornication. It may be they have a right to be married, but if they are living in adultery, they need to know what is demanded of them in repentance before they are baptized.

We will not know every sin the potential converts have committed; and every sin one could possibly commit does not

necessarily have to be pointed out before we baptize them; but when we are aware of a definite sin a potential convert must turn from, we should point out that sin before they commit themselves to being a disciple of Christ so they can fully count the cost (*Acts 2:36, 38, Luke 14:28*). Especially should one be aware if it means a marriage must end! Resentment from hiding the truth from them may be that ragged plank on top of the demanding new revelation causing them to turn away.

A preacher in the area was calling for help to teach newly baptized converts. I volunteered, and with another brother we learned these baptized believers knew nothing about the church. They were only taught of having a relationship with the Lord, and the necessity of being baptized for the remission of sins. They were still Catholics and Methodists, making no plans to change. Baptize them now and teach them later about the church was the philosophy of the preacher, and later, after contacting one of the elders of that local congregation, it was a philosophy which was not going to

be publicly condemned in that local church. How do we teach of having a saving relationship in Christ without speaking of the body of Christ of which He is head, and to which the Lord adds the saved (*Acts 2:47, I Cor. 12:13*)? The church claimed many baptisms, but the immersed were not really converts to Lord!

As institutional churches of Christ apostatize further in doctrinal error, individuals may seek membership elsewhere. If these members seek membership, should we receive them as members and teach them later about these issues?

First, they need to learn the truth of God exposing the error of “institutionalism”, and then denounce their previous connection with such error so we can truly be members one of another. Receiving them first and teaching them later is not fair to them, nor is it wise in keeping the local church pure from potential evil influences. It is always wise to deal with known error before receiving those in such error. Teach them now, and receive them later!