**Seven Bad Habits of Superficial Christians**

*by Stan Cox*

How often have you seen articles with titles like the one above shared on *Facebook* feeds? It is a common tactic, as authors and websites vie for the attention of readers. A catchy title or provocative picture will lead to clicks. Often the article itself has little to offer, but internet traffic leads to advertisers and revenue, so the trend will not soon change. Unfortunately, the trend is prevalent in material offered with the intent of aiding in spiritual growth.

Which leads me to note the first bad habit that leads to a superficial faith. **Taking a *Facebook* mentality into matters of spiritual importance!** I confess that I click on such titles myself, because they are attention getting. Too often the article is as much pop psychology as Biblical teaching. The quality of writing on spiritual matters is suffering as authors try to adapt to the short attention spans and novel cravings of a culture unduly influenced by social media. This is sad.

“But,” you say, “your title is an example of what you are criticizing!” Touché! It is admittedly effective. And I have no doubt that this article will get more clicks and maybe a few more shares than other articles I have posted to Facebook in the past. Seldom do articles written by faithful men on topics such as authority, the church, baptism, doctrinal error or other substantial topics get as much attention. **Do you pass up such “meat” that has as its basis a careful analysis of God’s word, in favor of more trendy topics**?

Which leads me to note another bad habit. **Becoming enamored with “felt needs.”** Paul warned of this in 2 Timothy, *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables”* (4:3-4).

Religious Americans generally have no interest in doctrine. “Tell me how to be happy, successful, rich, accomplished.” This is what they “feel” they need. And, they flock to teachers who give such to them. In contrast, Paul declared the whole counsel of God, in tears, constantly warning of sin and doctrinal error (cf. Acts 20:25-31). **How do you feel about doctrinal teaching**? Because a correlating habit of being enamored with “felt needs” is the bad habit of **neglecting doctrine**, which perfects the Christian, (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

A fourth bad habit leading to superficiality is an **overemphasis on the music in Christian worship**. I do not mean loving to sing too much, (as if that were even possible). Rather, I refer to two facets of the superficial faith of some. First, being enamored with the tune of a song. Because of a catchy or contemporary style, a song with little value for edification is often preferred over a song with substantive teaching. Second, many will travel hundreds of miles for an “annual” night of singing, and yet are too busy for a night of gospel preaching at a more local congregation. **Attendance numbers don’t lie. This is a problem in our time**.

Another bad habit leading to superficiality is an **unwillingness to contend for the faith of our Lord.** This, we are commanded to do (cf. Jude 3). However, many remain silent when the truth is under attack. Others are openly critical of any who have the temerity to give an answer for their faith (cf. 1 Peter 3:15). In our society, tolerance is valued above all other things. In the face of such attitudes, error prospers, and truth is often neglected. **How do you feel when you see false teaching refuted**? Do you cringe at “how it is perceived by others”, look with disapproval at those who dare to “criticize others”, or do you appreciate those who stand up to those who seek to lead souls astray.

The final two bad habits concern how Christians conduct themselves in the world. Some are content to **compartmentalize their faith**. That is, they are pious and spiritually minded while at worship or among fellow Christians, but have a very different demeanor while around those who are in the world. Jesus said to His disciples, *“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden… Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven”* (Matthew 5:14,16). **Is your light shining at all times, or only when you are among other “lights”?**

It’s not surprising that some who compartmentalize their faith will often **seek to conform to those around them, i.e., the world**! It is common for Christians today to contend for social drinking, questionable standards of modesty, certain “inncocent” types of gambling and dancing; and for them to fail to see the corrupting influence of various types of immoral recreation. In short, they are worldly minded. This in spite of Peter’s words, *“For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles”* (1 Peter 4:3), and *“as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct”* (1 Peter 1:15). What about you? **Do you enjoy, desire and pursue those things characteristic of the world?** Or have you been *“transformed by the renewing of your mind”*? (cf. Romans 12:1-2).

**The danger of superficiality is real.** The Americanized version of Christianity we see in our day is far different from the faith to which we have truly been called. Maybe its time to change some bad habits. We all are called to *“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong”* (1 Corinthians 16:13). **Are you willing to commit to the call?**