

# A Great Evangelistic Tool

I think it works better than radio, better than auto-dialers, better than showings of Jule Miller filmstrips, better than mailing out a bulletin, better than Dial-a-Bible-Reading, better than debates, better than cable tv.

**By Scott Smelser**

to God and care for our neighbor (Matt. 22), learn to be servants (Jn. 13), learn to be content (1 Tim. 6:8), learn to invest in family (Titus 2:5; Eph. 6:4; Prov. 22:6), and learn to clean out the inside of the cup, not just the outside (Matt. 23), then bright lights will shine.

*"Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light...having your behavior seemly among the Gentiles; that...they may glorify God" (1 Pet. 2:9-12).*

*"Present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God...and be not fashioned according to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:1,2).*

We are not called simply to know some things different from the world -- we are called to rise above the world, and to "be holy" (1 Pet. 1:15). And when people become that kind of light in the world, they become great evangelistic tools in God's service.

And it will far exceed the effect of debates, radio, TV, and mail outs.



What is it? It's brethren not being conformed to the world.  
 If a church is made up of people who understand 184 current and past issues correctly, but their lives do not show superior conduct, servitude, and holiness, don't expect an auto dialer, computer, printer, broadcast antenna, or cable outlet to compensate for the failure.  
 When church members think like the world, dress like the world, talk like the world, and chase money and status symbols like the world, it is the world that is winning them, not the other way around.  
 When church members are selfish, egotistical, arrogant, and shallow, then they are not in a position to help the world to a higher plane.  
 If our families are splitting up, our children are dropping out, and our homes are little different from our neighbors then our "light" gets rather difficult to notice.  
 But if people learn self-denial (Lk. 9:23), learn submission

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# Charlottesville Beacon



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Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

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## False Teaching 101

By Stephen Harper



### Thoughts To Ponder

Millions live in a sentimental haze of vague piety, with soft organ music trembling in the lovely light from stained-glass windows. Their religion is a pleasant thing of emotional quiver, divorced from the intellect, divorced from the will, and demanding little except lip service to a few harmless platitudes.

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Larry Rouse  
 Editor

In the religious realm, there are some men who would have us believe they are speaking the truths of God's Word but would be more properly identified as the "false teachers" they are. I know that is a 'label' that some individuals do not like to hear, but it is a Scriptural one (cf. II Peter 2:1). It seems the problem some have in calling anyone a 'false teacher' comes from an apparent misunderstanding about what **makes** one a 'false teacher,' but it is rarely a problem of identifying the **content** of what he is teaching. Right now, some are arguing that we can only know a 'false teacher' if we know his motives, but if that were true then we mere humans could **never** identify one as a 'false teacher' since no man can know the motives of another unless they reveal it themselves. [And when is the last time you heard anyone stand up and say, "Before I begin, I just want everyone to know I have ulterior motives behind the words I am about to say"?)

aware they have been deceived or, more correctly, **duped**. Some are unwittingly helping foster and propagate error, believing it to be truth!

The apostle Paul warned the Corinthian brethren to forgive and reaffirm their love for the brother whom they had chastened for wrongdoing, as Paul himself had already done, "lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices" (II Corinthians 2:6-11). Something as 'simple' as discipline can be used by Satan to divided brethren unnecessarily and, if that is true, how much more when he uses false teaching to divide brethren unnecessarily? We would do well to know how he and his ministers operate so we can more easily recognize them, expose them, and take precautionary steps to avoid them.

**Device #1: Redirect attention to the one who questions what is being taught.** [This can be done in several ways.] If the false teacher's doctrine is being questioned, he might say, "You are only teaching the **traditional teachings**, not Scripture," or [stated another way], "That's church of Christ doctrine." He will call **truth** [Bible teachings and Bible passages quoted verbatim] "tradition" to try to get people to believe it is of human invention and does not come from God, diverting attention away from the fact **his** teaching is without Scriptural basis. This is a common fallacy of argument

I believe honest men will admit that a "false teacher" is not so hard to identify as some might think, but that will not be the point of today's study. Today, I would like us to consider some of the **tactics** of those who are propagating error. I believe this is an important study because it seems many unbelievers and even brethren are being led astray by some of the tactics we will discuss today, and are apparently un-

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[*diversion*] and provides an easy way out of having to explain and defend one's own teaching [get the audience to look at someone else]. I have noted from my own experience that this is a favorite tactic of those who teach errant positions on marriage, divorce and remarriage. I also find it very revealing that they only make that accusation on **this** subject and not on any other, such as baptism, stealing, or murder. I can't recall anyone accusing another man of teaching "the traditional position on murder" but I have seen several men accused of teaching "the traditional position on marriage, divorce, and remarriage" [whatever **that** is]. Often, they will not even give a straight answer or a defense for what **they** are teaching — just accusations about what **others** are teaching. That is no way to find truth!

Another way attention may be diverted to the questioner is by the false teacher impugning the motives of the questioner and attacking his character. This, too, is a fallacy of argument [*ad hominem*] which diverts attention away from the subject of dispute and prevents anyone from reaching a reasoned understanding of truth. Often, at the same time the false teacher is impugning motives and calling names, he complains about the questioner impugning **his** motives [when only the doctrine he teaches is mentioned] and calling **him** names [even when it is his actual name]. To see brethren resort to these strategies is an outright shame and should be disgusting to true believers!

**Device #2: Call the opposition 'extremists.'** This is a favorite tactic in political circles, and one being used more frequently among brethren. Why? Again, it is an easy way to divert attention away from the subject of dispute or the false teacher himself, and onto those questioning the content, application, or consequences of his teachings. If someone disagrees with a teaching or practice and sound reasons are given, those who teach the false doctrines [knowing they cannot defend their teaching or practice from Scripture] will simply label the opposition as 'extremists' who are on the outer fringes of sanity and reason. This was used by brethren 40-60 years ago when they tried to defend **church-supported** institutions and I have found that some brethren today are now using the same tactic when they seek to defend **privately-supported** human institutions that are doing the work of the local church. Why can't we simply discuss the issue and leave the name-calling out of it? That will never help anyone to reach a

sound and reasoned conclusion! It **is** a source of division and bitter feelings between brethren, though!

**Device #3: 'I'm still studying it.'** If I teach on any subject, I would expect that some might disagree with something I have taught. I might even mistakenly teach error, though I do not intend to do so or plan on it ever happening. But if someone ever challenged me about what I was teaching, I would imagine no one would be satisfied with the response, "Well, I'm glad you asked, but I'm not going to get into a discussion on this subject because I'm still studying it." Sadly, I have heard this very response on a couple of occasions by men who had been propagating error but who also did not want to take responsibility for what they were teaching, or didn't feel they owed anyone an explanation about what they had taught; they simply wanted to teach their errors and go about their merry way, moving on and refusing to answer any further questions.

Friends and brethren, this is nothing but a "cop out." It is deception, pure and simple, because while they have been "studying" for decades, they continue teaching their doctrines the whole time as if they were convicted it was truth. Only when they are questioned do they suddenly feel unsure, and then claim the high ground of "not wanting to cause division." Meanwhile, the men who question them are maligned as "divisive" for simply trying to get a straight answer. For shame!

Friends and brethren, the tactics we have covered today are not new, and they will not go away anytime soon. As often as truth is taught, there will be someone to preach error right alongside it, but the false teacher [God's label, not mine] will always try to present himself in a favorable light while simultaneously trying to slander, malign, and impugn those who question him. Micaiah was called a "*troubler of Israel*" by King Ahab — the **real** troublemaker (**I Kings 18:17, 18**); the Sanhedrin accused the apostles of wrongly blaming them for the death of Jesus, when they gladly welcomed it at the time (**Acts 5:28; Matthew 27:25**); and Paul and his cohorts were accused of turning the world upside down and rebelling against the Roman government by envious and unbelieving Jews (**Acts 17:5-7**). Please note that in all cases mentioned, the false teachers and persecutors were **not** interested in sitting down and having a rational discussion so all could come to a reasoned conclusion and discover the truth!

We should not be surprised at the tactics of false teachers because Peter has revealed some of their ways (**II Peter 2**). Our duty is to expose them for what they are and keep standing for truth.



# A Story That Is Told

By Dee Bowman

The Psalmist said, "We spend our days as a tale that is told" ([Psalm 90:9](#)). It's a fitting description of life, isn't it? We do indeed spend our days as a tale that is told. There are several things about that that I like. Let me explain.

First, let it be noted that life is a spending of time. We *spend* our days, he says. All of us are born into time. Time is what we're all about. Time is all we have. Without time we're nothing. We don't actually know how much time we have to spend, we just know that we have some. In fact, we only know about the here and now. We can do little about the past—it's forever gone; we can resolve for the future. But the here and now is all we have. "Spend" is the operative word here. To spend means "to expend." In fact, "spend" is taken from the Latin *expendre*, to expend. So we expend our time, however much we have. That being so, it follows that we should do what we're going to do today, "for the night cometh when no man can work," when we've *spent* all our time.

Secondly, please note that the expenditure of time is a personal choice. *How* we spend our time is our choice. We spend it. We can do whatever we want with it. Now there are always some consequences attached to that choice, but the choice is ours nonetheless. For instance, if we want to squander our time, we can make that choice. And conversely, if we want to apply ourselves to some worthwhile project, we can. In fact, *worthwhile* is comprised of *worth* and *while*, worth having to do with value and while having to do with time. A worthwhile project is one worth the spending of the time it takes to do it. Lots of considerations figure into how we spend our time, but in the finality of things, how I spend my time is up to me.

Thirdly, please notice that we spend our time as a *tale*. A tale is a story that is told. Each of us is writing his own story. That's not exactly where we get the word *history*, but the connotation is easy to remember that way. Every man has *his story*. History is a narrative of events, a chronological (do you see "time" in that?) record of

what has happened. It is a story that covers a certain amount of time. It may be the story of a people, a project, or a person, but it is the same in each case; it's all about how time was spent.

In our own personal lives, we are writing our own history. A man will be judged by the story he has written. I won't be judged by yours (although your story may have an effect on mine, or mine on yours), but I will be judged on my own story, the one I have written. "We will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" ([Rom. 14:10](#)). And "...everyone of us shall give account of himself to God" ([Rom. 14:12](#)). So we need to be careful how we write. We need to see to it that our story is a good one.

Finally, notice that we spend our days as a *tale that is told*. When the tale is told, it's over. You can't go back and erase part of it or change some line you don't like or blot out some chapter that is offensive or repugnant. (Aren't we grateful that, while we can't erase anything, God can; that's what forgiveness is all about and why it's so important.) When you've written your tale—told your story—it's over. "Be ye therefore steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, inasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" ([1 Cor. 15:58](#)) is good advice, then, isn't it? To labor to write well just makes good sense.

Now let me extract several statements from this little piece that seem to me to be especially significant in view of the new year that is upon us.

We *spend* our days.

*How* we spend our time is our choice.

A man will be judged by that story he has written.

When you've written your tale, told your story, it's over.

So we need to be careful how we write.

What will your story be, will *your* story have a *happy ending*?

