

Asking for Announcements

By Paul R. Blake

(Talk about coincidence... Last week, I received the following question by email from a brother in Alabama) "We have our announcements at the end of worship before the closing prayer. We ask if anyone has any announcements. Occasionally some sister will speak up or one of us will ask a sister about a family member. Does that matter?"

Good brother, that is a question that comes up often. I have heard it in nearly every congregation I have worked with over the years and have heard it from places I have visited in gospel meetings. Consider the relevant text:

1Corinthians 14:34-35 - *"Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church."*

When apostle Paul wrote of women speaking in church, the context implies that it was more than just requesting prayers for someone during announcements. The problem he was addressing was that of women actively participating in the services by offering instruction or by questioning the instruction of the preachers and elders. This was certainly not in keeping with the spirit of humility and subjection he taught women in 1Corinthians 11:1-16. I do not imagine that they had their worship services organized in a 21st century manner. I don't see Paul ending the services with "Does anyone have an announcement that was overlooked? If not, please stand while brother Barnabas leads the closing prayer." Paul's concern was for women speaking out in worship to teach or question, thus failing to show subjection and humility to all present.

Having said that, I am not suggesting that women speaking during announcements is an acceptable practice today. However our worship services may be organized, if the announcements are considered part of it, then women should not speak at that time. We make the announcements at the beginning of services before prayers so that brethren can petition for those announced as ill. We begin with announcements, and it is clear that when the brother welcomes everyone to worship, the church has now begun its worship service. Therefore, if a woman speaks up during announcements, she has spoken in church. Your announcements come near the end before the closing prayer. It is understood that the assembly for worship has not come to an end until after the prayer, therefore the announcements are part of the assembly for worship. Women should not be speaking.

It has been argued that women speaking up during announcements is an incidental practice that does not violate the spirit of the law Paul was inspired to teach regarding subjection of women. At best, it could be said that this is an argument that should be considered briefly; but, then it should be discarded for the following reasons: 1) it is risky to build a case for overlooking a clear command in favor of human reasoning, and 2) such nuances of reasoning often escape the young in faith and the weak in understanding. And as we are to protect them and accommodate their tender consciences, I believe that permitting women to speak during announcements should always be discouraged for that purpose. I would gently admonish the sisters who do, and I would strongly admonish the brethren who permit it.

The solution to the matter is to arrive at services early enough to collect all of the announcements, thus avoiding the apparent necessity of asking for announcements. We have a long term practice here at TR. The brethren who make announcements have been instructed by the elders to not ask, "Does anyone have an announcement that needs to be made?" both at the beginning of services and when the services close. In addition, we have instructed the congregation to give their announcements to the deacon who collects them at the beginning of services, because we will not ask for them during services. In my experience, asking for

announcements opens the congregation up for embarrassment and potential problems when denominational visitors decide to speak up and ask for prayers for their bake sale or softball team. All the questions about women and visitors making announcements can be preemptively solved by not asking for or allowing announcements to be spontaneously offered during services.

The Shadow

"Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1Tim. 4:12). A detergent advertisement depicted a little fellow looking intently at his shadow that fell across his pathway. The slogan underneath the picture read: "That's the only thing we can't wash out!"

As we consider this clever bit of sales promotion, we are reminded of the shadow of influence we cast on others by our example. Wrong attitudes and actions can engrave an impression on the minds of others which are next to impossible to erase. Just as we can leave a permanent mark for evil, we can likewise leave a lasting effect for good. Let us, therefore, strive to live so that our loving spirit, vibrant faith, and purity of life are never diluted by inconsistency.

A Moments Wisdom on Change

To change and to change for the better are two different things.

A wise man changes his mind, a fool never will.

The risk you take if you change: that people you've been involved with won't like the new you. But other people who do will come along.

Everybody wants to do something to help, but nobody wants to be the first.

Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.

People can cry much easier than they can change.

Any change, even a change for the better, is always accompanied by drawbacks and discomforts.

By nature man hates change; seldom will he quit his old home till it has actually fallen around his ears.

"There is no new thing under the sun... To everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven" (Ecc. 1:9, 3:1).