

Charge to Members [part 2] Tim Miller (Oct 31, 2010)

1.) The Priority of **Scripture over Tradition**. Over Time, Desks get cluttered and need reordering. A similar thing happens in the church, and even in specific local churches over their life-cycle. Methods can crowd out the message over time. The great Reformation of the 16th century was about uncovering the Gospel from all the vines and leaves and hedges that seem to have not been trimmed much in 1500 years. The very greatness of our Mennonite tradition, at least as I see it, is its basic posture toward the relationship between Scripture and human tradition. Namely, that human tradition is unavoidable, but that it must be constantly reformed by believing and submissive interaction with the Scripture in every generation. To be truly Anabaptist is to be constantly asking, "Does what I believe match the teaching of Scripture? Does how we do this line up with the New Testament pattern?" *Semper reformanda*. *Always* reforming. "We've always done it this way," holds zero authority with us. Our cry is always, "What saith the Word?"

I don't care what you think. Which is why (and I mean nobody ill will as I say this) *I don't care what you think and you shouldn't care what I think*. I do care if you think what God thinks, and you should care if I think what God thinks. How do we know what God thinks? He's revealed Himself. That revelation is collected in the testimony of Scripture. We care what the Book says, because what the Book says, God says. If we've become a people who start a lot of sentences with "I think," or "I feel," instead of, "My best understanding of Scripture is...for these reasons."

Head covering conversation the other day. A lot of thinking and feeling and not nearly enough talk about the relevant portion of Scripture and what it means.

2.) The Priority of **Discipleship over Denominationalism**. We don't ask that you become a Mennonite, rather (consistent with our Anabaptist convictions) we ask that you follow Scripture and become a Christian. Our emphasis will never be the traditions of men, but will always be the Son of God. He or she whom God accepts into His universal church surely ought to be joyfully accepted into the membership of our local church.

3.) The Priority of **Commitment with these People**

- A commitment to these people.
- A commitment these people make to you.
- Extending God's Grace to Each Other (**Col 3:13**)
- Speaking the truth in love (**Ephesians 4:15**)

4.) The Priority of the **Priesthood of Believers**. A clergy/laity OR a priesthood of all believers? (**1Peter 2:9**). We believe that what traditional congregations expect solely of the pastors is actually God's will for the entire congregation (to "be there" in the clutch, to pray, counsel, support, visit, advise, rebuke, encourage, instruct, serve, give, love).

5.) The Priority of **Commitment to this congregation's leadership**. Given what we've just said about the priesthood of all believers, why submit to leaders (**Heb 13:17**)? Leaders are meant to have attained some measure of maturity and insight in *our common calling* that is worthy of respect and emulation. There is no double standard. What leaders are called to, all are called to (**Heb 13:7**).

6.) The Priority of **Pursuing Worship and Mission Together**

- OT - "Y'all Come", NT - "Go Make"
- OT - few mediate, NT Priesthood of all believers - can you imagine what it would be like to gather 1,000 believers who have love nothing but God and hate nothing but sin together in one place just to pray? The earth would tremble, because Romans 8 says even the earth groans, longing for God's people to come out of hiding and into His glorious light. The earth would tremble.

7.) The Priority of **Using Your Gifts to Serve Others (1 Peter 4:10)**