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WATCH THE “F” WORD IN CHURCH:
THE DANGER OF FAMILIARITY

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Introduction

1. Disciples of Christ need to watch for the “f” word in church because there can be danger in familiarity! Familiarity leads to comfort. Comfortableness can lead to complacency. Yes, we need to be on the lookout for the “f” of familiarity.
2. One author writes,

Complacency is a blight that saps energy, dulls attitudes, and causes a drain on the brain. The first symptom is satisfaction with things as they are. The second is rejection of things as they might be. "Good enough" becomes today's watchword and tomorrow's standard. Complacency makes people fear the unknown, mistrust the untried, and abhor the new. Like water, complacent people follow the easiest course -- downhill. They draw false strength from looking back.¹
3. In Luke 4:14-30, we are given an account that illustrates the spiritual dullness that can occur when one grows complacent through familiarity. By examining the proclamation of Jesus, the people’s perception of Him, and their persecution of Jesus, one can witness the hazards of familiarity.

¹ "Bits & Pieces, May 28, 1992, p. 15.," Sermon Illustrations, accessed January 14, 2017, <http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/c/complacency.htm>.

The Proclamation of Jesus of Nazareth (Luke 4:14-21)

1. After being baptized and enduring the temptation of Satan, Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit. It was due to this powerful anointing that Jesus received fame and glory throughout the region of Galilee. Galilee literally means “the heathen circle.”² The geography of this passage will become even more relevant later in the passage. (14)
2. Jesus taught in their synagogues. After the Babylonian Exile, synagogues began to surface as places of scripture and prayer. They are equivalent to a Christian church. (15)
3. Jesus returned to his hometown synagogue to make a proclamation. In a sense, this could be considered His ministry’s inaugural address. (16-17)
4. In verses 18-19, Jesus gives the “mission statement” of His earthly ministry. The scripture He reads from explains to everyone around what they are witnessing in His ministry.
5. He declares, “This Spirit of the Lord is upon me because...”
 - a. “...he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor...”
 - b. “...he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted...”
 - c. “...to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind...”
 - d. “...to set at liberty them that are bruised...”
 - e. “...to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” (18-19)
6. These two verses have a Year of Jubilee theme in them. What was the year of Jubilee? One author states,

Leviticus 25 ordains a sabbath year, one in every seven ([Lev. 25:1-7](#)), and a jubilee year, one in every fifty ([Lev. 25:8-17](#)), to sanctify Israel’s internal economy. In the sabbath year, each field was to lie fallow, which appears to be a sound agricultural practice. The year of jubilee was much more radical. Every fiftieth year, all leased or mortgaged lands were to be returned to their original owners, and all slaves and bonded laborers were to be freed ([Lev. 25:10](#)). This naturally posed difficulties in banking and land transactions, and special provisions were designed to ameliorate them ([Lev. 25:15-16](#)), which we will explore in a moment. The underlying intent is the same as seen in the law of gleaning ([Lev. 19:9-10](#)), to ensure that everyone had access to the means of production, whether the family farm or simply the fruits of their own labor.³

Basically, Jesus is declaring that He was there to free those in bondage. I do not believe that Jesus was speaking of the physical year of Jubilee. However, this could make sense of the fact they attempted to attack Him.

7. It is the claim of verse 21 that causes tensions to rise!!!

² James Strong, “G1056,” *Strong's Concordance* (Austin, TX: WORDsearch, 2007) WORDsearch CROSS e-book.

³ “The Sabbath Year and the Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25),” *The Sabbath Year and the Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25) - Bible Commentary - Theology of Work*, accessed January 14, 2017, <https://www.theologyofwork.org/old-testament/leviticus-and-work/the-sabbath-year-and-the-year-of-jubilee-leviticus-25>.

The People's Perception of Jesus (Luke 4:22, [16])

1. There are no doubts Jesus' words had a tremendous impact on the people. They could not get over the fact this was Joseph's boy! How could he claim this?
2. There are no doubts Jesus was considered a good teacher by these people (see v. 16). The "as his custom was" reveals this was more than likely not the first occasion Jesus taught here. Remember Jesus had been discussing matters of the Law with the religious leaders since he was twelve (see Luke 2:46-47)!
3. The people's hearts were hardened due to their familiarity with Jesus! Surely, this is not our Redeemer?!?
4. Do you know that familiarity lends itself to complacency by way of comfort? Familiarity can be a dangerous thing!
5. In the Bible, there is a distinction between common and sacred. A good illustration of this fact is found in Peter's vision in Acts 10:9-15.
6. Remember Uzzah? In 2 Samuel 6, Uzzah was struck dead because of touching the Ark of the Covenant. It may seem a harsh punishment but God had given specific instruction on how to transport the Ark (see Number 4:15), but they were not being followed. Instead, the holiest object on earth at the time was being moved around on a common cart. Also, in verse 3, the Bible states the Ark had been kept in Uzzah's father house. Could his familiarity lead him to get too comfortable around the Ark? I would argue in the affirmative. This is much like an electrician who grows too comfortable and gets shocked. The instructions and warnings were there but not heeded.
7. **Familiarity can lead to comfort which may lead to complacency. Familiarity can be a dangerous thing.**
8. The people in Nazareth had let familiarity harden their hearts. We should be familiar with Christ but not allow it to lead to complacency.

The Persecution of Jesus by the People (Luke 4:23-30)

1. Notice that Capernaum – a heathen city – witnessed the great works but Nazareth did not. (23)
2. Remember I said the geography of this passage would become even more relevant to understanding the meaning of this passage. Notice Jesus gives two example of prophets ministering outside of Israel.
3. Elijah minister to a widow in Sarepta, Sidon while countless widows were in Israel. (24-26)
4. Elisha cleansed Naaman the Syrian instead of the countless lepers in Israel. (27)
5. The common thread was unbelief through familiarity! Heathens were more receptive than God's people at times! Remember the story of Jonah?
6. The Nazarenes knowing their unbelief was the subject of Jesus' address were filled with wrath. The Greek implies "breathing hard."⁴ They were enraged to the point of murder.
7. This all stemmed from their unbelieving complacent hearts.

⁴ James Strong, "G2372," *Strong's Concordance* (Austin, TX: WORDsearch, 2007) WORDsearch CROSS e-book.

Conclusion

1. How can you keep from getting too familiar or complacent? Or your faith becoming routine?
 - a. Prayer
 - b. Fasting
 - c. Study
 - d. Fellowship

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