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THEME:

NEEDS FOR STRENGTHENING
THE LOCAL CHURCH

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NEEDS FOR STRENGTHENING THE LOCAL CHURCH

“UNDERSTANDING THE CHURCH OF CHRIST”

Clayton Winters

INTRODUCTION

- A. The Church of Christ is a non-denominational, non-sectarian body of believers in Christ. In the light of so many denominational structures, perhaps this is one of the hardest concepts to get people to understand.
- B. Also sometimes individual, autonomous churches among us are paralleled with denominations (for example, the seven churches of Asia).
- C. Hopefully, this lesson will enable us to have a better understanding of the church as Jesus intended for it to be.

I. THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

- A. The word church (from the Greek ἐκκλησία, meaning the called out) occurs about seventy times in our New Testament, and is used in three different senses.
 - 1. The universal body of Christ (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47; Hebrews 12:23).
 - 2. A local body of believers (I Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:2; Revelations 1:11).
 - 3. A group of believers assembled for worship (I Corinthians 14:18, 34, 35).
- B. The universal church is the total of all believers in Christ.
 - 1. On the basis of faith, repentance, confession and baptism, one is put into Christ, and into His body—the church of Christ. (I Corinthians 12:13).
 - 2. When the Ethiopian Eunuch was baptized, there was no local body of believers in the vicinity. Yet, they were baptized into the church (Acts 8:37-40). The same was true of Lydia and the jailer at Philippi (Acts 16:11-14, 31-33).
 - 3. The Lord added to this universal church (not a local body) all those who were obedient to the gospel, or those who were being saved. Thus it would follow that none of the saved were left outside the church; likewise, all who were saved were included in it (Acts 2:47; 20:28; Ephesians 5:25).
- C. This is what we normally mean when we speak of the Church of Christ.

II. THE LOCAL CHURCH—GOD’S ORGANIZATIONAL UNIT FOR SERVICE

- A. Local churches are organizational units within the Lord’s church.
 - 1. In the Scriptures these would be designated by their locality. They are normally thought of as containing all the saved people in that location, but basically are God’s functioning units for service and work.
 - 2. Each congregation is autonomous (self-ruled), and is subject only to the Head, Jesus Christ.
- B. The local church—God’s unit for service and work. No one can acceptably function in God’s service outside the local congregation. The reasons are numerous and apparent
 - 1. Paul saw the necessity of joining himself to the disciples or local group of Christians.
Acts 9:26 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.
 - 2. Elders oversee these autonomous bodies of believers.

1 Peter 5:1-2 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

- a) There are no brotherhood elders. We must place ourselves under the oversight of the local bishops in order that they might watch for our souls (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-3).
- b) These are God's servants qualified to feed the flock. Without such sustenance the congregation would soon wither and perish (Acts 20:18; 1 Peter 2:1-3; Hebrews 5:12-14).
- c) The churches of Galatia also engaged in the good work of benevolence (Gal. 6:10).

CONCLUSION

- A. It is only through the local congregation that we can function in the manner prescribed by the Holy Scriptures.
- B. People who drift from one congregation to another rarely are faithful, have no chance of real growth, never give their children an anchor for their lives, never assume real responsibilities, rarely offer much financial support to the church, cannot be depended on to support church activities and never form the loving ties that are so precious to most Christians.
- C. This lectureship is about strengthening the local church. In this respect, we all need to stand up and be counted!

NEEDS FOR STRENGTHENING THE LOCAL CHURCH
“MEMBERS RESPONSIBILITY TO THE LOCAL CHURCH”

Eddy Craft

INTRODUCTION:

- A. No matter who we are, somebody is watching us, they might even be scrutinizing us, and therefore being influenced in some way, whether good or whether bad.
- B. This certainly true in the local church.

I watched him walk in the way of life
With heart and head held high;
It always seemed my load grew light
Whenever he passed by
I patterned everything I did
By what I saw him do—
That he loved God I could not doubt
Because his life was true.
I often wished that more like his
My way of life might be—
Imagine my surprise to find
That he's been watching me!

- C. The word church is used in three ways:
 - 1. Universal. This refers to all the saved in the entire world (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 5:23-25)
 - 2. Local. This refers to all the saved in one community or congregation (1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1).
 - 3. Assembly. This is the local church when it assembles to worship (1 Corinthians 11:17-18,20).

I. MEMBERSHIP IN A LOCAL CHURCH IS NECESSARY:

- A. The local church membership is necessary because:
 - 1. The bible does not mention and teach a membership a large: in other words- do as you please, go as you want, visit all the congregations and never be a part of any.
 - 2. The Bible does teach that each member of a local congregation is under the oversight of an eldership. Hebrews 13:17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.
 - 3. The authority of this eldership is limited only to the local congregation, Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. 1 Peter 5:1-4 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Feed the flock of God

which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

- B. Therefore, in order for the eldership to rule over a people, they need members in a local congregation, which makes it essential to be a member of a local congregation.

II. WHAT MUST CHARACTERIZE A CHRISTIAN IN ORDER FOR HIM TO EXERT HIS RESPONSIBLITY TO THE LOCAL CHURCH

- A. The Christian must be totally committed to Christ. Jesus says "...If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. Following Christ is an all or nothing proposition – you either follow Him or you don't. (Matthew 12:30).
- B. The Christian must be deeply spiritual. It is most evident, that Christians should be spiritual people. We have experienced a spiritual birth (John 3:5). We worship in Spirit and truth – (John 4:24). We offer up spiritual sacrifices (Romans 12:1). We are stones in a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5). We all are to be spiritually minded (Romans 8:5-9).
- C. Let us generate a spirit of optimism by having a positive attitude by avoiding the grasshopper complex, by buying up the opportunity, by letting God work through us to accomplish his will.
- D. Let us increase the congregations membership by praying for the Lord of harvest to send forth laborers into His vineyard (Luke 10:2). By genuinely being concerned about those that are lost (Luke 19:10). By teaching home Bible classes, by raising your children up in the Lord (Ephesians 6:1-4). By inviting newcomers in the area to be a part of our worship.
- E. Here are a few ways in which you can add an extra influence for Christ in the local congregation: qualify yourself to be a teacher, an elder, a deacon, and gospel preacher. Encourage one another to qualify themselves for work in the Lord's church and qualify yourselves to be influential and faithful Christians.

III. SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK OURSELVES CONCERNING OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO THE LOCAL CHURCH

- A. Am I missed when I am not present? Absolutely, yes you are missed! When you are not missed, many things might cause this; a lack of attendance; the individual is living an inconsistent life or the individual is very inactive. Other members don't know if you will be here or not.
- B. Are you the kind of member that the local church would desire to have, if not, why not? Have you been too irregular in attendance, too erratic in devotion, too critical in your outlook, too unsound in your thinking, too worldly in your life, too unfriendly in your demeanor. These are some things we ought to ponder in our minds. How are we carrying on our responsibilities to the local church?

CONCLUSION:

- A. Since so many blessings flow into our lives through membership in the local congregation, it is deserving of the very, very best within each and every member to be the most influential we can be in all aspects of the Lord's work in the local church.
- B. We need to bare in mind that when we become Christians, we are added to the Lord's body the church (Acts 2:47). But we must then place membership with the local congregation wherever we live (1Corinthians 1:1-2).

NEEDS FOR STRENGTHENING THE LOCAL CHURCH
“A MEMBERSHIP UNITED IN LOVE”

(I John 4:7-11)

David Costello

INTRODUCTION

- A. CONGREGATIONS EVERYWHERE NEED A MEMBERSHIP UNITED IN LOVE. We can think of no better example when the membership of the body of Christ was united in love than the church of the first century.
1. The example of being a membership united in love (Acts 1:14; 2:1,46; 4:24; 5:12).
 2. The exhortation to being a membership united together in love (Romans 12:9-10; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 5:13-14; Philippians 2:1-4; 3:16).
 3. The effect of being a membership united in love (Colossians 3:14-15).
- B. LESSON TEXT: I John 4:7-11
1. The insistence for love (verse 7). Customarily, we think of I Corinthians 13 as being the great "Love" chapter of the Bible, but I John 4 gives that chapter some serious competition. Some form of the word "love" appeared 30 times in this chapter alone (e.g., "beloved" [3], "love" [19], "loveth" [5], "loved" [3]).
 2. The inception of love (verse 7). Since God is love -- intimate acquaintance with Him produced love.
 3. The initiative of love (verses 8-11). It was love that stirred God to send His only begotten Son into the world to die -- so that we might live through Him. *Eph 3:11*
- C. OBJECTIVE: We really haven't restored New Testament Christianity until we are a membership united in love.

Discussion

I. THE DEFINITION OF LOVE (Verses 7-8).

A. THE ESSENTIALITY OF LOVE.

1. We should love the Source of love (I John 4:18,19).
2. We should love the Scriptures (I John 5:2-3).
3. We should love Self (Matthew 22:39; Ephesians 5:28).
4. We should love the Saints (I John 4:7; Hebrews 13:1-2). Right here, John was pleading with us to be a membership united in love. Such a charge is not as easy as it might sound.

TO DWELL ABOVE

To dwell above with saints we love,

That will indeed be glory.

To dwell below with saints we know,

Well, that's another story.

- B. THE EXPLANATION OF LOVE. Love is of God! Man would have no concept of what forgiveness and salvation is without God's love (John 3:16; Romans 5:6-8).
- C. THE ESSENCE OF LOVE. God is love! Love is a word that is way too often misused and misunderstood.

1. Love is often used in the place of like or preference.
2. Love, according to the world's vantagepoint, has many aspects:
 - a. In the emotional sense, love is used to mean "as long as I feel well toward you, everything will be all right and I will love you, but if I do not have the same passionate feeling toward you, then that is another matter entirely."
 - b. In the physical sense, love is used to mean "as long as you look like you do, I will love you, but if you ever change, then that's another matter. . ."
 - c. In the fleshly sense, love is used to mean "if you really love me, then you will do this or that" or "if you love me, then you will let me do this or that."
3. Love, according to the biblical view is "a determination to do good toward another."
 - a. Love is distinguishable (John 11:35-36).
 - b. Love is demanding:
 - 1) Is it loving to allow a saint to grow cold without attempting to revive (Revelation 2:1ff)?
 - 2) Is it loving to allow an alien sinner to perish without attempting to recover (II Corinthians 4:3-4)?
 - 3) Is it loving to ignore an erring brother without attempting to restore (cf., Matthew 18:15ff; Galatians 6:1-2; James 5:19-20)?
 - 4) Is it loving to slight a false teacher without attempting to rebuke (Psalm 119:104; Romans 16:17-18; Ephesians 5:11; II John 9-11)?
 - c. Love is dutiful. We cannot claim to love God unless we demonstrate --
 - 1) Love for society (Matthew 5:43ff)! Jesus never did tell us it easy to love the unlovable, but we must be willing to do so if we are His followers (Matthew 5:43ff).
 - 2) Love for saints (II Peter 1:5-7; I John 4:11,19,20-21)!

II. THE DEFICIENCY OF LOVE (Verse 8).

A. LOVE IS THE REASON FOR SERVICE!

1. I Corinthians 13:1-2
2. I Corinthians 16:13-14
3. I Peter 4:8
4. Colossians 3:14-15

B. LOVE IS THE REQUIREMENT OF SAINTS! What does the church "need" right now?

1. From a divine perspective, what does the church of the Lord need? The plain and simple answer is: Nothing, absolutely nothing!
2. From a human perspective, what does the church of the Lord need? One thing that the church of the Lord desperately needs today, right this minute is a membership united in love. Why do we say that?
 - a. A lack of love among the membership hinders worship (Matthew 5:21ff).
 - b. A lack of love among the membership hurts work (Genesis 34:30; I Corinthians 5:1ff).

- c. A lack of love among the membership hampers warmth (Romans 12:9-10).

III. THE DESIGN OF LOVE (Verse 8).

- A. TO MAINTAIN OUR DISTINCTIVENESS AS CHRISTIANS (John 13:34-35).
- B. TO MANAGE OUR DIFFERENCES IN THE CHURCH. What if we all looked the same, talked the same, and acted the same? What if we all had the same job, played the same sports, ate the same food and wore the same clothing? Our differences should bless, not curse.
 - 1. Romans 12:5
 - 2. I Corinthians 12:25
 - 3. Ephesians 4:25
- C. TO MANIFEST OUR DETERMINATION TO CONNECT.
 - 1. The church is built up by members that are different (I Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 4:11-12). When Jesus chose His apostles, they were truly of different backgrounds, trades, and personalities. It stands to reason that these men had problems adjusting to each other. Likewise today, congregations are made up of carpenters, doctors, engineers, factory workers, housewives, etc...
 - 2. The church is broadminded about the fact that these differences exist. We must be tolerant and broadminded (Mark 9:38ff; Romans 14; I Peter 4:8). The church's work is too big to be divided over matters that are selfish.
 - a. In Acts 15:36-40
 - b. In Galatians 2:9ff; II Peter 3:15ff

IV. THE DEMANDS OF LOVE (Verses 9-11).

- A. WE MUST OBSERVE GOD'S COMMANDS (Matthew 22:37-39; John 14:15; I John 5:3).
- B. WE MUST OPT FOR GODLY COMMITMENT. Love acts in strict accordance to God's Will. Any action contrary to the teachings of the Bible cannot be the result of genuine love (e.g., flattery, fornication, a failure to rebuke, etc.,)!
- C. WE MOST OFFER GENUINE CONCERN (I John 3:16-18). Love is not demonstrated by idleness, but is demonstrated by showing tender concern.
 - 1. The charge to love one another (John 13:34-35).
 - 2. The consideration for loving one another.
 - a. Because love is of God "*let us love one another*" (I John 4:7).
 - b. Because God loves us, "*let us love one another*" (I John 4:8).
 - c. Because love will make us like God, "*let us love one another*" (I John 4:11).
 - d. That we many pass from death unto life, "*let us love one another*" (I John 3:14).
 - e. That the unity of Christ's body may be preserved, "*let us love one another*" (Colossians 3:14).
 - f. That we may know the joy of divine forgiveness, "*let us love one another*" (Matthew 6:14-15).
 - g. That we may work and worship together, "*let us love one another*" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

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- h. That men may know that we are Christ's disciples, "*let us love one another*" (John 13:34-35).
 - i. Unless the cancer of malice devour the finest qualities of the soul and fit us for the horrors of hell, "*let us love one another*" (I John 3:15).
 3. The concentration of loving one another.
 - a. In spite of differences of temperament, "*let us love one another*" (Ephesians 4:12).
 - b. In spite of diversity of opinion, "*let us love one another*" (Hebrews 13:1).
 - c. In spite of slights and injuries, "*let us love one another*" (Ephesians 4:31-32).
 4. The compensation for loving one another (Colossians 3:14-15).

CONCLUSION

The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. It is the child of God's offensive weapon. There are times when nothing will do but to take up our sword and fight -- fight -- fight. But, friends, today, I'm telling you that sometimes in dealing with brethren we are safe to lay aside our arms and employ the use of another powerful weapon -- love. Only when Christians begin to practice God's Word will they be able to love and understand one another correctly.

NEEDS FOR STRENGTHENING THE LOCAL CHURCH
“A MEMBERSHIP THAT SUPPORTS THE TRUTH”

2 John 9-11; Jude 1-4

James Meadows

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Jude 1-4 is the battle cry of the church. The great truths set forth in this text are demanding and challenging to our nature. It eliminates the idea of us contending for anything that is not the “faith.” It demands that we allow nothing to cause us to give less than all diligence in contending for the faith. It summons every member of the church for loyalty to the conflict between truth and error.
- B. Our land is filled with many different teachings, each claiming to be upheld and supported by the word of God.
 - 1. To a sincere seeker after God this poses a number of problems.
 - a. He sees good, sincere people in all religions.
 - b. He sees each one “proving” his doctrine by the Bible.
 - c. He sees each of the doctrines contradicting one another.
 - d. He wonders which one to accept because:
 - (1) If they are right which one is best for him?
 - (2) If they are all wrong then how does one determine what is truth?
 - 2. Such a state of affairs is sad indeed when one realizes that:
 - a. Our Lord prayed that his followers all be one (John 17:20-21)
 - b. The early church were one (Acts 4:32)
 - c. Paul begged the Corinthians to be of the same mind (1 Corinthians 1:10)
- C. In this study we purpose to observe:

Discussion

I. THERE IS SUCH A THING AS SOUND DOCTRINE (Absolute truth)

- A. The word “sound” is defined “to be in health,” “healthy” and “be sound.” The Greek word “Hugianin” is translated “in health” (Luke 5:31), “whole” (Luke 7:10), “safe and sound” (Luke 15:27).
- B. When Jesus finished the sermon on the mount the people were astonished at His doctrine” (Matthew 7:28; cf. Matthew 22:33; Mark 11:18).
- C. The gospels reveal that Jesus had a doctrine.
 - 1. He said “unto them in his doctrine,” (Mark 4:2; 12:38).
 - 2. My doctrine is not mine...” John 7:16.
 - 3. “The high priest then asked Jesus... of his doctrine,” John 18:19.
- D. The early church continued stedfastly “in the apostles doctrine,” (Acts 2:42)
- E. The priest accused the apostles of filling Jerusalem “ with your doctrine,” Acts 5:28).
- F. Sergius Paulus was “astonished at the doctrine of the Lord,” (Acts 13:12).
- G. Paul told Timothy to charge “some that they teach no other doctrine” (I Timothy 1:8-10).

- H. Timothy was admonished to give attendance “to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” and to “take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine” (1 Timothy 4:13,16).
- I. Servants are to obey their masters “the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. (1 Timothy 6:1; cf Titus 2:10).
- J. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine” (2 Timothy 3:16).
- K. Some will not endure “sound doctrine,” (2 Timothy 4:3).
- L. A man appointed to serve as an elder is to hold “fast the faithful word...” that he may be able by sound doctrine,” (Titus 1:9).
- M. Titus was admonished to speak “the things that become sound doctrine...,” (Titus 2:1).
- N. The apostles claimed that they received a message from God and revealed it unto the world.
 - 1. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth (John 16:13); they were to remain in Jerusalem until the power came (Luke 24:49); the power was to come when the Holy Spirit came (Acts 1:8); the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).
 - 2. Paul claimed he was guided by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:6-13) and that he received a direct revelation from God (Galatians 1:11,12).
 - 3. Peter claimed inspiration for the Bible writers (2 Peter 1:20, 21; 1 Peter 1:12).

II. **THERE IS SUCH A THING AS SOUND DOCTRINE AND WE CAN KNOW IT.**

- A. There are those today who contend “there is such a thing as absolute truth but we can never know it, thus we must ever view it as a goal which demands unflinching effort to attain it,”
- B. “If we cannot learn the truth, then the Bible is not even a meaningful revelation from God to man. What difference would it make (if the Bible is not God’s truth) if none of us could possibly learn the truth” (Thomas Warren, Sermon Outlines, On The Work Of The Preacher, Henderson; Arnold Office Supply, 1969, p.5).
- C. The following facts plainly declare that one can know truth (if one cannot know truth then these things are impossible):
 - 1. One can know the doctrine, (John 7:17).
 - 2. One is made free (from sin, fear, ignorance) by knowing the truth, (John 8:32).
 - 3. One is sanctified by truth, (John 17:17-19).
 - 4. One is saved by truth, (Romans 1:16).
 - 5. God desires man to speak the truth in love, (Ephesians 4:15).
 - 6. God wants man to have his loins girt about with truth, (Ephesians 6:14).
 - 7. One is chosen through his belief in the truth, (2 Thessalonians 2:13).
 - 8. God desires man to come unto knowledge of the truth, (1 Timothy 2:4).
 - 9. God desires man to rightly divide the truth (2 Timothy 2:15).
 - 10. God wants man to acknowledge the truth (2 Timothy 2:25).
 - 11. Man is begotten by the truth, (James 1:18).
 - 12. God does not want man to be against the truth, (James 3:14).

- 13. One is purified by obeying the truth, (1 Peter 1:22; Romans 6:17,18).
- 14. God wants us to walk in truth, (2 John 4).
- D. "How long can New Testament Christianity survive in an atmosphere where its teachers question everything, are tentative in all things, are non-militant in all their positions, who must view all as in the same tentative quest, and to whom it is said that a healthy respect for the tentative finds of others would become mandatory?" (James Bales, "The Difference Is Not Really So Small," The Spiritual Sword, Vol. 2, No. 1, Oct. 1970, p. 12).

III. THERE ARE FALSE DOCTRINES AND FALSE TEACHERS

- A. Jesus warned us to "beware of false prophets," (Matthew 7:15).
- B. Some teach for doctrine the commandments of men, (Matthew 15:9).
- C. Jesus warned his disciples against the "leaven" (doctrine) of the Pharisees and Sadducees, (Matthew 16:10-11).
- D. Elymas sought to pervert the right ways of the Lord, (Acts 13:10).
- E. Paul warned the elders from Ephesus about false teachers both within and Without, (Acts 20:28-32).
- F. There were false apostles and deceitful workers at Corinth, (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).
- G. There are those who pervert the gospel, (Galatians 1:6-9).
- H. Some do not walk by the same rule (the gospel) and are enemies of the cross, (Philippians 3:15-19).
- I. There are some who try to lead from the true doctrine by sleight and cunning, (Ephesians 4:14).
- J. There are those who teach the doctrines of devils (demons), (1 Timothy 4:1).
- K. Men can believe a lie (false doctrine) and be damned, (2 Thessalonians 2:8-12).
- L. After a first and second admonition factious men (heretics, teachers of false doctrine) are to be refused, (Titus 3:10-11).
- M. There shall be false teachers among you, (2 Peter 2:1).
- N. False teachers are to be tested by the word of God, (1 John 4:1).

IV. WHAT ARE SOME AREAS IN WHICH TRUTH IS BEING COMPROMISED TODAY?

- A. First, men compromise when they parade the devilish doctrine of "unity in diversity" and fail to properly use 2 John 9-11.
- B. Second, when men make a denomination out of the church, instead of recognizing it as a living organism (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4-6; Colossians 1:18,24).
- C. Third, men compromise truth when they deny their plenary verbal inspiration of the Bible and say that it just "contains" the word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21; 1 Corinthians 2:6-13).
- D. Fourth, men compromise truth when they fail to practice discipline in the church (Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1 ff; Titus 3:10-11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6).
- E. Fifth, truth is compromised when men and women confuse their roles and God's authority is not upheld (1 Corinthians 11:1 ff; 1 Timothy 2:8 ff).

- F. Sixth, truth is compromised when men teach that both the innocent and guilty party can remarry (Matthew 19:3-9; 1 Corinthians 7:8ff).
- G. Seventh, men compromise the truth when instrumental music is taught on the same part with songbooks, baptisteries, etc. (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16).
- H. Eighth, truth is compromised when pattern theology is ridiculed (Exodus 25: 40; 2 Timothy 1:13; Romans 6:17-18).
- I. Ninth, men compromise truth when we are led to believe that we can be faithful to God and extend fellowship to those who have not obeyed the gospel (Galatians 3:26-27; Romans 6:1-5; 2 John 9-11).
- J. Tenth, truth is compromised when explicit and implicit, generic and specific, inclusion and exclusion and matters of faith and liberty are removed from the realm of teaching God's word.

NEEDS FOR STRENGTHENING THE LOCAL CHURCH “A MEMBERSHIP PRACTICING PURE LIFESTYLES”

Jerry Brown

I. INTRODUCTION:

- A. Power of Example
 - 1. Positive examples--strength to the church (Matthew 5:16, 1 Timothy 4:12, 1 Thessalonians 1:6-7, 1 Peter 5:2-3)
 - 2. Negative examples--weakness to the church (3 John 11, 1 Corinthians 8:9, 2 Timothy 4:10).
- B. Lifestyles of Christians today
 - 1. Steadfast and faithful (I Corinthians. 15:58, Revelation. 2:10, Matthew 10:22).
 - 2. Apostate-(Hebrews 10:26, 2 Peter 2:20-22).
 - 3. Indifferent and Neglectful-(Revelation 3:15-16).
 - 4. Every lifestyle; a major impact on the church
- C. Purpose of this lesson: Practicing a Pure Lifestyle-a strength to the local church.

II. CONCEPTS OF MORAL PURITY TODAY – PROVERBS 23:7

- A. Christian concept
 - 1. Emphasis on moral purity in thinking
 - a. Blessing of God for a pure heart – Matthew 5:8
 - b. Focus of thinking of pure things – Philippians 4:8
 - c. Necessity of purity of self – 1 Timothy 5:22
 - d. Need for purity of heart – 2 Corinthians 7:1, James 4:8
 - 2. Emphasis of Moral practice in Christian lifestyle
 - a. Development of character by association--1 Corinthians 15:33, 1 Corinthians 5:11
 - b. Holiness before God, dependent on morals – 1 Peter 1:15
 - c. Morality, a fruit of the Spirit – Galatians 5:22-23
 - d. Human morality – a proof of a moral source – Romans 2:14-16
 - e. Good morals – a part of Christian leadership – 1 Timothy 3:1-13, 2 Timothy 2:24-45
- B. Concepts of today’s society
 - 1. Moral concepts
 - a. Social choice
 - b. Changes of standards with time
 - c. Acceptability of live-in relationships without legal ties.
 - 2. Sexual affairs and relationships
 - a. Acceptable sexual relationship by agreement of both parties
 - b. No shame for pre-marital relationships
 - c. Sexual relationships outside of marriage partner-acceptable
 - 3. Same sex relationships in homosexuality, lesbianism and gays.
 - a. Social choice, not a religious question
 - b. Recognition of same sex marriages in Vermont

- c. Legal standard of United States government and states
 - d. Legal in adoption of children
 - e. Legal for insurance coverage
 - f. Kentucky case – Baptist Homes for Children – 2000
- C. Effect of moral concepts on individual Christians
- 1. Power of sinful influence through temptations
 - a. Adultery, fornication
 - b. Pornography
 - c. R-rated and X-rated movies
 - d. Homosexuality and gay rights
 - 2. Scriptural warnings to Christians
 - a. Dangers of temptations – 1 John 2:15-17, Romans 12:1-2
 - b. Abstinence – 1 Peter 2:11, Colossians 3:5, 1 Timothy 5:22
 - c. Reject all lusts – Romans 6:12, Galatians 5:16-17

III. CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITIES FOR MORAL PURITY

- A. Responsibility for a knowledge of truth
- 1. Study of the Word – 2 Timothy 2:15
 - a. Daily meditation - Psalm 1:1-2, Acts 17:11
 - b. Inspiration of God – 2 Timothy 3:16-17
 - 2. Doers of Word, not hearers only
 - a. Danger of a forgetful hearer – James 1:25
 - b. Danger of deceiving self – James 1:22
- B. Responsibility for Scriptural Condemnation of sins of immorality
- 1. Condemnation a adultery and fornication in the Old Testament
 - a. Hidden sin – Job 24:15
 - b. Sin in Law of Moses – Exodus 20:14
 - c. Commission with neighbor’s wife – Leviticus. 18:20
 - d. Sin by Solomon’s instruction – Proverbs 6:32
 - e. Punishable by death – Leviticus 20:10
 - 2. Condemnation of adultery and fornication in the New Testament
 - a. Forbidden association with adulterers – I Corinthians 5:11
 - b. Judgement of God – Hebrews 13:4
 - c. Scriptural reason for divorce – Matthew 5:32
 - d. Abstinence of all sexual immorality – I Thessalonians 4:3, 1 Corinthians 5:9-11, 1 Corinthians 6:18
 - 3. Condemnation of Sin of Homosexuality
 - a. Forbidden in the Old Testament – Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13
 - b. Forbidden in the New Testament –1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Romans 1:26-27
 - 4. Christian attitude toward sins of immorality and impurity
 - a. Abhor – Romans 12:9
 - b. Abstain – Acts 15:20, 1 Thessalonians 5:22, 1 Peter 2:11, 1 Thessalonians 4:3
 - c. Flee – 1 Corinthians 6:18, James 4:7
 - d. Keeping Pure – I Timothy 5:22

IV. NEED OF LOCAL CHURCH FOR PURITY IN MEMBERSHIP

- A. Results of impurity and immorality
 - 1. Broken Homes – Causes
 - a. Legal Separation
 - b. Spousal unfaithfulness
 - c. Adultery
 - d. Anti-Scriptural marriages by guilty party – Matthew 19:4-9
 - 2. Unfaithful church members
 - a. Shame for innocent victim
 - b. Denial of Scriptural teaching by guilty party – Matt. 19:4-9
 - c. Desire for justification of sin
 - d. Desire for acceptance without true repentance
 - 3. Problems for elders
 - a. Toleration without Scriptural reasons
 - b. Discipline with danger of division
 - c. Concern for the innocent victim
 - d. Development of programs for single parent and single spouse
 - 4. Difficulties in selection of pulpit preacher
 - a. Need for Scriptural doctrine in preacher
 - b. Danger of liberal acceptance of impurity
- B. Results of Scriptural condemnation of impurity
 - 1. Unpopularity
 - a. Preachers
 - b. Elders
 - c. Bible class teachers
 - 2. Divisions
 - a. Liberal ideas of acceptance
 - b. Establishment of new congregation
 - c. Emergence of new interpretations
 - 3. Strength and Future growth by following Scriptures
 - a. Approval and blessings of God
 - b. Growth in spirit, love, and respect
 - c. Prosperity of truth

V. CONCLUSION

- A. Importance of Truth – John 8:32, John 17:17
- B. Importance of Sowing and Reaping – Galatians 6:7
- C. Importance of Example – Matthew 5:16, I Timothy 4:12
- D. Importance of Steadfastness – Acts 2:42, I Corinthians 15:58
- E. Importance of Teaching our children – Ephesians 6:4

NEEDS FOR STRENGTHENING THE LOCAL CHURCH
“A MEMBERSHIP THAT SUPPORTS ITS LEADERSHIP”

(I THESSALONIANS 5:12-13)

David Pharr

INTRODUCTION:

- A. We all recognize that the church has both a divine side and a human side. The divine side is perfect; the human side has flaws. We could want nothing better as regards the divine side. We would always want improvements on the human side. God’s plan for the leadership of congregations is a perfect plan. But the men he has placed in leadership positions are not perfect men. There is sometimes a temptation to depreciate or even to reject leadership with the justification that they are just men, men who are not perfect. What needs to be realized is that God knew that the leaders chosen would not be perfect, yet his perfect plan nevertheless has made them leaders.
- B. Once I was preaching on the responsibilities and authority of elders in a situation where a few were attempting to overthrow the eldership. Made the point that the Holy Spirit is the one who makes men elders (Acts 20:28). One man took strong exception. For some years he continued to circulate that I was a false teacher because I said elders were appointed by the Holy Spirit. You know, of course, that the Spirit does this through the word. It is not through some direct miraculous process. When Titus was told to ordain elders in every city (Titus 1:5) he was to do it on the basis of the Spirit’s instructions. But I submit to you that every elder Titus appointed on the basis of the Spirit’s instructions was as surely a divinely recognized elder as he would have been if it had been done miraculously. To resist the heavenly ordained authority of elders is to resist the Holy Spirit.
- B. In this lesson, however, we are not giving attention, so much, to those who might want to overthrow the elders. That is not our typical need. Instead we want to emphasize the importance of every member not only complying with the direction of the leaders, but also giving them wholehearted support and encouragement.
- C. You realize that some congregations do not have elders. Something is lacking when this is the case. (Titus 1:5) When it is because no men are qualified to be elders, it is still necessary that there be leaders. We are thankful that usually there are God fearing men who will gravitate into this role. Of course whether there are elders or other good men who lead, it is important that there be cooperation on the part of all. It would be hoped that the men who are leaders are the ones who will be growing toward being elders.
- D. Various texts might be considered, but we are going to focus on I Thessalonians 5:12-13. We will consider some questions based on the words of the text.

I. DO YOU REALIZE THAT BEING ELDERS IS HARD WORK? –“WHICH LABOR AMONG YOU.”

- A. Other translations say: *“diligently labor”*; *“work hard.”* Dedicated elders will be “working while others sleep.” Elders who are content to have a little meeting in the vestibule are hardly the overseers God intended.
- B. Elders work includes:
 - 1. Being pastors, feeding, shepherding the flock (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2; Ephesians 4:11).

2. Being bishops (oversight) (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2).
3. Ruling the church (1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17)
4. Guarding the church (Acts 20:29;-31; Titus 1:9-11).
5. Watching for souls (Hebrews 13:17).
6. Being proper example (1 Peter 5:3)
7. Represent the church (Acts 20:17)
8. Supervise money (Acts 11:29-30).
9. Prayer and care (James 5:14-15)

II. HOW WELL DO YOU “KNOW” YOUR LEADERS? – “*And we beseech you, brethren, to know them.*”

- A. The basic meaning is that they are to be recognized for what they are. Other translations say “respect” and “appreciate.” It might be expressed as “regarding them with favor.” Sadly, in some places some might not even know the names of elders, but this refers to knowing them with appreciation.
- B. We might dwell on the word “know” and ask:
 1. How much do you know about the time they give for the business of the church? Like the rest they are in attendance at all regular services. But what of additional time in meetings, visiting, counseling?
 2. How much do you know about things they have endured-in criticism, ingratitude, and stress?
 3. What do you know of their struggles to make the right decisions?
 4. What do you know of their struggles to help others through their problems?
 5. How much to you know about the time they spend in prayer?
 6. What do you know of their sacrifices of family time, of recreation, of business in order to attend to the affairs of the church?
 7. What do you know of the secret burdens they carry because of their confidential knowledge of the problems, sins and burdens of others?
- C. You will never know all the specifics of these things, but you should know and remember that they are very real.

III. ARE THEY REALLY “OVER YOU IN THE LORD?”

- A. Elders are not to be “*lords over God’s heritage,*” but they do have the oversight and members are to be subject to them (1 Peter 5:2-5; cf.; Hebrews 13:17; Acts 20:28). To have oversight there must be people to oversee. The Bible does not support arbitrary authority for elders. They have authority only to lead in the best interests of the church. Their authority is never for their own personal interests.
- B. The key is “*in the Lord.*” Their position is not political. The issue is not who has the power. This is the Lord’s business.
- C. A fine Christian couple confided that they did not agree with a certain policy of the elders, but that they respected the need to let the elders make the decision and would cooperate with it. Peter said we should submit (1 Peter 5:5). To cooperate when we agree is easy; to cooperate when we disagree is submission.
- D. I was asked to speak once, on “*What We Owe Our Elders.*” Of course the lesson could have covered a number of things, but I emphasized that we owe them our trust. It is sadly amazing that some are so quick to disagree with leaders’ decisions without

knowing all the facts. A man said he could not approve of the elders giving financial help to a certain situation because he did not know anything about it. He had decided to withhold his contribution because the elders might be supporting something he could not agree to. The point was, however, that the elders did indeed know more about it than he did, and he should have trusted them.

IV. HOW WELL DO YOU RESPOND TO THEIR ADMONITIONS? “AND ADMONISH YOU.”

- A. Elders have a teaching responsibility. This is not confined to explanations in a Bible class. Often elders admonish the congregation regarding attendance, giving, prayer, etc. See Hebrews 13:17. They watch for souls.
- B. The preacher may be more articulate and the one who speaks the admonitions. It is a good thing for elders to publicly express their endorsement. Several years ago we had a problem in the congregation. The elders could not get sufficient information to approach the matter privately. It was decided that some sermons should be addressed to the problem, but before the preacher spoke, an elder stood before the congregation and explained that they had asked for the sermon and wanted the congregation to understand that though the preacher was speaking it, the message came from the elders.
- C. Sometimes admonition must be personal and private. I spoke on this one time and a sister said to me, “*the elders better not think they can come to my house and tell me what to do.*”

V. DO YOU “ESTEEM THEM VERY HIGHLY IN LOVE FOR THEIR WORK’S SAKE?”

- A. I knew of a situation where it was suggested that something should be done to show appreciation for elders who had faithfully served for many years. When did you last know of a dinner in honor of elders or a plaque, or some kind of gift of appreciation? A preacher whose father was an elder in another state arranged for the elders to be given a special night of recognition. The preacher told me that his father had been an elder for many years and had not once had anything ever been done publicly to show appreciation. One man objected that all the members were equal and nothing should ever be done to give special honor to anyone. He did not know this passage (cf. I Timothy 5:17-18). The late Franklin Camp observed that elders are encouraged least of all. Preachers frequently get compliments, but how often do the elders?
- B. It is doubtless more to the point that individuals on their own, spontaneously, should express their esteem and love. Gus Nichols wrote: “*Every citizen should respect the governor of the state, not because one always agrees with everything he does or plans, for his work’s sake. Likewise every member of the church should esteem the elders not because he always agrees with every plan they make, but for, “their work’s sake.”*”
- C. What is too often the case is that members will tell the elders what they don’t like, but neglect telling them what they appreciate. Some elders rarely expect to hear anything from some members except something negative. Jesus suffered from

scoffers. The very ones He came to save made light of Him. Sometimes elders must endure the scoffing of disgruntled members, which they are trying to help.

D. I Timothy 5:17-18 shows that the better the work, the more one is to be honored.

E. The other side of this is that we are not to entertain groundless accusations (1 Timothy 5:19).

VI. DOES YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE LEADERSHIP PROMOTE PEACE AND PROGRESS IN THE CONGREGATION? “AND BE AT PEACE AMONG YOURSELVES.”

A. It is significant that the admonition to “*be at peace among yourselves*” closely connected with the points about leadership. “*Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.*” We should see this “peace” as more than the absence of fighting. It should be the peace of cooperation, fellowship, and labor.

B. 1 Corinthians 1:10 admonishes that all be of the same mind and same judgment. This may apply to doctrine, but it also applies to matters of judgment. How is it possible? There may be as many ideas as there are people. Letting the elders lead will keep the congregation in the same mind and judgment.

NEEDS FOR STRENGTHENING THE LOCAL CHURCH
“A MEMBERSHIP THAT IS COMMITTED AND FAITHFUL”

Everette Morefield

INTRODUCTION:

- A. The fruit of a Christian is more Christians. God wants every one of His children to win souls. The future of the church and salvation of our souls and the souls of others depend on it. “ When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.” (Ezekiel 33:8-9).
- B. Two things that must characterize us, if we are to be true to the New Testament pattern. Both of these have equal importance. The first is to be sound in the faith, or faithful and true to Biblical precepts. The second is a compassion or commitment to win souls to the Lord. Right doctrine must be accompanied by compassionate action.
- C. When I became a Christian, the Lord added me (Acts 2:47) to the church, where I am to be a committed and faithful member. As a member of the church, I am a worker and laborer in the vineyard of the Lord (1 Corinthians 3:9; 15:58). I must take a stand and make a plea for New Testament Christianity.

I. A PLEA FOR THE NAME OF CHRIST:

- A. He who says there is nothing in a name is not familiar with the Scriptures. Salvation is in the name of Christ (Acts 4:12).
- B. Remission of sins is in the name of Christ (Luke 24:47). Christians are those who wear Christ’s name, and who seek to reproduce the life, teachings and Spirit of Christ in their lives (Acts 11:26; 1 Pet. 4:16).

II. A PLEA FOR THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST:

- A. When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? (Matt. 16:13-16).
- B. The chief person in Christianity is Christ. The fact that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God, was the central truth in all the preaching of the apostles. (Acts 8:36-39; 16:31; Romans 10:9-10).
- C. He is Deity, “*Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.*” (Colossians 1:15).
- D. Jesus said, “*I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*” (John 8:24)

III. A PLEA FOR THE WORD OF CHRIST:

- A. The word of Christ is eternal (Mark 13:31; 1 Peter 1:25).
- B. The word of God is sufficient to give us all the religious instruction that we need (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3).

- C. Human creeds are unauthorized by the Sacred Scriptures. At best they are nothing but the opinions of uninspired men. They are sinful.

IV. A PLEA FOR THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST:

- A. The Bible teaches that God delegated all authority to Jesus, And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. (Matthew 28:18). Jesus in turn delegated the same authority to the apostles.
- B. He gave them the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth and protect them from error in revealing the Word (John 14:16-17; 26; 16:13). There is no evidence in the Scriptures of this divine authority ever being delegated to any one else.
- C. Divine authority ended with the work and revelation of the apostles (Revelation 22:18-19). Hence the kingdom of Christ is an absolute monarchy. It does not need councils, conventions, or synods to make, amend, or revise its laws. Christ is the head of His church (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18). No man has any right to change Christ's law.

V. THE PLEA FOR THE CHURCH OF CHRIST:

- A. We hear so much about this church and that church, that we have just about forgotten that Christ built a church. It belongs to Him. He said, "*I will build my church*" (Matthew 16:18).
- B. It belongs to Him by reason of Purchase. He purchased it with his own blood (Acts 20:28). It is scriptural and right to call it the church of Christ (Romans 16:16).

NEEDS FOR STRENGTHENING THE CHURCH
“A MEMBERSHIP THAT RESPONDS TO CHURCH AND COMMUNITY NEEDS”

David Irick

INTRODUCTION

- A. Peter described Jesus to Cornelius as one who went about "doing good". *"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him."* (Acts 10:38).
- B. We know that the primary mission of Jesus was to *"Seek and save that which is lost"* (Luke 19:10). The physical needs took a backseat in importance to the spiritual needs (John 6:27; 1Timothy 4:8). But through the life of Jesus, his teaching and the example of the church we see that there was an emphasis placed upon helping others in physical distress. Expressing love and compassion in meeting physical needs often paves the way in bringing men to the truth in order to have salvation. Like our Savior we must go about "doing good" unto others.

Discussion

I. HOW DOES THE WORLD KNOW OF OUR FAITH?

- A. *Faith Is Known Through Works.*
 - 1. Romans 1:8 (How could others know about their faith? Only in what they had seen their faith lead them to do).
 - 2. James 2:14-18 (Faith is not about talk, but about action. We express our faith by *living it!*)
- B. *We Are Commanded To Love Others. We give proof of that love by reaching out to help others in need.*
 - 1. Matthew 22:39-40
 - 2. 2 Corinthians 8:24 (The context of chapters 8-9 address the Corinthian's need to be liberal in helping others. In doing this Paul said they would give proof of their love.)

II. THE CHURCH CHRIST ESTABLISHED LEFT US AN EXAMPLE OF HELPING OTHERS.

- A. *Christ's Church Helped Those Within The Body.*
 - 1. Acts 2:44-46
 - 2. Acts 6:1-5 (The apostles did not say these widows were unimportant and should be forgotten. It is true the apostles had a higher priority in spreading the word, but they did make arrangements in meeting those needs.)
 - 3. Acts 11:27-30
- B. *Christ's Church Rendered Help To Those Outside The Body As Well.*
 - 1. 1 Thessalonians 5:15 (Remember Peter said Jesus went about "doing good." We know he helped meet the needs of people in a variety of ways. We should do no less today!)
 - 2. Galatians 6:10

3. James 1:27
 4. John 6:26-27 (Some people sought after Jesus for the food and not the right reason. Yet, this did not lead Jesus to stop showing compassion to others by helping them. Sometimes people take advantage of our goodness, but we cannot let this stop us from doing good to others.)
- C. *As Members Of The Church We Are Taught That Personal Prosperity Demands Us To Lend A Helping Hand To Others.*
1. Ephesians 4:28 (One of the purposes of working is to help others.)
 2. I John 3:17-18 (How can we claim to have the love of God if we fail to help another in need when we have the ability to do so?)
 3. Job 1:1-3; 31:16-23 (Consider the honorable example of Job.)

III. MUCH GOOD CAN COME ABOUT THROUGH HELPING OTHERS.

- A. *Extending Help To Others Has Led Many To The Knowledge Of The Truth.*
1. 2 Kings 5:9-19 (Naaman came to the knowledge of the true God.)
 2. John 9:34-38 (The blind man came to understand Jesus was the Christ through the compassionate miracle Jesus performed on Him.)
- B. *Dorcas Had A Marvelous Impact Upon Others Because Of A Helpful Hand.*
1. Acts 9:36-41 (Dorcas never preached like Peter, but she showed the way to Christ through her godly deeds.)
- C. *Remember That We Are The Light Of The World.*
1. Matthew 5:13-16
- D. *Even Future Generations Can Reap The Rewards Of Our Generosity.*
1. 2 Samuel 17:27-29 (Barzillai the Gileadite helped David when he fled from Absalom.)
 2. I Kings 2:7 (David as an old man instructs Solomon as king to show kindness to the sons of Barzillai.)

CONCLUSION

- A. The old saying that people do not care what we know until they know we care is probably true.
- B. Let us all do what we can to show the love of Christ.

NEEDS FOR STRENGTHENING THE LOCAL CHURCH "THE WOMAN'S ROLE IN THE CHURCH"

Wesley Simons

INTRODUCTION

- A. If one watches the religious world, he will see that the role of the woman is changing.
- B. Either we were wrong on our view toward women in stating that they could not teach or usurp authority over the man, or the religious community has given to women positions which are not to be theirs.
- C. The Presbyterian church in Shady Valley has a woman elder.
- D. Several years ago the Hopwood Christian church appointed a woman elder.
- E. The Bering Drive Church: "On July 31, 1988, the elders presented a statement to the Bering family concerning the use of spiritual gifts by both men and women, expressing our conviction that it is scriptural and appropriate for sisters as well as brothers to serve in Sunday morning worship roles of ushering, greeting visitors, receiving the offering, reading scripture, leading prayers, leading singing, and serving communion."
- F. The Nashville Jubilee has had women to teach over men and to lead singing with men present.
- G. At the 1990 preachers' and church workers' forum at Freed-Hardeman University, Robert Randolph, a pulpit minister for the church at Brookline, Massachusetts, and Lynn Mitchell, one of the elders at Bering Drive in Houston, defended an expanded role for women in the church (Ralph Gilmore and Don McWhorter took the opposing view). During the question and answer session, the following transpired: QUESTION: "I would like to ask brother Randolph, can women serve as elders today? If not, why not? Our culture today would allow it even though the culture of the Bible in general might not permit it." RANDOLPH: "I have no problem with women serving as elders today..." MITCHELL: "I wouldn't take any exception to what Randolph said..."
- H. International Church of the Foursquare Gospel Convention Los Angeles, California: A close study of the Word of God, both Old and New Testaments, indicates that God has seen fit to use women in His service in virtually every way He has employed men. We, therefore, see nothing that should restrict the God-ordained and Spirit-filled ministry of women in any capacity or office (in) the Church in keeping with the Word of God which guides men and women alike.
- I. WOODMONT HILLS CHURCH OF CHRIST ADDS TWO WOMEN MINISTERS TO ITS STAFF: In its publication, Love-Lines, Woodmont Hills announced that Meredith Moseley is---"the newest member of the Woodmont Hills ministry staff. Her title is Involvement and Communications Minister. She has worked at Woodmont Hills for over five years, first as a secretary and later as an assistant to Terry and Rubel." In the same publication it was announced by Eddie Plemmons that ---"Suzanne Rowe joins ministry staff June 1. Yes, the rumors are true! Suzanne Rowe will be joining our ministry staff June 1, as a full time associate children's minister...
- J. Their basic arguments for women preachers, etc.
 - 1. Women could not preach in the first century because of the culture.
 - 2. God wants all of us to use our talents.
 - 3. Misused scriptures.

I. GOD'S ORDER OF AUTHORITY.

- A. God has a certain order of authority: 1 Corinthians 11:3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.
- B. Christ is not inferior to God because He is subject to Him. Neither is the woman inferior to the man because she is subject to him.
- C. Christ will be subject to God in all eternity: 1 Corinthians 15:27-28 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. 28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.
- D. 1 Corinthians 14:34 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.
- E. Ephesians 5:22-23 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.
- F. The order of authority has nothing to do with intelligence, ability to learn or teach, etc.

II. A WOMEN IS NOT TO TEACH OR USURP AUTHORITY OVER THE MAN.

- A. 1 Timothy 2:11-12 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. 12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.
- B. Reasons why:
 - 1. Man made first: 1 Timothy 2:13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve.
 - 2. Eve was deceived: 1 Timothy 2:14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Genesis 3:16 Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.
 - 3. Woman has a different role: 1 Timothy 2:15 Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.
- C. The woman is not to be in positional authority over the man.
 - 1. This means she cannot be in a position that sets her over men in teaching, praying, leading singing, etc.
 - 2. God all through the ages has chosen men to lead in worship.

III. ONE SHOULD USE HIS OR HER TALENTS TO THE GLORY OF GOD.

- A. They argue that - if a woman has the ability to speak, then she should use that talent to the glory of God.
- B. Shall we tumble to the glory of God?
- C. Will we be permitted to lift weights to God's glory.
- D. We can do only that which is authorized: Colossians 3:17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

- E. I heard a man say at a lectureship that women could lead prayers in the presence of men because the men gave her that authority. Therefore, the woman was not usurping authority over the men. Another man asked, "If I give a woman permission to preach, can she?" The first gentleman sat down.
- G. We cannot give a woman or a man permission to do that which is not authorized.

IV. MISUSED SCRIPTURES.

- A. Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.
 - 1. They argue: God does not recognize any distinctions between male and female.
 - 2. Ephesians 5:22-23 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.
- B. Romans 16:1 I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchræa:
 - 1. Phebe was not a deacon.
 - 2. 1 Timothy 3:12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.
- C. Acts 21:9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.
 - 1. They did so in harmony with other scriptures.
- D. Acts 2:18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:
 - 1. Must be done in harmony with other scriptures.
- E. Acts 18:26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.
 - 1. A woman can teach a man. She cannot teach over the man.

V. QUESTIONS FOR US TO PONDER.

- A. Why do we allow women to speak up in class in view of 1 Corinthians 14:34? The verse says: Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.
 - 1. This was a unique situation where miraculous gifts were being exercised. Therefore for a woman to exercise her gift in this assembly put her over the man. So she is told to be in complete silence.
 - 2. She is told to ask her husband at home.
 - 3. What about the virgins, widows, etc.?
- B. Why do we let women teach?
 - 1. They teach the children and other women: Titus 2:4 That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, 1 Timothy 5:14 I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.
- C. Why can women sing in services? Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

CONCLUSION

- A. A woman cannot teach nor usurp authority over the man.
- B. This teaching is not tied to culture, but to the word of God.
- C. There is a role for the male and one for the female and this world has striven to tear down these distinctions. We must hold the line!!!

NEEDS FOR STRENGTHENING THE LOCAL CHURCH “A MEMBERSHIP WITH VISION”

Kent Bailey

INTRODUCTION

- A. By the term **membership** we refer to Christians composing a local congregation.
- B. By the term vision we speak regarding that of perception, discernment and/or foresight.
- C. Thus we are speaking regarding the importance of collective perception, discernment, and/or foresight within the local congregation of the church of the Lord.
- D. It is crucial that we distinguish between the church universal and the church local. The church universal is the aggregate of all those who have been saved from past alien sins. It is a relationship in Christ penitent believers are baptized (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27; 1 Corinthians 12:13). The church local is an organized collective functioning unit that is entered by both identity and fellowship (Acts 9:26).
- E. As we emphasize the importance and supremacy of the local church may we understand that:

I. WE CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS US

- A. The local church has divine obligations placed upon it to the accomplishment of specific tasks.
- B. In the accomplishing of those tasks, God provides the means to have the necessary strength to accomplish those divine obligations – Philippians 4:1-13.
 - 1. I Peter 1:5
 - 2. Romans 1:16-17
 - 3. Romans 10:17
 - 4. Hebrews 4:12
 - 5. John 8:31-32
- C. The Word of God is the source of our motivation—I Thessalonians 2:13
 - 1. Ephesians 3:1-5
 - 2. 2 Timothy 3:15-17
 - 3. Acts 20:32
 - 4. Philippians 1:12-14
 - 5. Colossians 1:11
- D. The reason both individual Christians and local congregations do not accomplish the work that God has assigned is due to the fact that they have not permitted the Word of God to empower them to the accomplishment of such tasks – Ephesians 6:11-18.

III. WITHOUT PROPER VISION REGARDING THE REALIZATION OF OUR POTENTIAL AND THE ACCOMPLISHING OF THE TASK THE LOCAL CHURCH CAN NEVER BE WHAT IT HAS THE CAPABILITY OF BEING

- A. Let us develop a great optimism for that of scriptural growth.
- B. Such growth is attained by:
 - 1. A great vision of the local church as the mighty army of Christ-I Timothy 6:12
 - 2. A great faith in God the Father and Christ – Hebrews 11:6; John 8:24; Romans 1:8
 - 3. A great love for both God the Father and Christ-John 6:66-68
 - 4. A great love for both the brethren and the lost – John 13:35; Romans 9:1-3

5. A great faith in the power of the Word of God – Romans 1:16-17; Hebrews 4:12
6. A great devotion to that of proper living – 1 Peter 2:11-12
7. A great vision for evangelism – Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16
8. A great motivation for Biblical Benevolence – Galatians 6:10; James 1:27
9. A great understanding of the necessity of Edification – Ephesians 4:11-16
10. A great devotion to that of plain gospel preaching – 1 Corinthians 1:18-25
11. A great love of truth and hatred of error – Acts 17:6; 28:22
12. A great willingness to stand in the defense of truth regardless of the cost – Acts 9:20-22.

CONCLUSION

- A. May we collectively in the local church develop the proper vision to accomplish those obligations set before us in the New Testament.
- B. May we have the love of truth to remain true to the Cause.

NEEDS FOR STRENGTHENING THE LOCAL CHURCH
“A MEMBERSHIP THAT IS FAITHFUL IN WORSHIP”

Dan Bailey

INTRODUCTION

- A. The lesson assigned unto me is entitled: “Membership That Is Faithful In Worship.”
- B. The three points mentioned in the assignment as given unto me are as follows:
 - 1. Public worship serves to advance the cause of Christ
 - 2. The public worship becomes very much the heartbeat of the church.
 - 3. When the public worship is neglected, we all suffer and the church is weakened or destroyed.
- C. Our God is a great God and He is worthy of our worship and adoration.
 - 1. John 4:24; Matthew 4:1-11; Psalm 89:7; Revelation 22:8-9
 - 2. Revelation 4:1-11; Isaiah 6:1-8

I. WHAT IS WORSHIP?

- A. Noah Webster defined the noun “worship” as: *“chiefly and eminently the act of paying divine honors to the Supreme Being; or the reverence and homage paid to him in religious exercises, consisting in adoration, confession, prayer, thanksgiving and the like.”*
 - 1. *“The worship of God is an eminent part of religion”*: --Tillotson
 - 2. *“Prayer is a chief part of religious worship.”* –Tillotson
- B. Mr. Webster (in 1856) defined the transitive verb “worship” as: *“to adore; to pay divine honors to; to reverence with supreme respect and veneration.”*
 - 1. *“Thou shalt worship no other god.”* – Exodus 34
 - 2. *“Adore and worship God supreme.”* - Milton
- C. Mr. Webster defined the intransitive verb as: *“to perform acts of adoration.”* As David said in Psalm 8:1-9...*“truly God has an excellent name and is therefore worthy of true worship!”*

II. WHAT ACTUALLY TAKES PLACE WHEN A CHRISTIAN NEGLECTS TO WORSHIP THE ONE TRUE AND LIVING GOD?

- A. It is offensive to God and therefore it is a sin to neglect or forsake the worship of God.
 - 1. Romans 6:23; Hebrews 10:25
 - 2. Many will be lost because they forsake the true worship.
- B. When one misses the worship services of God’s saints, he misses out on being edified, strengthened, and taught through the singing of God’s people. (Colossians 3:16-17)
- C. When one forsakes the worship he misses out on the blessings that could be his through the prayers offered publicly to God. And he also fails in not praying to God with his fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. (James 5:16)
- D. When one forsakes the worship of God he fails to honor and to support the cause of Christ. He fails to contribute with his physical presence as well as in giving financially to the cause of Christ. (I Corinthians 16:1-2)

- E. When one forsakes the worship of the one true God, he fails to commune with Christ and he fails to properly remember the death of God's Son.
 - 1. 1 Corinthians 11:23-30
 - 2. Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 2:9; Romans 5:6-9
- F. When one neglects the worship, he misses out on the encouragement, strength, comfort and guidance of God's word. Psalm 119:11; 18:34; 97, 104-105.
 - 1. Sermons are prepared to win souls and to help souls go to heaven.
 - 2. Lessons missed through neglect can only weaken and eventually destroy the soul. Matthew 10:28
- G. When one neglects to worship God faithfully, he is setting an example for others to do so. It is also a discouragement to his brethren when he forsakes the worship of God. Hebrews 3:13; I Peter 5:8-9; James 4:7

III. HOW DOES GOD LOOK UPON THOSE WHO FORSAKE THE PUBLIC WORSHIP SERVICES?

- A. Hebrews 10:22-30
 - 1. Verse 22 - How can we possibly draw near to God and His Son, if we fail to honor God in worship?
 - 2. Verse 23 - No one can hold fast his profession or confession of faith, if he fails to worship God in Spirit and in truth. (John 4:24)
 - 3. Verse 24 - When we gather together to worship God, we provoke one another unto love and to good works. However, if we have gone fishing or golfing or just too lazy to worship God, we fail to accomplish these worthy duties.
 - 4. Verse 25 - They had a problem with some in the first century. The day approaching may be the second-coming or judgment - vs. 27. Some believe it is the Lord's Day or the first day of the week; others believe it is the fall of Jerusalem. (In my judgment it is not the fall of Jerusalem).
 - 5. Verses 26-28 - To forsake the assembling of ourselves together is a willful sin, and it is to forsake and to abandon the blood of Christ.
 - 6. Verse 29 - There could be no stronger language imaginable!!!
 - 7. Verses 30-31 When we stand at the judgment seat of Christ, we'd better be found faithful!! (2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:11-12).

CONCLUSION

- A. In Matthew 22:1-4, Jesus gave a parable about the kingdom of heaven and how it was likened unto a certain King who made a marriage for his son. Many were bidden and many simply refused to come. There was a great feast and all things were ready, but still many made light of it. Some were more interested in their farms, some in their merchandise.
- B. The wicked in the city who refused to come were destroyed and others were invited but when the time came for the marriage, one man showed up without a wedding garment. He simply was not properly adorned and therefore woefully unprepared. He asked, "Friend, how comest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, bind him hand and foot, and take him away and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
- C. To forsake the worship of God is to be without a wedding garment on the last great day!!!

NEEDS FOR STRENGTHENING THE CHURCH “AN EVANGELISTIC MEMBERSHIP”

Charles White

INTRODUCTION

- A. To Christians, the most frightening mathematical figure in the world is: six billion.
- B. In churches of Christ the most preached on scripture is: Mark 16:15,16.
- C. If Mark 16:15 becomes a neglected scripture, then 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 becomes the most frightening scripture in the Bible.

I. CHRISTIANS CANNOT AFFORD TO BELIEVE ANY LIE, BUT ESPECIALLY THE FOLLOWING FOUR:

- A. Lie number 1: The Great Commission is distinctively first century and is not applicable for all times.
 - 1. That the gospel would go to every creature was prophesied in the Old Testament (Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14, et al), which thing did occur in the first century (Col. 1:23).
 - 2. If “entire-world/every creature” evangelism is only a first century phenomenon, it must follow:
 - a. Belief and baptism must also be temporarily first century (such as the signs following, vv 17,18).
 - b. Repentance and remission of sins, (Luke 24:46,47) must also be temporarily first century.
 - c. Therefore, only first century Christians had the authority to teach remission of sins (Matt 16:18,19) and only people in the first century could be saved; also if we have no obligation to teach every creature today, we have no authority to do anything.
- B. Lie number 2: All that is required to go to heaven is to be faithful in attendance, live a good moral life and harm no one.
 - 1. These lovely qualities are required, valuable and desirable, no doubt.
 - 2. However, Matthew 7:21-23 teaches:
 - a. Doing the will of God is indeed the outcome of faith in Christ (James 2:24,26)
 - b. People in the first century who prophesied and cast out devils were baptized believers on whom the apostles laid hands (Acts 8:14-25; Acts 19:6) and so must be included in the discussion of verses 21 and 22.
 - c. Anyone, whether in the church or not, can do wonderful works, using the name of Christ.
 - d. The key to understanding Matt 7:22 is 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 and the lesson learned is that whatever Christian’s do must fully be motivated by love.
 - e. Keep in mind this “love connection;” it will reappear later.
 - 3. One preacher said, “Except for the morality part, a department store dummy can fill a pew and do not harm to anyone.”
- C. Lie number 3: Evangelism is only the responsibility of church leadership.

1. "Why do you think we pay a preacher?"
 2. There is a tendency in this modern world to pass the buck, so let us be reminded that:
 - a. It is the responsibility of elders to oversee and feed the flock (1 Pet 5:2; Acts 20:28)
 - b. It is the responsibility of deacons to serve, their work being inherent in the name of the office they hold.
 - c. It is the responsibility of preachers to preach the word (2 Tim 4:2), but also to mobilize the congregation to do evangelism.
 - d. We do not ask elders, deacons or preachers to do our praying, worshiping, giving, living, loving or dying, so why require them to do our evangelism for us?
 3. Evangelism is an "every member business!"
- D. Lie number 4: A church can still be recognized as a church of Christ if it does absolutely no evangelism.
1. Ephesus was a church who had consistently labored in the name of Christ, had persevering patience, had aggressively guarded against false teaching, could not bear evil and had not become weary in well doing (Rev 2:1-3).
 - a. In spite of this outstanding record of service, however, they had left their first love and the Lord held it against them (2:4).
 - b. They were told to "repent and do the first works" (1:5) and if we discover what those first works were, we can discover what their first love was.
 - 1) Acts 19:10: And this continued daily by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.
 - 2) The "first work" was simply teaching the gospel to every person in the area of Asia Minor.
 - c. If they did not reinstate and revive these first works, their candlestick would have been removed from heaven's throne room (1:5).
 - d. Ephesus' example teaches the church of all ages a very sober and serious lesson: If a church does not exert every effort to preach the gospel in its general locale and refuses to repent of not doing so, it will cease to be recognized by God as a church of Christ.

II. "AND THE PEOPLE...OF ISRAEL ENCOURAGED THEMSELVES AND SET THEIR BATTLE AGAIN IN ARRAY..." (JUDGES 20:22)

- A. Christians are still battling against evil and we need all the encouragement we can get!
- B. It's encouraging to know that the seed and the soil remain the same today as always (Luke 8:5-15)
 1. Sowing must be done if there is to be a harvest.
 2. The power to regenerate is still in the seed, the word of God (Romans 1:16; Titus 3:5)
 3. People in any generation - past, present or future - do not change and Ecclesiastes 1:9 surely teaches so.

- a. People still reject the gospel (the devil's feeding ground, the wayside)
 - b. People still obey the gospel, but then fall away (rocks and thorns).
 - c. People still obey the gospel and will bear fruit (good seed, good ground, good fruit).
 - d. People are still hungry for the gospel. (As we've seen in Georgia Missions).
- C. It's encouraging to observe that there is a growing awareness of evangelism in the church and especially among our youth.
- 1. Speakers at youth rallies and gospel meetings are quietly being told, "More meat, please."
 - 2. More elders are beginning to not only shepherd the flock, but are evangelizing to help the flock grow, believing "How can I teach the flock to be evangelistic if I don't do it?"
 - 3. More preachers are taking the lead in evangelism with the local church, believing "Why teach evangelism if I don't do it?"
 - 4. Matthew 9:37,38.
- D. It's encouraging that more Christians are coming to understand just what love is.
- 1. 1 Peter 4:8: love covers a multitude of sins.
 - 2. James 5:20: "Whoever converts a sinner saves his soul and covers a multitude of sins." If love covers a multitude of sins and converting a sinner hides a multitude of sins, then the highest, noblest and most loving expression of a Christian's love is to teach the gospel to a sinner (in and out of the church) so that sins will be hidden by the blood of Christ in baptism (Romans 6:3,4) or by confession of fault (1 John 1:9; 5:16,17; James 5:16).

III. CONCLUSION

- A. All lies are evil, but the most evil lies are the ones we tell ourselves. It is a lie to believe that Christians have no responsibility to evangelize the world.
- B. If local churches are not engaged in evangelism, they will surely die but, before that death, they will be banned from recognition in heaven. The highest expression of love is saving a soul from death.
- C. We must realize our primary responsibility of evangelism, be encouraged by others and that which thou does do quickly.

NEEDS FOR STRENGTHENING THE LOCAL CHURCH
“MEANS AND METHODS OF EVANGELISM”

Charles White

INTRODUCTION

- A. Christians know:
1. The gospel is God’s power to save (Romans 1:16)
 2. This most valuable gospel treasure resides in us for the glory of God (2 Corinthians 4:7).
 3. The gospel is to be preached into all the world (Mark 16:15).
 4. The gospel was preached in all the world in the first century (Colossians 1:23).
 5. A church of the Lord is worthy of the Name when its main priority is preaching the gospel, both locally and elsewhere (Revelation 2).
- B. Christians worry:
1. They are not doing enough to preach the gospel.
 2. That God is displeased when the church’s evangelism fires are banked.
 3. That an eternal price will be paid, if we do not evangelize.
 4. Standing outside Atlanta, Georgia is Stone Mountain, the world’s largest piece of exposed granite. The old downtown Sears Roebuck building was constructed on a leg of Stone Mountain and never required water cooler refrigeration because the mountain’s water was always ice cold.
 - a) When Christians read the great commission, they wonder how in the world is the job going to get done?
 - b) It is like standing in front of Stone Mountain, the Lord gives you a spoon and says, *“Level it before you die.”*
 - c) The purpose of this lesson is to discuss some practical methods and means to get the job done.

I. THE TASK WAS ACCOMPLISHED IN THE FIRST CENTURY AND IT CAN BE DONE AGAIN ANYTIME WE GET READY.

- A. Means to do the job
1. Psalm 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.
 - a) Where evangelistic slackness occurs, there must first be repentance and before repentance occurs, we must be convinced that non-evangelism is a sin.
 - b) Repentance is based upon guilt whereas bringing forth “meat worthy of repentance” is based upon a determined attitude.
 - c) The “priority one” means is to clean up our spiritual house and be determined to do something about non-evangelism.
 2. Exodus 4:2 And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod.

- a) Moses' lowly shepherd's rod became a mighty instrument for God in Pharaoh's court.
 - b) Whatever is at hand must be used: house to house, radio, television, pulpit, Internet, rapid transportation, telephone, mail, home studies (Colossians 1:23).
 - c) You name it, you have it, you can use it!
3. Getting into people's homes
- a) It is a hellish perception that this generation doesn't want to study: People do want to study the Bible and will open their homes, if we just do the job.
 - b) Talking about the Bible is the easiest thing to do at work, school, recreation or visiting neighbors. Listen, don't argue, and provide scriptures without explanation.
 - c) When people move into your area, they have already made a change and are in the mood to make another.
 - (1) Add a "welcome to (name of your town)" program.
 - (2) Utility companies will be glad to furnish addresses of recently moved people.
 - (3) Get a school type pocket folder, have the print "Welcome to..." on the cover.
 - (4) Fill the inside with a letter from the elders and/or preacher, tracts, services provided (worship, benevolence, etc.), names and discounts from Christian-owned businesses.
 - (5) Invite these folks to ride around town with you. Think about it!
 - d) Getting into people's homes is like getting off drugs:" Just do it!"
- B. A few methods to use:
- 1. We like what we are doing in Georgia Missions: postage reply card offering Home Bible Studies by mail, by door to door work, involvement of our own members (which provides them with very fulfilling opportunities), strengthening smaller churches and "testing the soil" in unevangelized places.
 - a) Over 7000 studies have been conducted
 - b) Over 500 prisoners have been taught
 - c) Several baptisms and restorations have been reported
 - d) Members are excited and encouraged with their involvement
 - e) Door to door work must never be replaced by mail-outs the personal touch is best.
 - 2. Home Bible study video teaching
 - a) Jule Miller's filmstrips are now on video, both in English and Spanish.
 - b) Have a door to door campaign and invite people to "see the story of the Bible on VCR in your own home."
 - c) The first two lessons/workbooks can be left with the prospect and we recommend that a time be set up for the third and fourth lessons.
 - 3. Open Bible studies, using your own or someone else's
 - a) Use your Bible and let the prospect use his Bible. Version argument can cut a study quickly.

- b) Use plenty of paper, write down every scripture you use and leave them with the prospect
 - c) Sow the seed and water it. Throwing the Bible at someone may win arguments, but not many people.
 - d) Most important: close. Do not be fearful to ask if they are ready. Hesitation? Ask why? Draw a circle, put an "X" in the middle for saved; an "X" outside for lost, then ask the prospect to put an "X" where they are. Use children, spouse, heaven, and hell, anything to move a well-taught prospect.
4. Radio and television. Those who want to go into electronic media evangelism should contact Upper East Tennessee Christians for the best way to proceed.
5. Other mass media approaches:
- a) Avoid mail-outs replacing house to house work. We are not in the business of assuaging guilty consciences, but in making contact with people. There is no substitutes for house to house work.
 - b) Some house to house suggestions
 - (1) Go house to house and just leave a teaching tract. The denominations have been doing this for years and have had some success at it. Success for Christians, however, is the desire to sow seed.
 - (2) "Doorknob Evangelism" Get the printer to print a door hanger with a hole in the top for the knob. You can use this to advertise meetings, announce an upcoming religious census, announce a Bible study campaign and it is an absolutely great way to get young people involved in evangelism!
 - c) Newspaper teaching articles
 - (1) A question/answer format is excellent. (We called ours "Bible Talk" in Cleveland).
 - (2) Arrange with the paper to have you 4 x 6 article on the same day and in the same place every week. People will send in questions, read your response and recognize the writer.
 - (3) You get the attention of the community and the name of the church before the community every week in a non-confrontational way.
 - (4) The Cleveland Daily Banner editor told me our "Bible Talk" articles were the most read items in the paper.
6. A preacher once said: *"Anything that is scriptural, legal, moral and ethical can be used to make a contact and set up a Bible study."*
- C. Get the church involved!
- 1. Church leaders busy themselves planning, implementing and working in any of the above.
 - 2. Older Christians are delighted to grade home Bible studies and correspond with students.
 - 3. Christians who have written teaching materials will be delighted to see it used. Ask?
 - 4. If we build such works, they will come!
 - 5. Young people want more than fun and games – they want to be involved:

- a) Use youth and energy to distribute material and watch productivity go up.
 - b) People are not threatened by young people; they talk to them more than they do older people and as a rule, young people will set up more studies than the older.
6. **When a church centers its primary emphasis on evangelism, problems diminish, respect grows and the devil's workshop (an idle mind) is closed!**

CONCLUSION:

- A. Even though Solomon taught that wisdom belongs to the one who wins souls (Proverbs 11:30), I prefer to use the phrase "be a **seed sower**" because that is what we do. God is the soul winner; we are just farmers!
- B. Every person in our town, county and local area must have the opportunity to study the Bible – or else our candlestick is in danger (Revelation 2:4,5; Acts 19:10) and this in addition to our responsibilities for foreign work.
- C. Luke 9:62-10:2 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having ~~put~~ **put his hand to the plough**, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God 1 After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two ~~and~~ two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come 2 Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is **great**, but the labourers are **few**: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would **send forth labourers into his harvest**.

