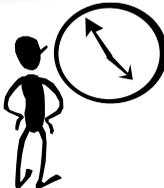


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### Time of Assembly



#### Sunday:

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.  
Worship 10:00 a.m.  
(Or every other week)

Bible Study 4:00 p.m.

Worship 5:00 p.m.

#### Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

## The Mire of Mediocrity

By Jefferson David Tant

The dictionary defines “mediocrity” as “1. Commonplace ability or condition. 2. A commonplace person.” We often use the word to describe that which is average — neither good nor bad, but “in the middle,” a person who is “mired,” is “fixed, stalled, or sunk in the mud.” By putting the words together, I believe we have an accurate description of a large part of the church today — mired in the mud of mediocrity!

Look around at your fellow Christians. Indeed, look at yourself. Do you see living examples of New Testament Christianity? Do you see members “running over” with the gospel in word and life? Maybe not too many. You may see some (even in your mirror) who are stalled, who are sinking, and who are stuck with the idea of being just an “average” Christian. If this is all it takes to gain the eternal prize, then well and good. But if your Bible reads like mine, then we must entertain serious doubts as to whether or not there are going to be any “average” people in heaven. It is true that we may be average in our ability, but we cannot afford to be average in the use of that ability we do have.

We are well aware that the openly wicked shall not enter in. The Scriptures abound with such warnings. But are we also aware of the fact that the Bible just as plainly teaches that the average and mediocre have no hope? Consider the parable of the talents. Two of the servants went out and worked. They bore fruit. The third servant? He was not an evil man who spent his money in riotous living. He didn’t spend it on gambling, women, or wine, and yet his master said, “*Thou wicked and slothful servant...*” (Matt. 25:26) What was his trouble? What evil had he done? He wasn’t bad. He was probably just a “good old Joe” who minded his own business and never caused trouble. Doesn’t that describe a

good many members of the church today? His “wickedness” consisted of his doing nothing! He was probably a “good” man, but good for nothing!

Consider the story of the ten virgins.

*“Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep. But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ Then all those virgins rose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the prudent, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the prudent answered, saying, ‘No, there will not be enough for us and you [too;] go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’ And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. And later the other virgins also came, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open up for us.’ But he answered and said, ‘Truly I say to you, I do not know you.’ Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour” (Matthew 25:1-13).*

Note that the five foolish virgins were not described as evil people. They even had an interest in the coming of the groom — but not enough! They didn’t go out of their way to prepare. How many church members do you know who actually do have an interest in the kingdom, but not enough to put themselves out very much?

Dear Readers, the Lord is not pleased with “average Christians” nor “mediocre members.” He wants people who will work, who will strive who will abound.

Where were the average people in Noah’s time; the mediocre who were destroyed in Sodom and Gomorrah; the “good old Joes” who were left behind when Israel entered the promised land after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness? They were dead — destroyed with all the rest who were unprofitable.

Now then, for the sake of your souls, let us remember the words of the Lord: *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord” (I Corinthians 15:58).* “Abounding” is not very “average” is it?

*“And who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?” (I Peter 3:13.)* Is this describing “mediocre?”

*“Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able” (Luke 13:24).* I don’t think “strive” means “coasting along.”

Let us put aside the complacency that allows us to appear at the services, but in a few dollars, and then go our way. Let us develop men and women who are uncommon, who love the Lord, who work for the Lord, and who thus have a real hope of heaven. If this is not done, then we can only look forward to further sinking into the mire of medi-

ocrity, and final damnation.

These words that have been written apply to all ages, but I especially want them to be heeded by the young, for it is in our young years that we develop our habits that will last a lifetime. It has been my privilege to know various young people who have been very active in learning the Scriptures, setting an example, doing mission work, and having a part in converting their friends and schoolmates.

*“Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe” (I Timothy 4:12).*

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## Self Control

By Bill Hall

What is the value of self-control? Self-control is that which enables us to hold our tongues when we are tempted to viciously put someone in his place once and for all; or when we know a juicy bit of gossip that would be entertaining to the group and would turn us into the "life of the party;" or when an occasion almost demands that we betray a confidence that must not be betrayed under any circumstances.

Self-control is that which enables us to control our passions when another is provoking us to anger; that keeps the clinched fists in the pockets when the agitator is only half our size; that keeps the lips sealed when another is railing and swearing at us. Self-control is that which enables us to be like our Lord "who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously" (I Peter 2:23).

Self-control is that which enables us to maintain purity of heart and to thrust out evil thoughts before they can take root; that enables us to place the best possible construction on another person's actions when unproven rumors could easily destroy our confidence in him; that helps us to maintain a cheerful disposition when everything around us has turned sour. Self-control is that which enables us to love the unlovable and to hate that which the world loves.

Self-control is that which enables us to rule our appetites; to say "no" when our lusts would lead us to sin or when that which is harmful to our health is placed before us. Self-control is that which enables the smoker to put down his cigarettes and the alcoholic to put down his drink and never return to it. Self-control is that which enables us to rule rather than to be enslaved.

The Bible does not glorify the indifferent and impassive. It is not our goal to be uncaring. To be like Paul, we must be able to have our spirit stirred within us when we are surrounded by evil (Acts 17:16). To be like our Lord, we must sometimes feel anger when surrounded by hypocritical self-righteousness (Mark 3:5); we must even react with occasional outbursts of goodness on occasions, as when the Lord cleansed the temple (John 2:13-17). But, all such outbursts must be tempered with self-control, that in

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our anger we “do not sin” (Ephesians 4:26).

God does not view our uncontrolled actions with amusement. Our temper tantrums and harsh, unbridled words are soul threatening, a potential bar to the abundant entrance into the Lord’s everlasting kingdom (II Peter 1:5-11). We must not minimize the danger. We must not surrender to this evil.

What is the value of self-control? It is one of the qualities that enable us to go to heaven. The possessor of it is rich indeed.

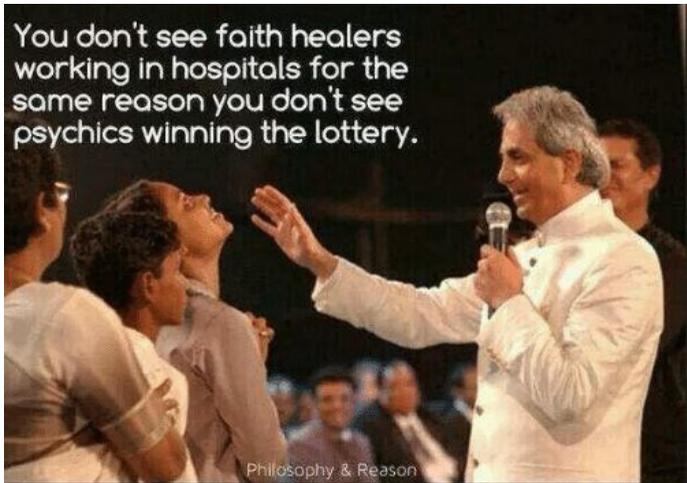
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## Willing to Suffer

By Doy Moyer

The willingness to suffer for the cause of Christ is not a bug, but a feature of the Christian’s worldview. We realize that this is not, in itself, a selling point that would immediately cause people to flock to Jesus Christ. No one likes to suffer, and most are not willing to suffer if they don’t understand why. However, everyone is willing to suffer something when they understand that the suffering is for something that they consider to be of greater value or toward a purpose they deem significant. Parents will suffer for their children. Friends will suffer for one another. Soldiers will suffer for their country. Many are even willing to suffer for animals and pets. There is no doubt that people are willing to suffer. The question is whether or not we truly understand the cause of Jesus Christ and why commitment to Him is everything. Once we do, then the willingness to suffer for Him should be a foregone conclusion. We will be willing to give everything.

Here, then, was Paul’s attitude about it: *“But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ—the righteousness from God based on faith. My goal is to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, assuming that I will somehow reach the resurrection from among the dead”* ([Philippians 3:7-11](#)).



You don't see faith healers working in hospitals for the same reason you don't see psychics winning the lottery.

Philosophy & Reason