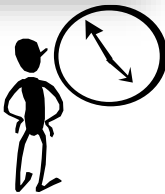


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Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study	9:00 a.m.
Worship	10:00 a.m.
Worship	5:00 p.m.
(every other week)	

Wednesday:

Bible Study	6:30 p. m.
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How to Grow the Church

By Paul K. Williams

John Cripps asked an elder in the United States why the church where he was a member was growing? He replied, "When we stopped pounding the pulpit on the issues we started to grow." The elder also said that the elders were divided on the subject of divorce and remarriage, so they don't teach on that. They let each member make up his own mind on that subject.

An elder's wife wrote me, "____ preached a hard-hitting lesson yesterday morning on marriage in preparation for the withdrawal of one of our brethren who has entered into an adulterous marriage. A few of the brethren are struggling with this. Weak brethren would like to live and let live when it comes to sin. Sad."

Question: Is that church going to stop growing?

But where will this attitude lead? My grandson, Nathan, told me that a few years ago a friend of his preached for a non-institutional church in Los Angeles. The elders invited him to move there and work with them, but they said, "You must agree not to preach against abortion."

Contrast that with the attitude of Paul, the apostle. He said to the elders of the church at Ephesus: "*You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house*" (Acts 20:18-20).

And heed what Paul wrote to Timothy: "*I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of*

season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (2 Timothy 4:1-5).

When Jesus wrote to the seven churches of Asia, saying that He knew their works, He did not write one thing about whether a church was growing in number. He wrote a great deal about their faithfulness, or lack of faithfulness, in life and doctrine.

Could it be that many of us have the wrong definition of success? Let us not measure ourselves by ourselves, but by the word of God.

Are You Satisfied?

By Bill Pierce

When talking with people concerning religion, I hear this statement, “I’m happy and satisfied with my religion!” It is true that religion is to bring happiness and contentment but let me raise some questions about this statement: What is it about “your religion” that gives this satisfaction? Is it because it is in harmony with truth – the Gospel? Is it because you were raised to believe this way and you have accepted it without examination because it is the faith of your parents? Is it because you like the people where you attend and your loyalty to them gives you this satisfaction? Is it because of certain social status you have where you attend that makes you satisfied and happy?

But you may be thinking, “Why are you asking these questions? Isn’t one religion as good as another?” To this question we give a definite NO! The word religion means to “bind again”. Religion is for the purpose of binding the sinner back to God. Only the religion of Christ can do this! The New Testament. speaks of “one faith” or one religion (Eph. 4:4-5). It is the Gospel of Christ outlined in the New Testament. If what you believe is not in harmony with what the N.T. teaches, your faith is vain – useless as far as binding you back to God (Mt. 7:21-23).

But you ask, “Why do I feel so good in what I believe?” Our feelings are based upon what we believe to be true. Our knowledge may be faulty, but if we believe it to be true, we will feel good. We react happily or adversely, by what we believe. Paul said, “I have lived in all god conscience before God until this day” (Acts 23:1). Yet, he had persecuted and killed Christians. How was it possible for him to have a good conscience while doing wrong? He said, “I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.” He acted on what he thought was right. He later wrote, “I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief” (1 Tim. 1:13; see John 16:2; Prov. 16:25).

But you ask, “How can I know I am a Christian?” Paul wrote, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom. 8:16). The Spirit has revealed in the Gospel what we are to do to become a Christian: HEAR – Rom. 10:17; BELIEVE – John 8:24; REPENT – Lk. 13:3, Acts 2:38 & 17:30; CONFESS – Rom. 10:9-10, Acts 8:37; BE BAPTIZED – Acts 2:38, 22:16. If you have done this, the Spirit is united with your spirit that you are a Christian.

Our feeling good and being satisfied are based upon our knowledge of and obedience to truth (Acts 8:26-39). Feeling good is not proof of our salvation but a result of it!

Insuring Success in Life

By Garreth L. Clair

One of the longings of a person early in life is a longing to succeed in life. This suggests that man knows early that there is a possible failure and a possible successful way of life. The person soon realizes that there are many possibilities in life (i.e. many directions to travel). A person may conclude that they would like to finish high school, college, and get a good job in a career that they have trained for. These are normal and expected thoughts and hopes for any person in life. Yet, there is an area of thought in the mind of many people today that lies dormant far too long as they seek success in education, marriage, career, and other areas to the total neglect of their spiritual life.

Indeed, every person wants to succeed in life and fulfill their secular goals and hopes. This is not evil or somehow foolish but possibly the dreams of almost everyone. The person that pursues their hopes in life without a consideration of spiritual things are short changing themselves and depriving themselves of a dimension of life that outlasts and is more fulfilling than acquiring all other goals. There is a Bible reference of a man that acquired great wealth in secular pursuits (i.e. farming), yet neglected his most precious possession (i.e. his eternal soul); please note the Biblical reference following --- Luke 12:15-20.

“And he said unto them, take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?” (KJV)

Friends and brethren, may we choose well our pursuits in life and make sure that we do not neglect or forget that God is watching us (1 Peter 3:10-15): *“For he that will*

love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (KJV).

Who Killed Jesus

By Jon W. Quinn

Occasionally, in the media, there will be a story about Jesus. It may be in the newspaper, a national magazine, or on television. Experts will be interviewed about what they have concluded about Jesus. Experts do not agree at all on things about Jesus!

Sometimes, there will be a painting of Jesus. We all have seen the typical ways in which He has been represented by artists who have never seen Him. There have recently been several articles about how He probably did not look much like the typical painting of Him. I have to agree with that. But what Jesus looked like is meaningless. It makes no difference at all. The important thing about Jesus is who He is and what He has done for us!

One older news magazine (April 24th, 2000 issue of *U.S. News & World Report*) has a cover article concerning Jesus. The caption on the cover reads, "Why Jesus Was Killed" and underneath in smaller letters: "Scholars find new clues about the Crucifixion".

The article accurately records a wide variety of thoughts on the matter of Jesus' death, from the most liberal, modernistic extreme to the Islamic perspective. So many concepts. So much speculation. Finally, there are some, but too few, more or less accurate Scriptural viewpoints.

There is discussed the role of the Jews in the crucifixion. Some, in the effort to be "politically correct" deny the Bible record is correct on this. They deny any involvement of Jews at all. It was all the Romans, they say. But others have referred to Jews as "Christ killers" and persecuted them. What is the truth?

Neither one of these positions is righteous and true. Faith in Jesus demands that we not follow either extreme. Add to that the fact that Jesus also teaches that there is no justification for hating anyone. We are to love our neighbors whether they be Jew or Gentile. And loving others includes not just the way we feel about them, but how we treat them.

As a matter of fact, Jews were involved. Their leaders sent soldiers to arrest Jesus. They tried Him before the Jewish High Priest Caiaphas and declared Him worthy of

death. They handed Him over to Pilate. They charged Him. They cried out, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Those things happened just as the ancient prophets of Israel and Judah had said they would centuries before (Isaiah 53, for example). Then, under the Roman governor's direction, the Roman soldiers carried out the deed. And as all this was being done, Jesus cried out in prayer, *"Father, forgive them! They do not know what they do!"*

But Jesus was also a Jew. So were Matthew, Mark and John, three of the four gospel writers. The people who mourned along the road to Calvary as the crucifixion squad led Jesus to that awful place were Jews. Paul, who wrote more of the New Testament books than anyone else was a Jew. Mary, Martha and Lazarus were Jews. All the apostles were Jews. Following the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the first three thousand converts were Jews. It would be another five years or so before the first non-Jews would obey the gospel of Christ. The first person to die for his faith in Jesus, Stephen, was a Jew.

As Jesus told the woman of Samaria at the well, *"You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews."* (John 4:22). The gospel was a gospel for the Jews before it became a gospel for the Gentiles. Paul wrote, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."* (Romans 1:16).

This might offend the politically correct on one side as well as haters of Jewish people on the other. Many find Jesus of Nazareth offensive, but He is the hope of the world, to both Jew and Gentile. To hate and mistreat any person using the event of the crucifixion as a pretext is evil and contrary to Jesus' own words. Jesus is Lord.

"For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise" (Galatians 3:27-29).

