

PLAYING CHURCH

Everybody wants the church to grow. The past few years there have been numerous church growth seminars and book on this subject. However, the church in many places is not growing. But this concern should not prompt us to employ techniques that are at best questionable or totally without Bible authority. There is a line that must be drawn between that which is expedient and that which is foolish. There must be a line drawn between that which is authorized by Scripture and that which is not.

Someone has said with regard to church growth: "What we do to draw them in will be that which we must do to keep them." Thus, those drawn by manipulation must be held by manipulation. Some in the religious world have used musical concerts and all forms of entertainment to attract people and they are trapped. They must continue all sorts of entertainment in order to keep that crowd.

The same could apply to the Lord's church. If we constantly must have "fellowship meals," chartered bus trips, softball games, and are forever trying to please the fun and thrill seekers, spirituality will take a backseat.

In 2 Timothy, there were some who seemed to love pleasure more than they loved God (3:4). Do we love God more than pleasure? There is the possibility that entertainment could be so dominant in a person's life that they could replace the dedication and allegiance one should have for God.

Moreover, the most noble of benevolent service cannot be depended upon to grow a church. When we try to use benevolence as a manipulative tool to attract folks to the church, we will soon find ourselves holding an empty bag. When the "loaves and fishes" play out, the crowd moves on. In some places the membership list is padded with names of people who never attend. They were converted with the "fun and games syndrome" which they conceived to be the doctrine of Christ. A constant appeal to games and the sensationalism will not bring one to the Christ who purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

To be sure, we will be loved and respected for our benevolent deeds, but that is not the priority in drawing others to Christ, Furthermore, we ought to practice Christian fellowship, and there is a time for "having fun," but Jesus preached and Jesus lived -- that is the drawing power of the church.

We should be very careful about pulling people into the church by means other than how God has directed. The Gospel is the power to save. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). We need to be sure we are converting people to the Lord Jesus, and that the Gospel is what draws them and keeps them.

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New Albany, MS

BELVEDERE BEACON

"Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14)

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DEDICATION

Talk about dedication! There is an event that many people know about and some also participate in. This event is a yearly event, evidently taking place no matter the weather. Today was the running of the Boston Marathon. The running of this Marathon requires a lot of dedication, even in the best of conditions. However, today running was not in the best of conditions. According to a page that I read, today's weather was rainy, raining for at least half of the race. Also, with a Nor'easter happening, winds were gusting more than 25 mph. The temperature was in the high 40s. No, today's running did not take place in the best of conditions. Yet, there was the running. A man by the name of Robert Cheruiyot won the race. This person is not unacquainted with winning; he has won it before. He ran the race in "normal" running attire. Talk about dedication! Talk about dedication spiritually! Of course, our greatest example is Jesus. Jesus came for His hour. John, the apostle, wrote, "Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come" (John 7:30). Also, "These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come" (John 8:20). Continuing, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour" (John 12:27). Closer to Jesus' hour, John wrote, "Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). When Jesus prayed to His Father, John wrote, "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee" (John 17:1). Talk about dedication! Jesus knew why He came, and though He prayed three times to the Father, that that "cup" might pass, Jesus said, "...Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39b).

Space could be used to write about the dedication of John Baptist or James. One could write about the dedication of Stephen as he went against the "stiffnecked and uncircumcised" of his day. Another person that we could write about that was dedicated would be the apostle Paul. In the face of constant persecution, Paul remained faithful. We could avail ourselves of what James encouraged his readers to do. James wrote, "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience" (James 5:10). We are following Paul's lead in our "Thought for Today." He lacked "time" to write of many that were dedicated. The text reads, "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets" (Hebrews 11:32). Talk about dedication! There are people that are dedicated, dedicated in the face of different obstacles. One would have to say that Robert is dedicated to running. Even in the face of difficult weather conditions, he ran the marathon. Spiritually, there are many examples of individuals that were dedicated to God, remaining faithful no matter the trial, even in the face of death. Beloved, now a question for all of us. Are we dedicated? Are we really dedicated? Let us look at Jesus, let us look at all the examples, given in God's word, and ask ourselves that question. Beloved, talk about dedication!

Beloved, listen to all of God's word, God will do thee good!

Thought For Today, 04/16/2007, Jimmie Z. Gribble, Portsmouth, VA

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 10.00 am.
Morning Worship 11.00 am.
Evening Worship 6.00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 7.00 p.m.

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KEN'S KORNER

TRAGEDY AT VIRGINIA TECH

All I am sure have heard of the tragedy that occurred at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia this week when a deranged gunman killed some 31 people and injured a number of others before using the gun to kill himself. This was brought close to home in the local area when a bright young man from the Augusta area was one of the first to lose their lives when he went

to the aid of the young lady in the dorm as the resident assistant. Our prayers are with those who have lost their lives. Many questions continue to be raised regarding such things as security, gun control etc. but I do not intend to get into these here.

Another story of heroism that comes out of these tragic events is that of the professor who held back the door to stop the gunman entering while students were exiting through windows only to be shot and killed himself. He had survived the Holocaust as a young child only to be gunned down in old age by this deranged killer. He sacrificed his life to save others. While there is no way a full comparison can be drawn, but we know that our Savior sacrificed His life for others. He died on Calvary's cross to save those who would respond in obedience to the Gospel from their sins that they might have eternal life.

Another thing that has been seen is the outpouring of concern from around the world but none more clearly seen than in the local area concerning the young man who was killed. A fund was immediately set up to help the family with funeral expenses. Also, since he was a member of the marching band, about one hundred of his fellow band members had planned to come to Augusta to be their for memorial services this weekend. When word was received in Augusta, local businesses and others made it possible for motel rooms to be found, at no cost and area restaurants committed to provide meals for these young people who desired to honor their fallen comrade. Such concern by the marching band members and local business and individuals is commendable.

However, in the midst of this, there was another response that came from a supposed "Christian Church." The Westover Baptist Church of Topeka, Kansas under the direction of its "pastor" was planning to picket the funeral here in Augusta and indeed all of the other funerals of the victims of this shooting. This, however, is nothing new for this group that has a reputation for picketing the funerals of men and women in the military who had lost their lives in the fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq. What stirs this group to do this is their disgust at the direction in which this nation is heading, with which we can agree. They see the acceptance of the homosexual agenda by many as an indication of the moral degradation in this country. With this also, we agree. However, the method that they chose to put forth their message and the content of their message is that which we find disturbing and contrary to the "Christian" faith they claim to espouse. They chose to parade with signs and protest at funerals of those who have given their lives in the fight against terrorism and now they were intent on doing the same at the funerals of the victims of the tragedy in Virginia. Their message is a message filled with hate, not simply for the abominable homosexual lifestyle but hate against not only against those involved with that lifestyle but with all they think that are condoning it any way. It shows forth that their "brand" of "Christianity" is not one of love but one of hate. Jesus hated sin but loved the sinner, that's why he came into the world to "seek and save the lost." He set the example that we should follow with respect to our attitude towards sin. He spoke out vehemently against sin, of all kinds, but he showed love to those who were enmeshed in sin as he sought to bring about their repentance. However, the web site of this particular group is filled with hatred, not just for the homosexual lifestyle but for any that they conceive as promoting in anyway this sinful lifestyle - such as those who serve in the nation's military because the military has its "don't ask, don't tell" policy. Fortunately, a radio talk show host, when he heard of their plans offered his radio program for one day in exchange for their not picketing the funerals. They have agreed to this and this will not inflict their venom on the grieving families.

May we always remember that while we are to speak out against sin and show that God hates sin, we must also show that God loves the sinner and desires their repentance (II Peter 3:9). We, too, should show the same attitude in our response to sin and the sinner.

Ken Chumbley

NEWS AND NOTES

Helen Culpepper is still unable to be out. Keep her in your prayers, as well as Les as he continues to take care of her. Also keep in your prayers Pam Gossett's mother, Kathy Treadway's mother and Bronwen Gibson's mother (Lavonne McClish) who has health problems.

Ron Wilson was not well Wednesday night and unable to be out.

Jim and Bronwen Gibson had started out to come for the Wednesday evening Bible Study but had brake problems and were unable to make it.

We will be having a potluck following the morning worship service on April 29. Plan to stay and eat together.

Use The Tide

An old gentleman states that when he was a small boy, he lived on the coast. One morning after a great storm he saw an old ship stranded. The storm had blown her in, and she was badly damaged and deserted by her crew. He said that often, when the tide would come in strongly and surround the old ship, she would almost be loosed from her moorings and go out. He stated that often he would go and stand by her and hope she would go out. He would say, "Go out, old ship; go out with the tide." But she never did. Finally, one morning after a severe storm he went down to look at the old ship, but the storm had blown her to pieces. Only the floating pieces of the old wreck were to be seen. She had many an opportunity, but she never went out.

How like many a backslider! The tide of opportunity to repent has risen for many and it is hoped they would go out from their sinful ways, but they settled back and never went out. Friends, if we are not living as we should we had better take advantage of the opportunity to repent while the tide is in. Jesus said, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). Remember: "I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold now *is* the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). Friends, now is the only time we are guaranteed it -- for the tide may soon be out. Think About It!

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via Beacon*

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