

If You've Never Been Called A Fanatic...

Webster defines the word "fanatic": "A person affected by excessive enthusiasm." Its definition indicates that it is a relative term, dependent upon one's judgment as to what is a proper degree of enthusiasm in contrast with what is excessive enthusiasm. Anyone who has any knowledge at all of the world and its standards knows that to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," and to "love the Lord with all one's heart, soul, and mind," and to "present one's body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" is to be in the eyes of the world a fanatic. But before becoming too concerned, one should realize that every Bible character whom he admires -- Paul, Peter, Eunice, Hannah, Jesus -- would be looked upon by the world as a fanatic were he or she living today. While on the other hand, the world would smile approvingly on those of whom the Lord said, "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I would spue thee out of my mouth."

If you've never been called a fanatic, you might need to reconsider your spiritual condition before God!

- by Bill Hall

Think about this . . .

A girl once came to a gospel preacher for advice in her contemplated marriage to a boy who was not a Christian. The preacher asked the girl to step on a chair . . . then onto a desk. He said, "Now pull me up to where you are." She tried with all her strength, and failed. The preacher then gave a slight pull, pulling her easily to the floor. He then said, "It is more probable that this boy will pull you down to his level than it is that you will pull him up to yours." The illustration was effective. The girl did not marry the boy until he became a true Christian.

- by Harry Lewis

Does He Mean This Much to You?

Some people never grow too old, or too tired; nor do they live too far from the meeting house to be present for every service. The weather never gets too hot, or too cold, as long as travel is possible. It is never too dry, never too wet, but that some people make arrangements to be at worship.

Do you think it is strange that people should act that way? Not at all. They attend services because of their relation to Christ. To them He is more than life or death, joys or sorrows; more than earthly comfort, entertainment or earthly gain. Christ is their all in all.

Such people do not have to tell their neighbors how much they love the Lord. Everyone knows that they do by the way they live. The apostle Paul said, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Phil. 1:21) "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ lives in me, and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of Him who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Gal. 2:20)

-via Old Paths II, Jamestown, IN

32,850 Sermons Later

Several years ago a reader of The British Weekly wrote this provocative letter to the editor:

"Dear Sir:

It seems ministers feel their sermons are very important and spend a great deal of time preparing them. I have been attending a church service quite regularly for the past 30 years and I have probably heard 3,000 of them. To my consternation, I discovered that I cannot remember a single sermon. I wonder if a minister's time might be more profitably spent on something else?"

For weeks a real storm of editorial responses ensued. The uproar finally was ended by this letter:

"Dear Sir:

I have been married for 30 years. During that time I have eaten 32,850 meals - mostly of my wife's cooking. Suddenly, I have discovered that I cannot remember the menu of a single meal. And yet, I received nourishment from every single one of them. I have the distinct impression that without them, I would have starved to death long ago."

- *selected*

The Value of Sunday Evening Worship

In recent years, a growing number of congregations have quietly discontinued their Sunday evening worship services. Sometimes the decision is explained as a matter of practicality. At other times it is described as an effort to "meet people where they are." And sometimes the service simply disappears without much explanation at all. Regardless of the reasoning, the result is the same—and it is becoming increasingly noticeable. When traveling, it can now be surprisingly difficult to find a congregation assembling on Sunday evening. That reality alone ought to make us stop and think.

Why would churches choose to do this? What value is gained by eliminating an assembly that generations of faithful Christians have viewed as an important part of the Lord's Day? If there is no spiritual cost, then perhaps the question answers itself. But if there *is* loss—real and measurable loss—then honesty requires us to acknowledge it.

At a minimum, when a congregation abandons its Sunday evening service, it forfeits roughly half of its pulpit preaching. That is no small thing. Preaching is one of God's appointed means for teaching, exhorting, correcting, and strengthening His people (2 Timothy 4:2). In addition, we lose a significant opportunity to assemble together—to sing, to pray, and to encourage one another as God instructs us to do (Hebrews 10:24–25). These losses do not simply disappear because we have chosen a more convenient schedule.

It is true that no passage specifies multiple assemblies on the Lord's Day. But Scripture repeatedly emphasizes the importance of Christians coming together. The issue, then, is not one of legality, but of priority. What does our practice reveal about how we value worship, preaching, and fellowship? The Lord's Day was never meant to be something we rush through or reduce to the bare minimum.

Perhaps the better question is not, "Do we have to assemble again?" but rather, "Why wouldn't we want to?" When God's people hunger for His word and delight in being together, gathering again on the Lord's Day does not feel like a burden. It feels like a blessing.

- *by Greg Gwin*