

The Mission of the Church

It is not the mission of the church to furnish amusement for the world or even for its own members. Innocent amusement in proper proportion has its place in the lives of normal people, but it is not the business of the church to furnish it. The church would come off a poor second if it undertook to compete with institutions established for the express purpose of entertaining people. It would make itself ridiculous if it entered into such competition.

Again, it is not the responsibility of the church as such to furnish recreation for its members. A certain amount of recreation is necessary to the health and happiness of the individual. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, it is said, and rightly said; but it is not the function of the church to furnish the play. The church was not established to feature athletics.

Rather it emphasizes the principle that "bodily exercise is profitable for a little; but godliness is profitable for all things; having promise of the life which now is and of that which is to come." 1 Timothy 4:8. Sometimes one would conclude, from the emphasis given to recreation, that godliness is profitable for a little, and that bodily exercise is profitable for all things.

For the church to turn aside from its divine work to furnish amusement and recreation is to pervert its mission. It is to degrade its mission. Amusement and recreation should stem from the home rather than the church. The church, like Nehemiah, has a great work to do; and it should not come down on the plains of Ono to amuse and entertain.

As the church turns its attention to amusement and recreation, it will be shorn of its power as Samson was when his hair was cut. Only as the church becomes worldly, as it pillows its head on the lap of Delilah, will it want to turn from its wonted course to relatively unimportant matters.

- by **B. C. Goodpasture**, *Gospel Advocate*, 1948

Again, I say to you, with caution and thought, that it is not the work of the church to furnish entertainment for the members. And yet many churches have drifted into such an effort. They enlarge their basements, put in all kinds of gymnastic apparatus, and make every sort of an appeal to the young people of the congregation. I have never read anything in the Bible that indicated to me that such was a part of the work of the church. I am wholly ignorant of any Scripture that even points in that direction."

- by **N. B. Hardeman**, *Tabernacle Sermons*, Vol. 50

An Anecdote from "Raccoon" John Smith

In passing a Methodist camp meeting one day in September, John Smith stopped to watch a young Methodist preacher baptize a howling, rebellious infant by sprinkling water on the squirming body. When the service was concluded, Smith stepped to the front of the crowd and, identifying himself, took the preacher firmly by the arm and attempted to lead him toward the creek a few yards away.

"What are you trying to do, Brother Smith?" the young preacher protested. "Are you out of your mind?"

"What am I trying to do?" (Smith pretended deep surprise.) "Why, sir, I am going to baptize you by immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to his commandment."

"But I have no desire for such baptism. I know of you; you are called 'The Dipper'. But you are not going to dip me. I'm a Methodist; let me go!"

Smith tightened his hold on the man's arm while the crowd watched, some in apprehension, others in amusement. "That is a scoffer's blasphemy of a holy ordinance," John said sternly. "Are you a believer?"

"Of course I'm a believer," the preacher said indignantly. "But I'm not willing to be immersed. It would do no good for you to baptize me against my will. It would be wrong!"

"I don't understand," Smith said. "Only a few minutes ago you baptized a helpless baby against its will, although it screamed and kicked. Did you get its consent first? Come along, sir, we will have no more of this foolishness."

The crowd broke into open laughter, and Smith gave the young preacher a quick pull toward the creek, and then as suddenly released him.

- by *Louis Cochran*

When You Leave This Local Church

We are aware of your plans to leave this local church. What's that you say? You didn't know that you had such plans? Yes, in fact, such plans are in place - FOR ALL OF US!!!

There are several ways it might happen. You might decide to move to some other location. Or, you could elect to become a member of some other area congregation. Or, although we pray that it would never happen, you might become unfaithful and fall away. If none of those scenarios develops, you WILL leave this church at the time of your death. Do you see what we mean? Every one of us, at some point, will be leaving this congregation.

So then, the question is not 'if', rather it is 'when?' And 'when' you leave, we wonder how folks will react to your departure. There are three possibilities:

1. Sadness: When good, faithful, active, involved, dedicated members leave our midst we are truly sad to see them go. This congregation depends on members of this sort. They are the ones who step up to teach classes, call on the sick, encourage the weak, enthusiastically support the programs of work, and generally do all they can to see to it that the church here succeeds. They constitute the real 'backbone' of the congregation. When we lose such people there is a sort of 'void' that is left behind. Usually it takes a good while to get over their departure. We really miss them.

2. Their leaving is hardly noticed: Unfortunately there are some folks that never really get involved in the local church. Oh, yes, they may attend with some regularity, but they seldom do anything more than that. Don't expect these people to get involved in anything that requires 'extra' effort - they simply won't do it. Sadly, when they leave the church, their absence is barely noticed by other members.

3. A sense of relief - almost happiness: It is truly a horrible reality, but in most churches there are members who do nothing but complain and criticize. They don't do anything themselves, but they are always looking to disparage what others are doing (Matt. 7:1-5). They are constantly 'tearing down' rather than 'building up' their fellow Christians. When they are gone, we almost breathe a sigh of relief. How sad!

So, YOU are ultimately going to leave this church. How will your brethren react to your leaving? THINK!

- by *Greg Gwin*