

Shrewd Sons

Jesus once lamented that the sons of this age are shrewder in relation to their own generation than the sons of light (Luke 16:8). In other words, people of the world have more initiative toward worldly things than Christians do toward heavenly things.

Consider a man who wants to catch fish. He does not expect fish to swim up to his door and invite themselves in. He is realistic. He'll buy ample equipment: a rod and reel (likely several), hooks, a net, a bait bucket, a stringer, all sorts of tackle and a deluxe box to keep it in, a hook remover, a cleaning knife, and anything else he thinks might be useful. He will probably borrow some money and buy a boat. He'll read books on fishing, watch those fishing shows on TV, and might even go to fishing college (yes, there is such a thing). He'll start keeping track of the tides. He'll talk to other fishermen about the best spots to go.

Do you suppose he will give it all up the first time he comes home empty-handed? No way — he'll just go out earlier the next time! No matter how busy a fisherman is, there is always time for fishing. He will ask his buddies to go with him. And when he snags a big one will he keep it a secret? You know better.

There are Christians who say they want to learn more of God's word. To accomplish this worthwhile goal they devote a whole thirty minutes per week listening to a preacher! Why don't they get up an hour earlier or set aside Wednesday evening for Bible Study? Evidently they don't see much value in that. And when these same folks have no money for books, periodicals, and other study aids, and no time for daily reading, it is little wonder that the fish aren't biting.

Are you having trouble with a certain temptation? Get help. Talk to others. Talk to God. Read His prescription. Stay away from circumstances where that urge is the greatest. You don't have to worry about saltwater fish in a freshwater lake.

Want to convert your neighbor? Set a good example. Ask him to come to church with you. Ask him to study with you. You might begin by asking him to tell you about his beliefs. Give him some literature or subscribe to a good magazine for him. You won't catch a thing unless you throw your hook in.

Here is a young brother who thinks he might want to serve as an elder some day. What should he do? Objectively analyze his character and work on deficiencies. Learn well the word so he can hold it faithfully. Listen to older brethren that his judgment may mature. Develop his skills as a teacher by watching, listening, and doing. Pay close attention to his family. Be hospitable. Work with people. Be careful to protect his reputation. Pray. When the time comes to cast, he'll be ready.

Heavenly goals merit thought, careful planning, enthusiasm, hard work, and whatever sacrifice of time and money is required. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12).

- by Frank Himmel

Possible or Impossible?

Can an accountable person who so desires become just a Christian? And can a group of such people constitute a congregation (such as those we read about in the New Testament) that is non-denominational and that belongs to Christ? The religious world in general says that it is impossible; we say that it is possible. Christians in the first century were neither Catholics nor Protestants. All of the Lord's churches were non-denominational and neither Catholic nor Protestant. Our plea is for people to lay aside human names and designations, human creeds and doctrines, human organizations and systems, and become only Christians, and constitute only churches of the Lord.

Can any accountable person, as a result of his own sincere desire and effort, understand the Bible so that he can know what it teaches and so that he can see clearly what it is that God wants him to know, to believe, to do and to be? The religious world in general says that this is impossible; we say that it is both possible and necessary. We know that God is unlimited in power, wisdom and knowledge; that He is capable of giving a revelation that can be understood by men; and that He certainly wants men to understand this revelation of His will. To maintain that

people cannot understand the Bible, or that they cannot “understand it alike,” is more of a reflection upon God and His Book than it is upon men.

- by **Bill Crews**

Blessings & Reverses

Every person has many blessings and at least a few misfortunes. The ones he reflects upon will either strengthen or weaken him.

Our most necessary blessings are apt to be uncounted, because they are the most common: sunshine, rain, oxygen, soil, plants, animals, and a thousand other workings of nature.

The universality of so many blessings, however, does not lower their value. If this commonness tempts us to be ungrateful, let us ask: Where would we stand if the earth caved in? What would we breathe if the oxygen ran out? What would we do if the water dried up?

- by **Leroy Brownlow**

Attendance

Attendance at worship services and Bible study times has always been a problem. Faithful brethren have constantly agonized over those who didn't attend. It has been that way in every generation, including among the very first Christians. The Hebrew writer was compelled to pen these famous words:

“Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Notice the reasons why you should attend every scheduled service:

1) IT' S A COMMAND: The NASV says: “not forsaking our own assembling together”. This ought to be reason enough, but the Lord has provided plenty of additional motivation ...

2) YOU NEED THIS: If you've been thinking that worship is something that God needs - FORGET IT! Worship is for us, not Him. The passages says that the assembly allows an opportunity to be “exhorting (encouraging) one another”. Brother, you need this, and you miss out on it when you are not here.

3) OTHERS NEED YOU: As a member of the Lord's body, you are in a ‘give and take’ situation. Too many apparently feel that it is all ‘take’ - they never ‘give’. But we are commanded to “consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds” (NASV). The worship services provide an excellent opportunity for doing that very thing. You can't encourage your brothers and sisters by your absence. On the other hand, brethren are seriously discouraged by low attendance.

Those who neglect the assemblies dishonor God, miss out on a great spiritual blessing, and violate the rule of brotherly love and concern. Think!

- by **Greg Gwin**