

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

"Make No Provision For The Flesh"

How do we win the fight against fleshly lusts? Several answers come to mind. Pray. Fill your heart with God's word. Fill your time with spiritually beneficial activities. Associate with people who will influence you for good. In Romans 13:14 Paul identifies another key: "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts."

To make provision for something is to think ahead, to make plans, to provide opportunities. Paul's word literally means forethought. Its other occurrence is in Acts 24:2, where the lawyer Tertullus praised Felix, the governor, because through his "providence" beneficial reforms were occurring throughout the land.

Obviously, making no provision for the flesh requires that we not plan ways of fulfilling illegitimate carnal lusts. But it goes beyond that. It requires that we think ahead and, when possible, avoid even the opportunity for such conduct. Here is the principle in action.

Teens, when you are planning a date, make no provision for fleshly lusts. Do not go to movies that glorify sensuality and fornication, and thereby arouse desire. Stay away from dances for the same reason. Be selective about parties; skip those where alcohol is featured. Avoid dark, lonely sites that provide the occasion for unchaste behavior.

Parents, when arranging your homes, make no provision for fleshly lusts. It may make me unpopular in some circles to say so, but when you allow your kids to have televisions, phones, and internet-connected computers in their bedrooms, you are providing a world of possibilities for wrong conduct.

Families, when you are purchasing in-home entertainment, make no provision for fleshly lusts. If you don't subscribe to cable or satellite channels which air nudity and "adult" content, there will be no opportunity for any family member to watch it. If you refuse to listen to profanity, you will be much less likely to speak it.

Shoppers, when you are choosing your clothes, make no provision for fleshly lusts. Plenty of modest choices exist for those concerned about such things. Err on the side of caution. Don't underestimate the appeal of exposed or accentuated flesh.

Brethren, when you place membership at a congregation, make no provision for fleshly lusts. Realize up front that you won't always get your way, that others may be more talented than you, that we are all working together for the same cause. Remind yourself of that often and give thanks for your brethren.

If you want to know what this last point is doing here, read Paul's illustrations of fleshly conduct in Romans 13:13. Let's not deceive ourselves into thinking that strife, jealousy, and bickering are any less carnal or any less sinful than drunkenness or fornication. No matter the sin, make no provision for fleshly lusts.

- by **Frank Himmel**

Day by Day

Most of what we do in service to the Lord will be worked out as individual disciples in the pursuits of daily life where we meet our obligations to our families (Ephesians 5:22–6:4), to our employers (6:6–9), to the officials of government (1 Peter 2:13–17), to our enemies (Matthew 5:43–48; Romans 12:17–21), to the poor (Ephesians 4:28; James 1:27) and especially to lost men and women (Matthew 28:19–20; Acts 8:4). All this will be liberally sprinkled with private prayer (Philippians 4:6–7) and Bible study (Colossians 3:16), and even a spiritual song now and then (James 5:13).

- by **Paul Earnhart**

'Essential' Church Members

In every healthy congregation you will find certain people that comprise the essential "heart and soul" of the church. Note . . .

-- They are always present at the assemblies. They make it a point to never miss any of the services. If it is necessary to make changes, adjust schedules, suffer inconvenience or simply miss out on other activities, they will do so because they are committed to being present every time the doors are open.

-- These folks actually look for opportunities to serve. If there is work to be done, Bible classes to be taught, weak members to be encouraged, sick folks to be visited, menial chores to be fulfilled, they will step up and get the job done. They are not waiting to be told what to do. Instead they are searching for more and more that can be accomplished.

-- In matters of personal purity and morality, these people are setting a worthy example. They don't look for "loopholes" to justify untoward behavior. Rather they "go the extra mile" to make sure that there is not even an "appearance of evil" (1 Thess. 5:22). In the clothes they wear, the language they use, the places they go, the movies and TV they watch, these brethren are determined to do the right thing.

-- Most surveys indicate that 80% of what is contributed in any church comes from about 20% of the membership. The kind of people we're describing here are among that 20%. They are truly sacrificial in their giving.

-- When conflicts arise in the church, these people can be counted on to help make resolution. They are not the sort to get their feelings hurt easily. Instead, they work hard to address situations that -- unheeded -- could lead to serious division. They stand firmly and without compromise for the truth, they love their brethren, and they care about the church.

More could be said, but the picture is pretty clear. Local churches depend on these members. In fact, without them a congregation will never prosper. Now, the simple question is: Are you one of these "essential" church members? Think!

- by **Greg Gwin**