

Being An Enabler

In the field of civil law, there are sometimes people who "aid and abet" criminals, and there are also those who "contribute to the delinquency of a minor." To do either of these is against the law, and those who do it become criminals themselves. In the field of psychology, there are sometimes people who are identified as "enablers," because they enable others (often their own loved ones) to be involved in addictive behavior. "Enablers" are not necessarily people who would themselves participate in the addictive conduct; they may actually even oppose it. But by their actions they make it easy for the addict to continue in his addiction.

In spiritual matters, we also unfortunately have people who "aid and abet" evildoers, or who "contribute to the delinquency" of sinners, or who become "enablers" of those who are doing wrong! Now, you might be thinking of those who practice deeds that are "worthy of death," while also giving "heartily approval" to those who practice "such things" (Romans 1:32). But these are not the "enablers" we are talking about. The "enablers" we are talking about would not practice the sins that they "aid and abet." In fact, they would oppose and carefully avoid such practices in their own lives. And yet, they enable others (especially when the "others" are their own family or loved ones) to practice sinful behavior.

How does that happen? In what way do they "aid and abet" evildoers or "enable" those who are given to sin?

Often, it is done by downplaying the person's sin or by even offering excuses for the "poor helpless sinner." More often than not, they enable sinners by their silence. Instead of lovingly confronting the sinner (Matt. 18:15) and exposing his crime (Eph. 5:11), they ignore the sin and pretend it isn't really happening. Even worse, they hamper the local church's efforts to correct the sinner by continuing to socialize and associate with the one who has been collectively disciplined by the group (1 Cor. 5:1-13). When will we learn that this does not help the sinner to correct his ways? It only enables him to continue in his evil deeds!

Don't you dare be an "enabler" of sin! Don't you dare "contribute to the delinquency" of one who is caught up in a trespass or "aid and abet" a sinner in the error of his way! Instead, be an encourager and "enabler" of that which is good, even if it means you must confront and oppose someone you love. If you really love someone in sin, you will not enable him to continue in the error of his way; you will, instead, do whatever you can to turn him back to God...to "save his soul from death" and to "cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:19-20).

- by Rick Liggin

"It Was Donated By Individuals"

The New Testament does not authorize sharing common meals as part of a local church's collective function. To the contrary, 1 Corinthians 11:22 and 34 clearly assign that to the home, not the church. Additionally, Acts 2:46 illustrates that taking meals together was a "house to house" activity for first century Christians. If eating such meals is not part of our collective work, it is obvious that a church providing facilities in which to eat is equally unauthorized. Renaming such facilities "fellowship halls" or "family life centers" instead of kitchens and dining halls changes nothing!

Many brethren who have these facilities and activities feel little need to justify them Biblically. Along with a host of other things unknown in the New Testament, they are swept in by the broom of attracting more people, good works, etc. Others, a bit more cautious about the necessity of Bible authority, offer various rationales. One I have heard of several times lately is this: the kitchen equipment was donated by individuals, not paid for from the church's treasury.

This reminds me of an incident a number of years ago. A deacon and I went to see a woman who had visited our services. She was struck by the fact that we did not have instrumental music, assumed it was because we could not afford it, and offered to buy us a piano! We declined, of course, explaining the Biblical principles involved. But what if she had donated a piano? Would it have been okay to use it because it was not paid for out of the church's treasury?

What is the practical difference between someone giving cash on a Sunday and the church going and buying a stove with it vs. that individual buying the stove and donating it to the church? Either way it is the church's stove, to be used in its facility, in an activity advertised under its

name, with the approval of its leaders, for the enjoyment of its members — an activity that is just as unauthorized as ever!

If several of our young mothers installed some playground equipment at the building, took turns watching each others' children here all day, put a notice about it on the bulletin board, and invited others to drop off their kids as well, would anyone honestly try to say the church was not in the day care business simply because the equipment was not paid for out of the church's treasury?

The hollowness of this rationalization ought to be self-evident. Such arguments would never be made if we would be content to live by Bible authority.

- by Frank Himmel

Earthquakes

We often hear predictions of an impending major earthquake along the New Madrid Fault not far from here. These predictions generally produce great concern from Memphis to St. Louis. While experts have generally refuted the possibility of accurately predicting such things, the public, nonetheless, remains quite concerned.

Religious prognosticators seem to delight in warning us that any upsurge of seismic activity is a forerunner of the return of Christ, as indicated in Matthew 24:7,8. Are their conclusions accurate?

Interestingly, scientific data concerning earthquake activity indicates that, contrary to popular opinion, the number and intensity of earthquakes has remained steady or slightly declined in recent years. The illusion of greater frequency and intensity has been produced by better detection (more seismographs with greater sensitivity) and increased news coverage.

Does earthquake activity provide a means to predict the imminent return of Christ? **NO!** In Matthew 24, Jesus had prophesied about the destruction of Jerusalem (vs. 1,2). The disciples asked, "When shall these things be?" (vs. 3). Jesus proceeded to mention certain "signs" that would signal the event, including earthquakes (vs. 7,8). Concerning these signs, he said: "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (vs. 34).

Therefore, even if there would be an uptick in earthquake activity, it would have nothing to do with the Lord's return or final judgment. The timing of those events cannot be predicted.

- by Greg Gwin