

Who Cares?

Did you ever think about who turns out the lights and locks the doors at the church building? It may seem a small thing, but it could create some problems if no one did it. The point is, someone accepts the responsibility that most members give very little thought to. The same could be said of cleaning and maintaining the building, parking lot, lawn, etc. Usually, some few willing souls will volunteer their services — and most others are perfectly willing to let them. Many Christians simply do not relate themselves to such work, and worse, may not appreciate those who do. But, in the absence of paid janitors and yardmen, why is any one member any more or less responsible than any other? What if no members cared about the appearance of a dirty building, or a weed-filled lawn or broken windows? Such neglect would soon become embarrassingly apparent.

On the other hand, other and more serious neglect is not so apparent. Take, for instance, the erring brother. Whose responsibility is he? Who cares? Must he finally embarrass the church like an unpainted door or a broken window to merit attention? God says, "Ye which are spiritual" should restore such a one (Gal. 6:1). As none will admit to not being spiritual, that makes the erring member the business of every member! When Christians are motivated by genuine love and concern for each other; when they have the same care one for another (1 Cor. 12:25); and when each looks to the needs of others (Phil. 2:4), little time will be wasted in trying to figure out who has to go and help "save a soul from death" (Jas. 5:20). What if no one in the whole church cared about the weak brother? It's bad when Christians don't care about unkempt meeting places; but it's far worse when they neglect the erring brother, one for whose sake Christ died.

Equally important is the responsibility every Christian has in regard to teaching the lost. The faithful are to be able to teach others (2 Tim. 2:2). All are to be ready always to give answer concerning their hope (1 Pet. 3:15). To that extent they can teach others how to gain such hope. When the early Christians were scattered abroad, they went about preaching the word (Acts 8:4). Unscattered Christians can and should do the same. Paul writes of how most of the Roman brethren were bold to speak the word of God without fear (Phil. 1:14). The world urgently needs such bold brethren speaking that same word today! But who will do it? Those who turn out the lights and lock the doors? Only those who preach from pulpits? God looks to His people — all of His people — to help others in the way of salvation. The blessings of truth and salvation are not to be hoarded, but shared — else, we risk losing them. Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Lk. 19:10). How can His followers not be interested and involved in the same work? How can they not care?

Shunned and shifted responsibility has hurt the Lord's church immeasurably. The slothful spirit of "doing-as-little-as-you- can-get-by-with" may suit the world, but it is grossly inappropriate for those who care — and those who have been blessed with God's best.

- by Dan Shipley

What Men Have Done to Hell

1. Atheists, skeptics and modernists have eradicated it by their "wonderful" powers of "reason".
2. "Christian Scientists" have attributed it to improper thinking, the figment of bad imagination, or "malicious animal magnetism".
3. Universalists have removed the need of fearing it since they teach that all will be saved anyway.
4. Unitarians and others have decided that the only real heaven or hell are encountered by men in this life by pleasant or unpleasant experiences.
5. "Jehovah's Witnesses" have reduced it to annihilation, eternal non-existence rather than eternal punishment.
6. Many Protestant denominations have taken away any concern about being lost from millions by their doctrine of "once saved, always saved".

7. Catholicism has assured millions that they will not go there because of her sacraments and rituals, and has caused many to be more concerned about an imaginary "purgatory".
8. Many have sought to remove the eternal duration and the awful torment of hell by their own concept of God's love.

But what the Bible says about hell remains true. You may read about it in: Matthew 18:8-9; 25:41,46; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; Revelation 14:10-11; 20:10, 15; 21:8.

- by Bill Crews

Did Jesus Use Carnal Methods to Attract Crowds?

Many religious groups use a variety of carnal appeals to draw people to their assemblies. For instance, there are suppers and ice cream socials, ball games and entertainment events, etc. When asked to justify these activities they will commonly refer to the episodes where Jesus fed the multitudes. Some have said, "If you first feed a man's body, then you'll have a chance to feed his soul." Let's see if their reference to Jesus' activities will really support their practices.

There were two separate instances in which Jesus miraculously fed huge crowds of people with small quantities of food. One time there were 5000 men, plus women and children (Mt. 14:15-21; Mk. 6:30-44; Lk. 9:10-17; Jn. 6:1-14). On another occasion there were 4000 men, plus women and children (Mt. 15:32-38; Mk. 8:1-9).

In both instances, the people had followed Jesus to hear His marvelous teaching and to see His amazing miracles. There had never been a promise of food to draw them. In fact, both episodes show the people following long distances and for a long time before they were offered food. For example, in Matthew 15:32 we read: "*Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.*" Do you see it? The people were not lured to follow by an offer of food. The food came *AFTERWARDS*, as an act of compassion. The people had *NOT* come in anticipation of being fed.

We have one reference where Jesus suspected that the people did, indeed, come with a desire of receiving food (Jn. 6:22ff). On that occasion He *DID NOT feed* them!

Those who would use the example of Jesus feeding the multitudes to justify their carnal practices today are simply wrong!

- by Greg Gwin