

## ***Are You Starving To Death?***

Having local churches, having assemblies, and requiring specific things to be done in those assemblies was God's idea, not man's. And God warns us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Heb. 10:25). Christians who choose not to assemble with other Christians are lacking in spiritual appetite, defying God, sinning willfully, and depriving themselves of the benefits that God intended to be derived from those assemblies. They will not grow spiritually; they cannot grow spiritually; they will begin to starve their souls until they become spiritually dead. Some are slowly dying; others have long since died. Do not let this happen to you; do not choose a course of neglect that will ultimately lead to the starvation of your precious and immortal soul. Put Christ first.

**- by Bill Crews**

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## ***Influence***

A woman asked, "How can I win my husband to Christ?" "You can't," was the surprising answer from the preacher. "You never attend worship regularly. If your husband wants to go for a drive on Sunday, you neglect the Lord and go with him. And if you don't have a way to come to church, you never call some other member to come for you. You will never win your husband unless you let him know, and all those about you, that your religion means more to you than anything else under heaven. This alone is the kind of influence that wins souls."

**- via "Great Plainness of Speech"**

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## ***"Troublers in Israel"***

"Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, "Is that you, O troubler of Israel?" And he answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord" (1 Kings 18:17). No, Elijah was no "troubler," but as in his day, there are many that trouble God's people today.

Did you ever hear a factious man confess his sin? An old priest claimed in his confessional, he had heard every sin confessed – except covetousness. I add that in my years, I never heard a troubler confess his sin - his own "besetting sin" - his contention and factiousness.

Did you ever see a factious man - a troubler quit? The church is filled with drunks who quit - fornicators who quit - homosexuals who quit - liars who quit - cheats who quit. People have quit just about every sin to serve Jesus. You can easily point to them. Who do you point to as a troubler who quit his troubling? Mostly, I think, they quit when they die!

Paul instructs: "Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned" (Tit.3:10). "Reject" seems the anticipated and fixed end to this matter - after admonishing him twice. Little or no hope is extended for restoring him. Cut your losses! Damage control! Is this one of those "impossible" to "renew them to repentance" situations? (Heb.6:4). It sounds like it! - final and scary possibility!

A troubler of Israel may not see himself as contentious or factious - brethren may not identify the scoundrel as their problem, but God does! He will surely "...repay with tribulation those who trouble you" (2 Thes.1:6). Don't dare dabble with becoming a troubler in Israel!

**- by Joe Fitch**

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## ***Is This an Active and Growing Church?***

There can be no doubt that the Lord expects every congregation of His people to be active and growing. He told all of the seven churches of Asia (Revelation 2,3) that He was aware of their activity. He began His assessment of each church with the statement, "I know thy works." We would be seriously mistaken to imagine that He does not make the same observation of all churches today.

So, we must be active and growing. But, while seeking to be so, there are some errors to avoid:

1) Don't equate increased numbers with real growth. Yes, growth usually means an increase in the physical size of the congregation, but not always. There are instances where the kind of 'growing' that God desires will actually result in lower numbers. The rapidly growing church in Jerusalem actually lost members in the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1ff). The church at Corinth was condemned because an immoral brother had not been "taken away from among you" (1 Cor. 5:2). 'Growing' sometimes means losing numbers in order to please God.

2) Do not confuse 'commotion' with beneficial, God-honoring activity. Seems some brethren think that 'keeping things stirred up' is a good thing. And so, they constantly are bringing up controversial subjects or suggesting ill-conceived plans that force an unnecessary tumult. These folks apparently have missed the analogy of the church to a flock of sheep. Just as sheep do best when kept calm, so also the church. We do not need or want unnecessary stress and turmoil in the local church.

3) Never compromise Bible authority in the name of 'doing good.' The religious world at large – and sadly, too many of our own brethren – urge us to consider 'how much good is being done' when we challenge them about their unscriptural practices. We must remember Samuel's famous rebuke to King Saul: "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15:22). Or, to put it another way, you aren't really 'doing good' if you aren't adhering to Bible authority.

4) Be careful about assuming that 'special programs' are essential in achieving growth. Too many disciples apparently think that nothing is being done if there are not specially organized efforts in behalf of this or that artificially designated group within the congregation. This is particularly evident in regards to 'programs for the young people.' However, even denominational 'church growth experts' are proclaiming that "today's modern concept of youth ministry is a 50-year failed experiment" (Christian Post, 7/28/11). Actually, this institutionalized view of activity hurts the real productivity of a congregation by causing members to sit back and wait for someone to 'organize' something, rather than using their own initiative to get God's work done.

5) Do not imagine that the church is not growing and active simply because you don't 'see' something happening. Often the most positive work done in a local congregation is done by quiet, humble servants who are simply out there caring for the sick, encouraging the weak, sharing the gospel with others, etc. They're not trying to make a big 'splash' – they're just doing their best to accomplish all they can. They are not doing their work "to be seen of men" (Matt. 6:1ff).

Active? Growing? Yes, we must be! But let's evaluate our progress as the Lord does, and not as man does. Think!

**- by Greg Gwin**