

Changing the Standard

Conductor to orchestra at the beginning of a rehearsal: *"Please get your pencils out . . . we have some marking to do on this score:*

The first two bars are in 3/4, not 4/4 as written.

Next, in the 5th bar, change it to 7/8 and this remains to the end.

Now, in bar 7 we lower the pitch 1/2 step.

In bar 13, lower the pitch one whole step and this will remain to the end.

Thank you. Now, let us begin."

Soprano soloist: *"Excuse me, Maestro. What would you like for me to change?"*

Conductor: *"Nothing, madam. Just sing it exactly as you did yesterday."*

When we vary from the standard, there are two things we can do. We can alter our lives to meet the standard, or (as in the story above) we can alter the standard and expect everyone else to meet this new flawed standard.

The spiritual application should be readily apparent. What should we do when someone is teaching that which is not according to the Word of God, our spiritual standard? Do we hold to the standard and require them to comply, or do we attempt to change the standard?

There can be no choice -- the standard cannot change. Breaking the scale won't fix our weight problem, and changing (or ignoring) God's Word won't make our sinful behavior acceptable.

- by Alan Smith

What About Church Sponsored Activities For Young People?

I do not question the fact that young people - and older folks, too - need some innocent recreation. When our children were young, I helped coach ball teams; worked as a scout leader; and took them fishing, hunting, camping, etc. My wife and I had parties, picnics, and outings for them. We did this, as parents, in meeting the needs of growing children (Lk. 2:52; Eph.6:4).

But parents cannot shove their parental responsibilities off on the church, nor can the church assume these obligations. We have individual, family obligations that are not the business of the local congregation (1 Tim.5:16).

A couple I once studied with complained that the church had nothing for their young people. I named the Bible classes that were available to them. Then they 'let the cat out of the bag' - there were no recreational activities provided by the church. When I asked what they were doing to provide recreation for their own children, they became angry.

We live in a selfish, "me first" society in which parents want to push their responsibilities to their children off on the government, the schools, and the church. It is time we refused to encourage this sinful behavior and taught parents to provide for their own (1 Tim. 5:8). At issue is the nature, mission and work of the church. It is clear that God has not designed, planned or authorized the local church to provide social and recreational activities.

- by Keith Sharp

Identifying With A Local Church

Many members of the church move into a community and never formally identify themselves with any congregation. Some are drifters, visiting here and there, but never becoming a part of the church where they attend. They just consider themselves members wherever they go. They would not do this in their work. It becomes necessary for them to actually enter the establishment where they work. They do not do this with their children in school. They go immediately and formally enroll them. In fact, we do not treat anything so lightly as we often do the church. There are a number of good reasons why we should identify ourselves when we move to a new location:

1. Every Christian should be a member of a local church. It is scriptural, and therefore,

bears God's approval (Rom. 16:1-2; 1 Cor. 16:3; Acts 9:26-28).

2. It makes it possible for the "shepherds of the flock" to tend the sheep (1 Pet. 5:2; Acts 20:28).

3. It acquaints Christians with one another and is a good environment for spiritual living.

4. It opens opportunities for service in His vineyard as members become active in the church (Matt. 25:14-30; Mark 13:34).

5. It encourages others (Heb. 10:24).

The elders are charged with spiritual well-being of members. They cannot be responsible for caring for you if you have not placed yourself under their oversight. It is important for you to identify yourself with a local congregation. If you have not taken that step, then please give it serious consideration.

- selected

Making Time

If my car is broken down, I must find time to fix it. If the house needs painting, necessity demands that time be found to do it. If the weather and all other conditions are favorable, I will find time to go fishing.

All of this simply illustrates what has been said many times before - we find time, make time, arrange our schedules, and do what's necessary so that we can accomplish certain things. We will find a way to do the things that must be done, things that need to be done, and especially things that we want to do.

Think of the implications of this concerning our spiritual service to God. Faithful attendance is a must (Hebrews 10:25); regular Bible study is a need (2 Timothy 2:15); teaching others is an absolute essential (Matthew 28:19,20). Other acts of service could be added to this list, but our point is established.

Now, if we don't do these things, what is the problem? Could it be that we don't understand the commands that God has given? No. Do we fail to see the need for learning more about Him and serving Him faithfully? No. Have we failed to observe the things that are spiritually essential? Probably not.

The answer lies in what we want to do. Sir John Lubbock, English statesman of the last century said: "In truth, people can generally make time for what they choose to do; it is not really the time but the will that is lacking."

Jesus put it this way: "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me (Matthew 15:8)

Are you putting the Lord first? Are you making time for the things that must be done and for the things that need to be done? Do you really want to do the Lords will in all things? Think!

- by Greg Gwin