

THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

July 27

2008

WHAT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE?

Two individuals attend the same congregation. The first declares the members of this congregation to be the friendliest he has ever known. The second says the members of this congregation are the coldest and most unfriendly people he has ever been around. What makes the difference? I am sure the second individual would say the members were showing partiality if they had been that friendly to the first individual, however, upon additional observation we may learn what REALLY makes the difference. We observe that the second individual always arrives just as services are about to begin (maybe even a few minutes late); he is out the door just as soon as the services are over and never speaks unless spoken to. The first individual always arrives several minutes before time for services to begin and makes it a point to greet each person as they arrive. He will remain after services to greet any visitors present and to visit with others. Could it be that these different actions on the part of the two individuals is really the difference in their evaluation of the friendliness of the members where they attend? I am convinced that this is the case. I am persuaded that people will be as friendly to us as we will let them be. How friendly are the members where you attend?

A gospel meeting is planned. One member says that he will be able to attend every service of the meeting because he is taking his vacation from work that week. Another member says he will NOT be able to attend the meeting because he has already planned to take his vacation from work that week. What makes the difference? They both have planned to take vacations the week of the meeting;

however one says he will be able to attend every night and the other says that he will NOT be able to attend. Is it possible that one is willing to put first things first and the other is not? Could it be that one is more interested in having a good time than in the preaching of the gospel?

Two families with the same number of children attend the same congregation. One family lives several miles away from the meeting place and the other lives very close to the building. The family that lives far away is always early and are never late unless something beyond their control causes them to be so. The family living near the building is usually late. It is unusual for them to be on time. What makes the difference? Could it be that the family that is always on time plans to be on time? What about the other family. Someone has said that the only explanation for someone always being late is that they plan it that way. What about you? What are your plans?

Two men are guilty of sin. They both hear the truth proclaimed. One recognizes he is lost in his present condition and obeys the truth. The other becomes angry and says he will never be back. The first thanks the preacher for teaching him the truth and for his help in showing him the right way. The other becomes angry at the preacher and says the preacher is going to run everyone away if he keeps preaching like that. What makes the difference?

The above illustrations are not fictional. Each one is based upon real situations which I personally know about. Have you ever wondered, as I do, what makes the difference in people's actions? Could it be attitude?

James Hahn



"HOW" THE CHURCH DIVIDES

Several years ago a fellow-preacher assured me, *"If the church divides I will be with the sound minority!"* Meantime, (while "the church" is trying to decide what to do, I suppose) he is right in the fat middle of the liberal camp. Another party asked, *"If the church divides, who will get the name?"* Neither of these parties showed a working knowledge of the church, either united or divided.

THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH is the whole body of saints, world wide; and has no organizational entity. It grows as individuals obey

the gospel; and it "divides" every time a member leaves Christ. This fluency has been characteristic of the church since its beginning, and will continue to the end.

A single LOCAL CHURCH is the largest (and only) organized body of Christians authorized in God's word. Any "dividing", in the sense of one group of members becoming two groups, would have to take place here. Paul foretold such division in the church at Ephesus (Acts 20:29- 30).

But men have invented a new conception of churches, which they erroneously call "brotherhood." They speak and write of this churchhood as though it were a functional unit; assigning it a work, a doctrine, and institutional adjuncts ("our" homes, "our" hospitals, etc.) which carry on "churchhood" (they call it brotherhood) functions. THIS is the "church" they think may divide; and sometimes it seems "churchhood" pride outweighs concern for alienated brethren. Denominational concepts prevail among "us."

But even if we accept an accommodative manner of speech, and discuss a division in "the church" as that caused by the missionary society and mechanical music in the past; we need to read our history with greater care. Such divisions do not take place on a certain date—prior to that time all are one—the next day, divided. We do not flip a coin for "the name" nor line up on "sides" at a bugle call.

There are multiple shades and hues of "soundness" at all times; and the color of "the great body" or majority of churches **has nothing to do with being acceptable in God's sight.** The "middle of the road" philosophy has blinded some otherwise good preachers on this point. Our adherence to God's word, both in individual and collective (congregational) matters, is the only true rule of soundness (2 Cor. 10:12ff). Congregations "come and go" with respect to "soundness" – one here, one there. Through a sort of radiational influence, the churches in one section may be ultra-liberal; while another section may be ultra-conservative; but neither extremes nor **general consensus** are safe divine guides. Taking consolation in such is a sure sign of denominational thinking, and can only lead us away from the truth.

If the church of which you are a member is not NOW encouraging sound preaching: warning of the rapid encroachments of the social gospel and "churchhood" projects such as Herald of Truth, Campaigns for Christ, Inc., "churchhood" benevolent societies, and the

like, **that church has already separated itself from the truth,** and you are encouraging its waywardness.

✍ Robert F. Turner



VOICES FROM THE PAST

As you may guess from the publishing of several of his articles recently, I have been reading the bound volumes of *Plain Talk*, a paper edited by Robert Turner for 20 years. This paper was published during the time that many brethren were being caught up in the social gospel movement. As we go back and read the articles written during those years we are impressed with the fact truth never changes and the attitudes of men remain the same. The "specific" activities may differ but the real problem remains the same, i.e., a failure to respect the authority of God's word and to be limited thereby. I am thankful for men like Robert Turner and others who did so much writing during those years and that we still have access to this material. If you were not fortunate enough to obtain the bound volumes of *Plain Talk* you can still access all of them on line at the website of the church in Cedar Park, TX (www.cedarparkchurchofchrist.org/ptalk). One of the advantages of the internet is that so much good material from the past has been made available. We can profit greatly from the reading of such. (JH)

Belleville church of Christ

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www.bellevillechurch.net

Schedule of Services

Sun. Bible Study. 9:30 a.m.
Sun. Morning Worship. . . . 10:30 a.m.
Sun. Evening Worship. . . . 5:00 p.m.
Wed. Bible Study. 7:00 p.m.

Elders

Charles Carpenter. (317) 839-3873
James Hahn. (317) 745-1507

Deacons

Leon Nevins. (317) 272-2966
Don Perry. (765) 676-5825
Alvin Stanley. (317) 831-3514
Mike Thomas. (317) 539-2699

Evangelist

James Hahn. (317) 745-1507