

THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

August 23

2009

We Must Learn To Let Them Go

Nearly forty years ago my father wrote a short article under this same title. In it he pointed out the dilemma preachers face when Christians who don't share our dedication to scriptural authority move into our area and seek to become part of our local fellowship.

Especially in areas where the church is numerically challenged, the temptation may be to merely preach the principles on Bible authority, but walk too softly in making the needed application to current issues. My father's point was that if newcomers prove to be resistant to teaching against church support of institutions, sponsoring church concepts and other unscriptural practices, "we must learn to let them go." To do otherwise will eventually lead to division—or worse yet—digression.

If we think that we have moved beyond that problem, we ought to "think again." With the accelerated pace of digression among many churches of Christ, we are beginning to see a remnant who are unwilling to accept the changes coming at the hands of the ultra-liberal among them. Some may try to find refuge with those of us who are more conservative.

This is good as long as they embrace a new dedication to the authority of the scriptures. However, as we "contend for the faith" (Jude 3) we must be prepared to preach the word "in season and out of season" (2 Tim. 4:2). If those who want to maintain "a little liberalism" won't endure sound teaching, "we must learn to let them go."

Even if we were to have no such newcomers among us, the need

is still there to teach and emphasize the need for scriptural authority. I fear there are many congregations, long identified as "non-institutional," filled with members who are unprepared to resist unscriptural innovation. Battles fought in past generations will not suffice in preventing digression among present and future generations.

From an article by *Al Diestelkamp*



Church Recreation

Recently I received an invitation to a facility that provided "ping pong, walking track, concerts, basketball, weights, pool table, board games, banquets, refreshments, etc." No, the invitation did not come from the local Boy's club. It came from a local church.

Increasingly churches have begun to take on the atmosphere of social clubs; some do rival local health spas. Yet, I do NOT read in the Bible where "the churches of Christ" (Romans 16: 16), in their life and death struggle to preach the gospel to a lost world, ever made such social/recreational provisions for that world (or themselves). Do you?

According to the New Testament (NT) the ONLY work God ordained the local church to do consists of: preaching the gospel (1 Thessalonians 1:8), assembling for worship and edification (Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:24-25), and meeting the physical needs of destitute Christians (Acts 4:34-35; 6:1ff). The work of the local church was spiritual, NOT recreational.

And it certainly was not for lack of public interest that kept churches in the Bible out of athletics and entertainment. The world into which the gospel was first preached LOVED the sports arena. Their children played five different games of ball and the Roman emperors were masters at building public baths, theaters, stadiums and using them to 'politic' the people. The world back then had their superstar athletes, actors and actresses too. In fact, it is safe to say that America's enjoyment and pursuit of recreation/entertainment is equal to the people of NT times. But again, the NT is SILENT about local churches making ANY provision for the fulfillment of such interests. And get this! The hope of the gospel was still "proclaimed in all creation under heaven" (Colossians 1:23). Churches in the NT

understood that the world needed the gospel and its eternal benefits, not temporary distractions.

Are you disheartened, tired or fed-up with watching the church where you worship spend her time and resources to recreate and entertain herself and the world? Then, worship with a church that believes the gospel is STILL God's power to motivate all men to faith, obedience and salvation (Romans 1:16).

✍️ *Keith Camp*



A Real Problem

I hope everyone reads the previous two articles. They deal with a very real problem that exists today. The first article is a portion of an article by Al Diestelkamp that appeared in the most recent issue of *Think On These Things*. When brethren become more concerned about gaining "numbers" and keeping them than with pleasing God compromises will be made. So many today seem to think that as long as one comes from a group identifying themselves as a church of Christ that one should be received without question. Sadly, many such groups have become caught up in the proclamation of the social gospel with emphasis on the "here and now" rather than on the eternal salvation of souls. It is not uncommon to receive the kind of announcements brother Camp mentions in his article.

As a result of such emphasis we find members who are willing to accept anything that sounds good, or as Paul states, "*tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine*" (Ephesians 4:14). They have not been grounded in sound doctrine nor have they been impressed with the need to have divine authority for all that is taught and practiced. These individuals may be content within our ranks for a time but after time they will be among those Paul warns Timothy of in 2 Timothy 4:3 who "*will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.*" For these to remain content to remain in our midst we must be willing to compromise the truth and refrain from speaking out against certain sins.

For years those who embraced the institutional position of church support of human institutions have engaged in the providing of recreation and entertainment to attract people. In recent months we

are seeing more and more this appeal among those that would list themselves as "non-institutional." We frequently receive announcements of Bible studies followed by some form of recreation or entertainment. The argument is made that these activities are being provided by individuals and not from the church treasury. This was the same argument made by institutional brethren years ago when they first started using such to attract people. There is nothing wrong with people getting together and enjoying such activities but when we start using such to attract people to Bible studies we are going down the wrong road. It is an insult to young people (or old) to tell them they are so carnally minded that the word of God would not appeal to them; that we must use these carnal things to get them interested in the study of God's word.

Brethren, we must decide whom we will seek to please. Paul asked the Galatians, "*For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ*" (Galatians 1:10). I hope our desire is to please God in all we teach and practice. To do so may mean that we will not be found in favor with some men. Just remember, Jesus Christ is the One who died for you. He is the Savior. His word will judge us in the last day (John 12:48). It behooves each of us to respect the authority of that word without compromise.

✍️ *James Hahn*

Belleville church of Christ

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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

Evangelist

James Hahn. (317) 745-1507