

Fulton County Gospel News

"The Churches of Christ Salute You"

Second Class Postage Paid at Mammoth Spring, Ark.

Volume 12

Mammoth Spring, Arkansas 72554

June 1971

Number 6

Areas of Improvement

By Johnny Ramsey

3418 Boulder, Odessa, Texas

In the past few years it has been my privilege to preach in as many meetings as anyone not engaged in full-time evangelism away from home. This enables me to see a good cross-section of the brotherhood all across the nation and even in Scandinavia, Europe, Africa, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. There are many encouraging signs of progress and spirituality. In every congregation one can find some of "The salt of the earth." Brethren have always been exceptionally kind to me—and this year has been the very finest of my life as a gospel preacher—so any point made in this article is an honest observation and not a reflection of bitterness. My purpose in setting forth these weaknesses is to correct them and cause us to be more pleasing before God and more influential in the sight of the world. We do need to change in the following areas if we ever make a serious impact on behalf of New Testament Christianity:

More Godliness In Our Homes

The church can never be truly strong until the homes composing its membership are solid in spiritual fervor. It would seem that some Christians have forgotten the Biblical injunctions that govern the home as God desires it to be. Parental authority, discipline, obedient children and a joyous spirituality should emanate from every home where followers of Jesus live! But, alas, it is not often so. Psalms 127:1 still pointedly reminds us that "unless the Lord builds the house they labor in vain who build it." The poorest children in the world are those whose parents have never taught them—by example—to study the Bible and pray.

A Mature View of Individual Responsibility

One of the most severe problems we face is the almost universal misconception regarding the work of a gospel preacher. Not a few preachers contribute to the dilemma by their willingness to be used as a professional errand boy, taxi driver, hospital visitor, architect, treasurer, counsellor, peace maker and party planner! As a result of this imbalance so few are doing so much of the work of the Lord and so many are just freeloaders.

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The Lord's Work...

Children are a heritage of the Lord, each possessing one soul which is valued above the price of all of this world's goods, both tangible and intangible. It was God's plan that these children should be conceived within the framework of the Divine institution of marriage, which is honorable in the sight of God. A home consisting of a Mother, and Daddy and children is the God appointed and approved institution in which these youngsters are to be reared. The Apostle Paul admonished fathers to bring up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord not provoking them to wrath in the process. Yes, a house, a Mama and a Daddy with the children being taught and cared for as they mature to take their place in the community as useful citizens and children of God is the way God would have it under normal conditions.

What we refer to as normal conditions do not always prevail. Circumstances do not always allow parents to live long enough to see their children grown and mature. Sometimes Mother or Dad, one or both, do not perform the task which they assumed by bringing the children into the world. Many examples could be given—Whose fault is it? This is a question which is beside the point when a child is in need of food, shelter, clothing and love. It makes very little difference whether the mother or father are dead as a child cries for food, or whimpers because he is cold, or shivers because of fright due to insecurity. The child whose parents have deserted him is just as destitute as if they were deceased. In fact in many cases the child probably would make a better adjustment if he could see them buried than to continually be looking for their return. Someone in society must care for these homeless children regardless of the circumstances which caused them to be without a home.

The New Testament reads, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." Gal. 6:10. In the case of every homeless child there is an opportunity to do good. The letter to the Galatians was written to the Churches of Galatia so the things said are said to the church. The church is made of individual members who must in some manner do their part, in practicing pure

(Continued on Page 2)

Influence of Songs

Military songs excite the spirit of war. School songs with their rhythmic Rah! Rah! so affect the athlete that he races faster for a score or a touch-down. Songs of his "Alma Mater" will increase the student's love for campus, faculty, and classmates, and will live in precious memories through the years. Jazz songs with their sexy rhythm lead weakling youth into lascivious thinking, and often to a long step into licentious living. Someone has said, "Let me write the songs of the nation, and I care not who writes its laws." (May God help America then!) It is not surprising that He, who knows us better than we know ourselves, has given commandment to the household of faith to sing.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16).

With all due respect to those who like the devious turns and twists of the jig-time, jazz-type religious songs I become increasingly thankful that I was not brought up to hear, sing, or admire that variety. The voices of saints who long ago departed this life, linger in memory's ear, as I recall and still love to sing such songs as: "Beyond the Sunset's Radiant Glow", "There's a Land That is Fairer Than Day", "What a Friend We Have in Jesus", "Sweet Hour of Prayer", "My Faith Looks up to Thee", "Are You Walking in His Footsteps", "I Need Thee Every Hour", and many more. The influence for good of such holy sentiments cannot be described nor measured. I am also thankful they were not marred nor mixed with mechanical sounds.

In these days when trashy songs are being so widely broadcast, may God's people continue to teach and admonish by singing the songs of Zion. If you don't know the songs in the song book that we are using, take a little time and learn them. About the only time some people look in a song book is when they are in the church building for worship. Learn the words of these great songs and then praise God with what ability He has given you.

—Gene Johnson
Hamlin, Texas

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... is a monthly publication distributed free of charge to any who care to receive it. We will be happy to add any names to the regular mailing list. If you send in a name, be SURE to include the Zip Code Number. It must be with each address according to the Postal regulations. This paper is supported by unsolicited contributions for which we are grateful. If you care to know of its financial status and expenses, that information will be furnished upon request.

EDITORS: Clovis Ragsdale
and James E. Henley.

CONTRIBUTIONS:

Viola Church of Christ	\$10.00
Greg McFann	1.00
Odle Frisby	1.00
Amos Tremuly	3.00
Ring Church of Christ	5.00
Elizabeth Church of Christ	5.00
Mrs. Amos McCord	1.00
Agnos Church of Christ	5.00
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Lora Tinkler	2.00
Dellhalf Church of Christ	5.00
Lorene Brigham	1.00
John Hodby	1.00
Bethany Church of Christ	10.00

News!

There will be a gospel meeting at the Church of Christ in Mammoth Spring, Arkansas, July the 19th through the 25th. Brother Hubert Plumlee from Baytown, Texas, will be the speaker. Services will be at 7:30 p.m. each evening.

The Lord's Work (Con't.)

religion, to care for the fatherless. Jas. 1:27.

It is to this great God ordained work to which we aspire as we seek to see Rolling Acres Children Home become a reality. This type of home is one way of caring for those who need it. We know that the desire to perform this good work is heavy upon the hearts of many. May the Lord bless you each that we may accomplish this task for the glory of God. Let us be busy about the Father's work for the night cometh when no man can work. We pray that we may be equal to task.

Neale Phipps

Christians Urged to Teach

By A. Z. Hays
Associate Professor of Education
Abilene Christian College

All Christians should be preparing to teach God's word whether that preparation be for beginning teaching or after many years of experience in teaching the "Word." Preparedness is the keynote of good teaching.

Why are not more Christians preparing themselves to teach? Christ has given us the inspiration in such statements as found in Matthew 28: "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations."

And in II Timothy 2, as Paul passed the Great Commission on to Timothy, "And the things which thou has heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

Why have not more of us accepted the responsibility placed upon us? Is it possible for a person to be "risen with Christ," and not be enthusiastic about the gospel, or not care whether his friends and neighbors have learned of Christ? Have we as Christians considered the "Parable of the Talents?"

Christ taught whenever and wherever he could to any and all who would listen. He was always looking for opportunities to teach people the word of God. He took advantage of every opportunity, whether in a boat, at a well, from a mountainside, in a Jewish synagogue, or in a private home.

Our opportunities are more numerous than those at the time of Christ. Our facilities are good, the fields are white unto harvest, but the laborers are few. The gospel still has its appeal and power, and the rewards of teaching are many. More of us should enjoy the thrill that comes to a Christian who has taught someone the way of the Lord.

Possibilities

Longfellow could take a worthless sheet of paper, write a poem on it, and make it worth \$6,000 — that is genius.

Rockefeller can sign his name to a piece of paper and make it worth millions — that is capital.

Uncle Sam can take gold, stamp an eagle on it, and make it worth \$20.00 — that is money.

A mechanic can take material worth \$5.00 and make an article worth \$50.00 — that is skill!

An artist can take a fifty cent piece of canvas, paint a picture on it and make it worth \$1,000 — That is art.

God can take a worthless, sinful life, wash it in the blood of Christ, put His Spirit in it and make it a blessing to humanity — that is salvation.

We should not overlook the persons we are associated with in every capacity as possible recipients of the gospel. The word of God has the power to make a Christian of any man. The impact of personality upon personality is great, but the impact of the word of God on the mind and heart of a vile sinner can change him into a Christian, who can in turn lead others to the Way.

An examination of our purposes in teaching should challenge us to desire to teach or to do a better job of teaching.

First and foremost of our purposes should be to save lost souls. In order to accomplish this objective, teaching is necessary, that knowledge be gained, attitudes and ideals changed, and appreciations developed in each individual; because being a Christian is an individual matter rather than a group process.

A second objective of teaching is the "feeding of the flock," "the perfecting of the saints," the building up in the Most Holy Faith." Christians never outgrow their need for teaching, and any brethren who do not attend Bible classes certainly would not have us believe they have reached full growth as Christians.

Many teachers are needed if all ages of the Church are to be properly taught, that they may continue to grow toward full growth in the Lord, an ideal never attained in this life; but the nearer we reach that ideal the better prepared we are to be with the Lord.

All of us need to learn the joy of striving in the Lord, of building toward the ideal, to know Christ better, to be more like Him. All this requires study, and study is accentuated through teaching.

"Supposing"

Abraham Lincoln insisted on facts when a case was being presented him. One day a committee waited on him, setting forth a matter of public concern, Their case was built largely on "supposing."

Mr. Lincoln asked them, "How many legs would a sheep have if you called its tail a leg?"

"Five." was the prompt answer. "That is what I thought you would say", declared Lincoln, "but that isn't true; the sheep would only have four legs. Calling a tail a leg doesn't make it one."

Calling a SINNER a CHRISTIAN doesn't make him one, either.

Selected

Seven Practical Exhortations From Ephesians 4:25-5:2

These are given that we may keep the unity of the faith, that the church might be one. These are directions how we should live, the way we should walk with God. We are created to be like God. We should live lives of holiness, truthfulness, and uprightness.

PUT AWAY FALSEHOOD. SPEAK THE TRUTH. The entire body is discredited when one member lies. "All liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. (Rev. 21:8)

CONTROL ANGER (v. 26-27). If angry, be careful. Do not nurse a grudge. Jesus looked around him in anger (Mark 3:5), but he had the control. Do not let anger control you. Do not let it continue. Satan will use you if you do. He will take advantage of the loophole. Cool it.

DO NOT STEAL, BUT WORK WITH YOUR OWN HANDS TO HELP OTHERS, (V. 28). This is wearisome, exhausted toil. There are many ways one can steal. One steals when he cheats on his income tax, loafs on the employer's time, cheats on exams in school, embezzles funds, etc.

LET NO EVIL TALK COME OUT OF YOUR MOUTH, BUT SPEAK ONLY THAT WHICH IS GOOD, THAT IT MAY IMPART GRACE TO THOSE WHO HEAR, v. 29. It is sickening to the Lord for those saved by his amazing grace to allow putrid, rotten talk to come out of

our mouths. The words that come out of our mouths show what is inside yet. The picture of putrid is a dead animal that has laid in the sun several days. Words are powerful. Wars are begun, children run away from home, homes are broken up because of careless words. God gives our tongues to be a blessing, not a curse. Two ears and one tongue indicate we should do twice as much listening as talking. The tongue is in a slippery place, hemmed in by teeth. If it gets out of place, bite it. The tongue is given to sing praises to the Lord, to edify, to build up. Ask yourself: "Am I building or tearing down? Am I strengthening or discouraging?" Habits are difficult to break. James says: "... If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body ... Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be." (James 3:2, 10).

DO NOT GRIEVE THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD by whom you were sealed. The Holy Spirit is a very sensitive person easily grieved by our actions and our speech. He is grieved when we do not listen to these exhortations.

PUT AWAY ALL BITTERNESS, CLAMOR, etc. (Loud, angry talk based on ungoverned feelings)

BE KIND, TENDERHEARTED, IMITATORS OF CHRIST. WALK IN LOVE.

Who Is On The Lord's Side

The title of our article was a question asked by Moses after the Israelites had worshipped the golden calf (Exodus 32). The question implies that God has a side and that there is the possibility of being on a side which opposes God. Read I John 3:10. Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." (Matt. 12:30).

The Lord's side is one of righteousness. To be on the Lord's side is to follow His word. David said, "My tongue shall speak of thy word; for all thy commandments are righteousness." (Ps. 119:172). One leaves the world of darkness and is translated by obedience into the kingdom of Christ. (Col. 1:13, 14).

Being on the Lord's side involves a refusal of friendship with the world. (James 4:4; I John 2:15-17). It further requires that we bear our cross daily (Lk. 9:23), performing the service required out of a spirit of love. (John 14:15). Our lights are shining (Mt. 5:13-16) and we are offering spiritual sacrifices through Christ (I Pet. 2:5; Rom. 12:1,2).

A friend once tried to console Lincoln in his many problems by saying, "I hope the Lord is on our side." Lincoln replied emphatically that this was not his hope. "I'm not at all concerned about that, for we know that the Lord is always on the side of the right. But it is my constant anxiety and prayer that I and this nation should be on the Lord's side."

Are you on the Lord's side?

—Carroll P. Bennett

The Ungodly Can Wait

The story is told of an old Christian slave in the South, whose master was an infidel. One day the master went duck-hunting with his slave, and turning to him, suddenly said: "How is it Tom, that the devil never tempts me, and always worries you? Why should he tempt a Christian more than an infidel?"

Before the slave could find an answer, a flock of ducks came within shooting distance, and the master fired at them. He then directed the slave to make haste to secure the wounded birds first, and let those that were dead wait until last. When the slave returned to his master he had found his answer.

"You see, Massa, I reckon it is this way about the devil. He thinks I am the only poor wounded soul that he wants to make sure of first, but you are surely his and so you can wait."

Perhaps it would do us well to determine in our own minds whether we are simply a "wounded bird" or a "dead duck." Selected

Dear Gabby . . .

"Dear Gabby:"

What happens to marriage when you get married? I've been married a couple of months and it isn't like I thought it would be at all. Already I hate it. I think I'm beginning to hate my husband and I hate myself for getting into this mess.

I didn't get married to wash dishes, wash clothes, iron clothes, make up beds and look after an immature and sloppy little boy. I am 16 and my husband is not much older. I despise him now for talking me into this. He lied to me. What do I do now?

Signed: DISAPPOINTED.

DEAR DISAPPOINTED:

I'm very sorry you are in this "mess". If sympathizing with you will help, then I feel for you. What do you do now? You grow up in a hurry!!!

You wanted to get married or you would not have. You wanted to believe the idealistic lie, or you would not have.

You wanted to get away from parents, or you wouldn't have left them. You wanted to try playing at marriage or you would never have registered for the game. You got what you WANTED . . . Then. You got your way. (I'm sure many tried to discourage you. Too I'm sure some told you teen-marriages seldom last. Over 50% fail in less than 5 years.)

Now, I presume you are a Christian . . . and I hope your husband is too. The only thing—before God—that you can do is wash the dishes like a CHRISTIAN WIFE, wash the clothes like a CHRISTIAN MATE, iron the clothes like a CHRISTIAN HOMEMAKER, and make up the bed like a MATURE, CHRISTIAN WOMAN. You chose to climb up into the adult world. Not you're there! It consists of daily drudgery, sweat and toil. It was your choice DISAPPOINTED. Now stick by it like an honorable Christian woman should. There is no other way. SIGNED: GABBY

What Does "Love One Another" Mean?

The inspired admonition of the apostle Peter to "love the brotherhood" (I Pet. 2:17) must not be taken lightly. If there is anything clearly taught in the New Testament it is love of the brethren! Jn. 13:34-35; I Pet. 1:22; 1 Jn. 4:7-11, etc.)

Every Christian should have a heart filled with love! If one's heart is filled with love there will be no room for the characteristics of hatred. We should all consider carefully what love is as taught in God's word. (See I Cor. 13:1-8a and Rom. 13:8-10) It would be well to reflect on I Jn. 2:9-11.

And yet, I sincerely believe that some brethren use these great truths in a way our Lord never intended for them to be used. I don't believe He ever intended them to serve as a cover-up for false doctrine or wrong doing. Some evidently think they are immune from being called in question on anything under the guise of "love one another."

What some overlook is this: love for one another involves an interest in and a concern for one another. Therefore, if a brother becomes involved in wrong doing or begins to teach error, those that truly love him will be concerned, and try in a loving and kind way to bring him back to the right way. If he should persist in whatever it is that is wrong, the divine instruction is: "Them that sin reprove in the sight of all, that the rest may be in fear." I Tim. 5:21.

Even if it is necessary to take the last resort measure of withdrawing the fellowship of the church from an erring individual, this does not mean that we've abandoned the teaching of the Lord to "love one another." Contrariwise, it means that we really do love—the Lord, and His truth, and the erring brother, enough to do what the Lord said to do. And remember, He said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." Jn. 14:15. And one of His commandments is that the church withdraw "from every brother that walketh disorderly." II Thess. 3:6.

Surely the apostle Paul loved Hymenaeus and Alexander but he didn't tolerate their making "shipwreck concerning the faith." I Tim. 1:19-20. And surely he loved the apostle Peter but he "resisted him to the face" because Peter stood condemned on a particular matter. Gal. 2:11. Surely the apostle John, who wrote so much about loving one another, did not forfeit this principle and yet he wasn't going to forget the wrong doing of Diotrephes. III Jn. 9-10.

And remember too our Lord, Jesus was the epitome of love. And yet He was moved with righteous indignation and cast out the mercenaries from the temple.

Some Said God Is Dead

Some have said God is dead.

Others have said there is no God.

Those that make such statements put their opinions above the inspired writers of the Bible, who give their lives rather than deny that Jesus was the Christ.

I wouldn't say there is no God, even if I thought it. I would only express my ignorance of a Supreme Being.

The Bible has always proved itself to be true. Prophets have prophesied and their prophecy has come true.

Agabus foretold of a great famine that would prevail. The Bible says that Famine prevailed in the days of Claudius. Josephus wrote of the same famine.

Alexander Cambell at one time debated an atheist. The man had come from a Foreign country, and was staying in the Cambell home during his stay in this country. The Cambells were farmers, and it was not uncommon for people to bury their dead on their own property. Mr. Cambell and the man whom he was to debate took a walk in the field. They came to the graveyard. The man said we are not like you folks, we have no fear of death. Mr. Cambell asked if he had any hope. According to his position, he said no. Mr. Cambell said you are like that old steer out yonder under the shade of that tree, his belly is full of grass, he don't know tomorrow he may go to the slaughterhouse!

We have a Heaven to gain, and a hell to shun.

The wise man built a temple, planted gardens, had beautiful flowers, entertained the Queen, but finally said all is vanity and vexation fear God and keep his commandments.

Paul said let the word of God be true and every man a liar.

Christ said Heaven and earth may pass away but my word will stand forever.

The prophet of God said my children must repent else they will be destroyed.

The man or woman that believes there is no God don't realize had there been no God they never would have been born.

They may not believe here, but they will in the after while, for every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess.

Amos M. McCord

Matt. 21:12-13. He also scathingly rebuked the Pharisees. Matt. 23. Who would dare suggest He didn't love these?

So brethren, let's love one another, but not allow this great teaching to obscure our need to stand foursquare for the truth. The idea of love must not be equated with a toleration of error and a sanctioning of wrong doing.

—Maxie B. Boren

Areas Of Improvement (Con't.)

The gravest result, however, is the shallow teaching and preaching program of many congregations. One cannot specialize in promotionalism and gospel preaching at the same time and 1 Tim. 4:12-16 tells us which emphasis is correct.

An Awareness of "First Things First!"

In the past decade there has been a tremendous pull in the direction of secularism and materialism among members of the church. Seeking God's kingdom first (Matt. 6:33) has given way to fitting worship services and work programs conveniently into our reckless abandon over bowling, football, PTA, week-end hunting and fishing, golf tournaments and even working on the lawn or in the flower beds. Instead of "putting our approval on things that are excellent" (Phil. 1:10) we often see indications of members who are enamored by incidents and some who even engage in questionable activities and others who stubbornly continue in sinful matters although they know better. Not very many members can be counted on to attend every service of our gospel meetings and just a mere handful engage in personal work. This spirit of "Let others do it" reflects strikingly in the contribution. Sadly, in nearly every church, 80% of the collection is given by 20% of the membership.

SENTENCE SERMON

We've seen pictures of great men astride horses, but never one astride a fence.

Too many professing Christians never get religion on their hands and feet.

Service is the rent we owe mankind for the space we occupy on the earth.

The world is full of willing people: some willing to work, the rest willing to let them.