

THE GREENWOOD BULLETIN

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Does God Just Zap Us ?

From Exhorting One Another # 71

Have you ever thought about losing weight? The thoughts alone didn't do much good, did they? Good intentions were certainly not enough. You might even have read and studied about how others have lost weight, but reading itself does not burn away many pounds. You might visit a gym several times a week to watch others exercise, but their seating had little effect on your weight. You might write out a plan of diet and exercise, but such plans do little good unless you act upon them. You might even pray asking God to help you lose weight, but did you notice that the pounds did not just begin to melt away without commitment and action on your part?

When you have heard a sermon on personal evangelism exhorting you to talk with others about Christ, did you ever think, "I really should do that ... but I just don't know enough yet"? Did you perhaps even pray asking God to grant you the knowledge, ability, and courage to talk with your friend about spiritual matters? Have you noticed that your Biblical knowledge did not significantly increase over the years if you did not commit yourself to spending meaningful time in God's word?

Have you ever prayed asking that God help the congregation to grow both spiritually and numerically? After that prayer, did you immediately see a group of people walk in the door of the building asking to be baptized? What action did you personally take – inside and outside the building - to try to help the congregation to reach lost souls? What personal plan did you act

upon to grow spiritually yourself and to help others grow stronger in the faith as well?

Have you asked God to remove pride from your life but still wonder why others are not as committed to the Lord as you are? Have you asked for humility yet are unwilling to admit your weaknesses to others? Have you asked Him to take away your selfishness but yet neglected to see and fulfill the needs of those around you? Have you prayed that something may be said or done to bring a lost loved one back to Christ but then failed to take any further action yourself?

We know that our God is all powerful and that He hears and answers our prayers. But sometimes it seems that we are simply praying that God will "zap" things in answer to our prayers rather than realizing that He often works through us. He has given us eyesight we can use in reading His word, and hearing we can use in listening to its proclamation. He has given us a sound mind with which we can understand His will, and a mouth with which we can tell others about His plan. If we don't feel that we know enough to talk with others about Christ, God has given us the ability to establish and act on a plan to gain that knowledge if we choose to do so. Each of us has 24 hours today in which we can choose to set aside some time to study His word and petition Him in prayer – even if it means getting out of bed a little earlier or giving up time from something else we would like to do. Each of us is regularly presented opportunities to mention spiritual things to others. For example, "Hasn't God blessed us with a beautiful day!"... Or "Isn't it wonderful how each bird is cared for by our Creator!"... Or "I really don't know how I could get through this without relying upon God!" Each of us also has the ability to invite others to "Come and see" as Philip did (John 1:46). May we commit ourselves each day that our will may be one with the Lord's and that we will seek to do His bidding.

PERMISSIVE PARENTS

By Bill Hall

Children can influence their parents just as parents can influence their children. The following story about an imaginary couple may have been duplicated in the lives of many of our readers.

George and Mary were a wonderful couple as they began their life together. Throughout their youth they had received strong teaching concerning worldliness, and their conduct showed the effects of that teaching.

They had been taught faithfulness in attendance, and they never missed a service for "anything." In character and conviction, they were blameless.

This young couple failed, however, to instill into the hearts of their children these same convictions. Consequently, as the children reached their teens, they began to put pressure on their parents to let them do what all the other young people were doing. Gradually the will of the parents was broken down, and they began to permit their children to do things they never dreamed their children would do.

Rationalization came easy for George and Mary. "After all, the Bible is not specific in these matters," they thought. "The Bible says 'modest apparel,' but it doesn't define modesty." "And, they're only planning to go to the dance; they aren't planning to dance." "We can't say 'no' to everything," they said. When Junior began to show unusual athletic ability, the question of attending services became a problem. At first they took Junior out of games and brought him to midweek services, but then the team began to depend more and more on him. The play-offs came, and the team's only hope in the play-offs was for Junior to play. George and Mary gave in. And once they had given in, they had no more argument for the future. Junior never missed another game to "go to church."

George and Mary often found themselves on the defensive in Bible classes. They began to argue for their children's behavior. And, the more accustomed they became to their children's actions, the more innocent their actions seemed to be. Eventually, their own conduct became affected. They reached the point where they thought nothing of missing on Friday night during a meeting to see junior play ball. Mary even adopted some of the daughter's dress habits, although remaining

sufficiently "discreet" to stay in the good graces of the brethren. Yes, George and Mary are still in good standing in the church, and their change has been so gradual that many fail to realize that they are not the strong Christians they formerly were. What happened to George and Mary? Instead of bringing their children "up" in the nurture and admonition of the "Lord," their children brought them "down" in the nurture and admonition of the "devil."

Our children may do wrong, but they must not do wrong with our permission! We do not seek anger, but repentance. Parents, would your names fit in the place of "George" and "Mary" in the above story?