

Depending on the Church: Personal Work

by *Collie Caldwell*

Recently a very dedicated woman who has spent many years serving the Lord and her fellow men expressed her sincere concern over the lack of individual efforts among Christians to teach the lost and care for one another. She believes that we used to do more day to day, on our own, activities for the Lord. While she spoke, I pondered a concern of mine. I am afraid that many of us have turned our attention so much in the direction of church sponsored programs of work that we do not think much about individually motivated service. This may be especially true of personal evangelism. Brethren everywhere, myself included, are concerned that we are not reaching the lost as we should. Churches are developing elaborate programs designed to bring the brethren together in these efforts. Some of these programs have produced some good results (primarily in getting inactive members involved in some group meetings and/or visiting) but most that I know anything about have converted few, if any, aliens to God. I am not here, however, attacking these collective efforts. I think what I want to do is ask you to consider a question: Is our involvement in a church sponsored "personal work program" really personal work?

Personal work is the individual Christian meeting his individual responsibility to another person: lost, needy, sick, or weak. It is my seeing my neighbor in a lost condition and doing something to bring him to Christ. It is giving the cup of cold water (Matt. 10:42) and expressing good will in the name of the Lord to whomever we meet. It is living, speaking, and thinking Christ always. The church must edify all its members, encourage the weak, assist its own needy, and teach the lost. All of us must be personally involved in collective work and each of us will be judged personally for our involvement (we all understand that) but is involvement in group action really "personal work?"

Sometimes we wonder why our personal work programs "fizzle out" (that means, "to fail after a good start"). I think I know. The answer is that too many brethren are not committed to real personal work. Getting brethren committed to a "program" is only temporarily motivating. The real motivation must be a genuine love for the souls of men (John 3:16), a recognition that one soul is worth all the world (Matt. 16:24-28), a knowledge that we are doing God's work and that God is with us (Rom. 10:1-3; Eph. 6:18), a boldness and patience in serving God (Heb. 10:35-36), and a fear of the judgment if we allow the unlearned to remain unlearned (Ezek. 3:18-19). "But," the elders say, "how can we get brethren to do it?" Teach these truths forcefully, persistently, and illustrate them in our own lives. Isn't all duty to God motivated by teaching and example?

Do you remember the lessons we learned in our studies concerning the errors held by institutional brethren? There are things which Christians do together as a church and there are things which Christians do individually. Let us not suppose that all evangelism is group sponsored. Let us not need for the elders to supply our contacts. Let us not psychologically depend upon a group personal work meeting for motivation. Let us come together to worship and study and then go out everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:4; 5:42). While we must participate in the collective work under the elders, I, for one, believe that what we need is not more elaborate programs. What we need is more PERSONAL work!!!

-- via Broadmoor Beacon

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