

It Is Written

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Why Saints Assemble

By Robert F. Turner

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together--" (Heb. 10:25) is a clear statement of God's will in the matter; and some babes in Christ may "go to church" compelled by fear of God's wrath. This is a legitimate motive, albeit one that is less needed by the more mature Christian. The collective action of saints, with its attendant assemblings, is far more than a self-justifying end. It grows out of the basic character of saints, and their God-appointed purposes.

Early Christians were "together" "with one accord" (Acts 2:44-46). A closeness and singleness of purpose such as theirs brought them together physically, just as it will bring true Christians together today. They gravitated toward one another for prayer as fishermen gather to discuss lures; they had a common interest and object of worship.

They loved the truth, and their "delight" was in the law of the Lord (Matt. 5:6 Psm. 1:2). When people are hungry, they do not have to be urged to go where there is food; nor do they eat "because of a sense of duty."

Faithful Christians had great respect and veneration for Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 11:23-f) - hence, welcomed opportunity to participate in the memorial supper. Their hearts were warmed and faith renewed as they worshipped "in remembrance of" Christ.

Each one's concern for his own spiritual welfare, as well as that of fellow Christians, was reflected in the assembling. In Heb. 10:23-25 note how "let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering" is related to their gathering together.

And because "every man according to his ability, determined-" the making of a common treasury brought them together (Acts 11:29; 1 Cor. 16:1-3). A pooled fund is the means of exchange by which a plurality of saints act as one to do God's will. Some early churches were so anxious to do God's work they begged Paul to take their offering (2 Cor. 8:4). The next verse explains this eagerness: they had given themselves to the Lord.

Saints today assemble for these same reasons. I do not refer to those who occasionally "attend" worship; I mean those who worship with regularity, the faithful few or many.

The indifferent and the hypocrites make excuses; perhaps even try to make some "logical" argument, as, "I can worship God, being alone." Of course what one could do, being alone, is hardly the question. The hypocrite is seldom alone (i.e., there are other saints within reach) and if one were alone there is little reason to believe he would worship God. Such people usually compound their wrong by lying - to others, to themselves, and to God.

If you are a "oncer" (once-a-week) or worse, allow yourself a moment of truly honest self-inspection. Can you believe that one who loves his brethren because they are brethren, who delights in Bible study, has deep respect for the Lord's Supper, and is truly concerned for God's work and his own soul, would "do as you do"?

CHARTING A COURSE BY POLLS

By Jere E. Frost

Men without moral compasses may read the polls and take a public stand accordingly and be said to be good politicians. Successful politicians may do it, but true leaders do not. Popular preachers may do it, but lovers of truth do not. He who charts his course according to polls declares a lack of honor by that very fact.

A poll does not tell you what is right or wrong. It does not tell you which way one should go. It only tells you what people have already decided. He who takes his stand on the basis of what people already think is not really a leader at all, but a self-serving opportunist.

The story is told of the Roman general who was in an upstairs salon being preened by a hairdresser and manicurist. A roar from below was heard. He rushed to the window and saw the army marching by. He grabbed his coat and hat as he bolted out the door. Asked where he was going, he replied as he rapidly descended the stairs. "I've got to get in front. I'm their leader!"

Some "leader." A leader does not wait to see which way the crowd is going and then work to "get in front." He determines the way they should go, and heads that way. The preacher of truth does not poll and then take the result as his belief. He searches Scripture for truth. He determines what the truth is without knowing or caring what the majority thinks. He often takes a stand in spite of, but never because of, the polls.

In the nature of the case, truth is often unpopular, and the way of truth commonly lags in polls. Men love darkness rather than light (John 3:19). Jesus plainly said the gate was strait and the way narrow that led to life, and that the broad way, where the many were, was the avenue to destruction (Matthew 7:13-14).

"But what about majority rule?" someone asks. Well, what about it? It is understood that the majority rules in the democratic process, but that does not mean the majority is right. Sodom's majority decided on unnatural vice as a lifestyle, Absalom ascended the throne because people were charmed and pleased by his promises, and Jeremiah's popularity sadly lagged behind that of the false prophets. Poll approval was never an evidence of being right, and poll disapproval never was an evidence of being wrong. Regardless of polls, "righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34).

Is the world round or flat? Never mind the polls. What's the fact of the matter? Is adultery a trivial matter? Do not keep score of how the politicians, preachers or lawyers decide. Their opinions do not constitute truth, one way or the other. Besides, the Lord has plainly said, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, and my ways are not your ways" (Isaiah 55:8-9). So, we are safe only as we rely on what He says.

Noah ignored the polls when he built the ark. Joshua made his decision as to where he would stand without thought or knowledge of where others would stand. That's what true leaders and men of honor do.

Maintaining Our Marriages

By Greg Gwin

My friend Ted Fisher once pulled into a gas station and asked the attendant to check the oil in his car. Ted asked, "How is it?" The attendant said, "Filthy!" You see, Ted hadn't learned about the importance of preventive maintenance. Cars, and other things, too, need regular attention and care.

Our marriages are like that. If not cared for and nurtured, they can begin to crumble and fall apart. Let us suggest a couple of important areas that need constant attention:

1) Never forget that you are involved in a life-long relationship. Too many have the view that if things don't work out exactly to their liking, they will simply divorce and find another mate. With this outlook they are destined to fail, because no marriage is perfect and no marriage partner is flawless. On the wedding day, and every day thereafter, we must be committed to this principle: "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6). Fulfilling this commitment will require us to learn about true love - as opposed to simple physical passion. True love is learned (Titus 2:4), and can be re-learned. Passion can fade, but true love grows stronger and stronger.

2) Realize that self-sacrifice is essential to a successful marriage. Too often husbands are only concerned with their own selfish interests. Wives only submit when it pleases them to do so. Read Ephesians 5:22-29 to get an accurate picture of how things ought to be. Remember that one of the basic characteristics of true love is that it "seeketh not her own" (1 Cor. 13:5).

A happy marriage is a great blessing from God. We should work hard to keep ours in good repair!

"Circumspectly"

By Tom Edwards

"See then that ye walk CIRCUMSPECTLY" (Eph. 5:15, KJV).

How other translations render this: "See then that you walk circumspectly" (NKJV); "Look therefore carefully how ye walk" (ASV); "Therefore be careful how you walk" (NASB); "Look carefully then how you walk" (RSV); "Be very careful, then, how you live" (NIV).