

Are We Devoted to the Fellowship?

Brian Kenyon

Luke summarized the first church of Christ, established in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ: “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). The term, “continued steadfastly” means to be devoted (Acts 1:14; 2:46; 6:4; Romans 12:12). There are four specific things, all spiritual in nature, to which these early Christians were devoted. In this article, we will examine the second of these. They were devoted to “fellowship.” The word “fellowship” refers to association, communion, joint participation and sharing together. The fellowship in which the early church continued was their joint participation in the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:9). The implied object of their fellowship is God (1 John 1:3, 7). Included in this sense of fellowship were concrete expressions of that joint participation and sharing (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35). One great example is the collection Paul took among the Gentile churches to help the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. The Greek word *koinonia*, usually translated “fellowship,” in those contexts is translated “contribution” (Romans 15:26) and “sharing” [“distribution,” KJV] (2 Corinthians 9:13). Fellowship must be important in our lives as well. No congregation can follow God without seeking and maintaining true fellowship (Ephesians 4:1-3). Christians should seek other Christians for encouragement and support. This is why assembling together is so important (Hebrews 10:23-25). How devoted are we to “fellowship”?

■ *Everyone feeling the need to be involved.* That doesn't come from one sermon being preached on involvement. It comes from the spirit of Christ being in us (Matthew 20:28). There is no reason for anyone to feel that he is not a part of the work of the church (Romans 12:4-5).

■ *Everyone willing to do his part in the work.* After the dispensers of discouragement had done their work in Nehemiah's day, the Jews returned "every one unto his work" (4:15). Often members of the church are not willing to do the work of which they are capable. What do we need to make us willing workers?

■ *Everyone realizing the seriousness of his task.* How often do we think that any contribution that we might make is of minimal significance? We are all in this work together and we need the mind to work rather than the mind to fight, argue and tear down.

When people work together, they grow together. The church that is busy at work is busy growing. How busy are we?

The Spirit of Involvement

By Dennis Gullledge

In the Book of Nehemiah we are introduced to people who had "a mind to work." This is the same as saying that they had the spirit of involvement. It takes involvement to get a job done (Nehemiah 2:17-18). It takes involvement for the church to grow.

The spirit of involvement demonstrated here is opposed to the spirit of laziness, fear, contentedness, hopelessness, apathy and indifference. Enemies try to provoke a spirit of hopelessness in us just as they did in Nehemiah's day (4:1-3), but, we can respond to discouragement by praying (4:4).

Interest and enthusiasm are contagious commodities as are their opposites, stagnation and non-involvement. Leaders can lead, urge, encourage and provide the example for greater involvement

in the Lord's work, but, until people "catch fire" with interest and zeal there is little else they can do.

One of the problems we face in the church today is spectator mentality. Someone has suggested that most congregations are composed of people who are "100% willing"--10% are willing to work and 90% are willing to let them. No doubt, all of us want to see the Lord's work prosper and grow, but what are we doing to help? We want to see the lost taught the Gospel, the sick visited, the needy relieved, the weak encouraged and the body of Christ edified, but who is personally involved in any of these areas? Are you? We have no aversion to being involved in clubs, sports, scouts, organizations, social interests and hobbies; however, how much will we commit ourselves to do in the greatest cause on earth?

The spirit of involvement, or the "mind to work," comes from the following areas:

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