

Of Springtime And Churches

A few years ago, while living in Amarillo, spring-time brought a strange and marvelous commodity our way: rain. And plenty of it. Due to several weeks of above-average rainfall, the usually parched and arid earth became a virtual paradise, exuding life through beautiful blades of green.

One friend fussed that he had already mowed more grass that year, by early June, than he had mowed all summer the year before. His point? The greenery, while beautiful to look at, was harder to take care of than the dirt of the previous year's drought.

My friend was right, and about more than grass. More effort has always been required to care for that which is alive and growing than for that which is dead and decaying.

It doesn't take much food to feed a corpse.

The same principle is true concerning churches. Zealous, healthy congregations demand effort and hard work, the toil and prayers and sweat of an energetic membership in love with the Lord and the Lord's work.

By contrast, dying churches are much easier to care for. More often than not, they just want to be left alone and allowed to continue their last days in peace.

The words of Ephesians 5:14 could be placed appropriately over many of our church house doors: *"Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light."*

The next time you feel inclined to complain about the effort, the work, and the sacrifice the church asks of you, remember this: dead churches, steeped in the stench of decay, make few, if any, demands. Living churches are the ones expecting something of you!

--Dalton Key (Oklahoma City, OK) via Old Paths

Who Are We Trying To Please?

Imagine if a wife came to her husband and said, "Honey, I've been talking with all of the men in the neighborhood, and they would like it if I wore some different kinds of outfits." What if she wasn't even suggesting she would wear anything provocative or immodest, but simply said, "Yes, I took a poll of all the men of the neighborhood asking them what their favorite color is, and the majority said red, so I've decided to wear only red outfits from now on." If you were her husband, how would that sit with you?

Not well, I would guess.

But isn't that what the church does so often? We ask the world, "What would you like the church to be like?" We look at polls, surveys, and statistics to determine how the church should look and behave. But is that who we are? Isn't a bride supposed to please her husband?

The church is the bride of Christ, and she should aim to please Him (Ephesians 5:22-33; 2 Corinthians 5:9). That's not to say we should be unkind or unwelcoming. Certainly we should try to reach out to people and bring them to Christ. But we must be uncompromising in our doctrine and practice. As Paul wrote, *"For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ"* (Galatians 1:10).

Remember to whom you belong!

--Wes McAdams (Plano, TX) via Old Paths

Consider Yourself

I am often asked my opinion about someone else's standing with God. "They did so-and-so. If they refuse to repent, will they be lost?"

Jesus was asked similar questions. Someone said, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" Jesus answered, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able" (Luke 13:23-24).

In John 21:18-22 Jesus told Peter, "'Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you to where you do not want to go.' (This he said to show by what kind of death he was going to glorify God.) And after saying this, He said to him, 'Follow Me.' Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them . . . (and) said to Jesus, 'Lord, what about this man?' Jesus said to him, 'If it is My will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!'"

Each time, when Jesus was asked about someone else's salvation, He said, in effect, "Mind your own business! Make your own calling and election sure."

--Cecil May, Jr. (Montgomery, AL) via Preacher Talk

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A young woman was brought before the judge in traffic court for driving through a red light. She explained that she was a school teacher and asked for immediate disposal of her case so she could get to school on time.

A wild gleam came into the judge's eyes. "Madam, I shall realize my life-long ambition. I've waited for years to have a school teacher in this court. Now, sit down at this table and write "I will not drive through red lights" 500 times!