

Just Suppose

Joe Slater

As members of the Justin Church of Christ, let each one of us look inward and ask these questions: "Just suppose every member of the congregation was like me. What would the church look like? What would its future be?" Specifically . . .

Just suppose that every member came to Bible classes and assemblies with exactly the frequency that I do. What would the attendance roster look like? Would Bible class teachers be encouraged or discouraged? Would the congregation even have Bible classes at all? Would we just lock the doors except for an hour one or two Sunday mornings each month?

Just suppose that every member contributed to the work of the church with the same regularity, generosity, and cheerfulness that I do. Would the church be able to continue the ambitious support currently given to the spreading of the gospel and supplying the needs of the fatherless and widows? Or would we have to scale it back? Would we even be able to keep the lights on?

Just suppose that every member made the same effort that I make to greet and welcome visitors before clustering with family and friends. Would our guests feel comfortable and appreciated? Or would they leave feeling ignored and unwanted? How likely is it that they would return?

Just suppose that every member shared the gospel with the same zeal that I do. How many people in this area would know who Jesus is, what He did for us, and how to enjoy the benefits of His atonement?

You can extend this list indefinitely. Just suppose . . .

Spiritually Shabby Reflections

When I was growing up, the one thing that you did not do was embarrass your parents. That is not to say I never did it! I can almost hear my mother now: "Richard Matthew, do not embarrass us!" Mom was high on what other people thought about her young'uns! I feel the same way today.

I think in a similar way our Heavenly Father would have each of us live in such a way that others would see him in His proper place. Calvin Miller writes, "The great sin against God is to live in such a way that others don't see us as wealthy in the spiritual sense." To live a spiritually shabby life is to cause others to see God as a poor father! (See Romans 2:24.)

The great sin of the prodigal son was in his making his father look bad! If anyone saw him at the hog pen, they would have surely thought that his father didn't love him at all! They would have never dreamed that hanging on the wall in a big house back home was the portrait of this filthy hog herder! When we walk through life looking just like everyone else, everyone else may think we are just like everyone else! But when we walk through life with the confidence that God is our Father, and that He is a Father who cares for his children, and who provides everything, down to the very bread we eat and the clothing that we wear, then others can see how glorious our Father is! But if we walk through this life not caring how we present ourselves; not caring about our attitudes, our actions, or our appearance, others will think we have a poor father!

Jesus said, *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven!"* Remember, He Is A Good, Good Father!

--Richard Clinard

Optimism

Optimism is an essential ingredient for the growth and well-being of the body of Christ both individually and congregationally. Leroy Brownlow writes, "The world is not going to follow the man who has a gloomy outlook. We like the person who enjoys the donut rather than griping about the hole in it."

Optimism is a byproduct of hope. The Christian's hope is not rooted in this world, but is anchored in the next (Hebrews 6:19). It is a hope that *"does not disappoint..."* (Romans 5:5). When life grows dark and dreary, threatening to dampen our enthusiasm, we must set our *"mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth"* (Colossians 3:2). Easier said than done. An optimistic outlook requires a disciplined mind. Paul says, *"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if here is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things"* (Philippians 4:8).

Output is determined by input. So long as we fill our minds with polluted, negative thoughts, we will enjoy little success maintaining a positive attitude. By contrast, when Paul sought to fill his heart with things lovely and noble, he was able to rise above physical hardships and proclaim, *"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me"* (Philippians 4:13).

Wouldn't you rather look at life through the hopeful optimism of faith in Christ? We will not always be treated fairly in life. Hardships will come even into the lives of Christians. But, in Christ, we have the resources to deal with life at its worst and still maintain our hope for the future. Remember, *"This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it"* (Psalm 118:24).

--Glen Elliott (Greenbriar, AR)