



The Reflector

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Watch out for the “Quick Fix”

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“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not loose heart.”
– Galatians 6:9 (NKJV).

Someone has said, “The American prayer is: ‘Lord, give me patience and give it to me right now’”. We want results right now, rather than in due season. We want our problems solved immediately, if not before.

The electrical system blows a fuse. Why spend valuable time and gas going for a new fuse? There is that penny in your pocket. Place it behind the old fuse and everything is fine – for now. So what, if the real problem is ignored? So what, if there is risk of burning your house down? It works! The lights are burning, the refrig is cooling, and the stove is cooking – what better evidence can you have than that!

God promised Abraham and Sarah a son. But God surely was taking his own good time to make good his promise. So, Sarah went for the quick fix. She persuaded Abraham to father a son by their handmaid. It worked! Ishmael was born! But he was not the son of promise. God still carried out his plan in due time. But, Sarah’s quick fix to the problem brought sorrow upon sorrow to her and her descendants.

The Lord’s church has had crisis after crisis beginning with the first congregation at Jerusalem. God gave the perfect plan for the church, but those

who work that plan are not perfect. They make mistakes, some with little adverse consequences, others with major consequences. There are attendance problems, problems with getting folks to be baptized, with divisions, with fellowship, with internal sin, etc.. We would all like to see these problems resolved – right now! How I would like to go to the next assembly and find every Christian along with every outsider in this community present! How I would like to baptize every sinner that I know! How I would like to announce to the congregation that all divisions have been healed, all controversies among brethren settled, all problems with internal sin solved! Would that not be wonderful? But that is not likely to happen and I need to be careful of “quick fixes” in an effort to make things happen.

Differences arise between brethren. Some are contained without open division. Others are not. Every Christian, who loves the Cause of Christ is concerned about any division. This tempts one to go for the “quidk fix” – more love. Now that does sound good! It **would** solve all the problems – **if** the root cause of all division was a lack of love for brethren. But, the problem is seldom that simple and the love-togetherness approach is not always adequate. It may ignore the real cause of the division in the first place. The cause may be conflicting “minds” – carnal vs. spiritual (Cf. 1 Cor. 3:1-5). It may be conflicting attitudes toward Scriptural authority, by brethren

who dearly love each other. It may be conflicting concepts of the mission of the church. It may be over matters of conscience that carry people in different directions and cannot be resolved without basic change in convictions. The quick fix is to encourage someone to squelch his conscience for the sake of peace. It takes longer to educate consciences. But until that happens one cannot afford to override his conscientious misgivings even for the sake of peace. (cf. Rom. 14:23). Of course, if it is a matter in which one can yield his preference, without overriding conscientious doubts, then he should give in for the sake of peace now! Even where there are other basic causes for conflict, hatred sometimes raises its ugly head, then love must be restored.

I know of no congregation that would not like an overflow crowd at every service. Most would like to find some way to motivate folks to attend. It is a big problem. But, beware of the “quick fix”. Most of these folks are carnally minded, so appeal to the carnal mind with the gimmicks of social activities, recreational opportunities, making it “fun” for them. Give material rewards and pride-appealing recognition to motivate them. Such may get them to “church”, but not to the Lord. Only those taught, having heard and learned, are drawn to the Lord. (John 6:44,45). This method is usually slower, and less appealing to many, but it is the Lord’s way of getting people “to church” and keeping them there!

There are problems with applying the New Testament teaching on “fellowship”. In today’s atmosphere, one is bound to be charged with inconsistency in his application of the matter. If one is not careful he will try to find a “quick fix” to the consistency problem. On the one hand he may decide that he should not fellowship anyone who is mistaken on any Bible subject. He reasons that since he does not fellowship some who hold different views on other subjects then he will not fellowship this brother – to be consistent. It saves the time of finding out the nature of the man’s “error” and it

effect upon the church, etc. Another knowing that he “fellowships” some brethren with whom he differs on what the Bible teaches on **some** matters, decides that to be consistent then we must fellowship **all** brethren with whom he has differences. Again, this saves the time of investigation and consideration for each matter. The truth of the matter is that several factors must be taken into consideration before deciding whom to fellowship. Attitudes, maturity, opportunity, ability, the effect upon the gospel and the church, etc. But, it is much easier to go for the “quick fix”; for the fellowship - **all** - with - whom - we - differ or the fellowship - **none** - with - whom - we - differ approach. But, Jude 22, tells us that some distinctions have to be made.

1 Thess. 5:14 shows that different ones need different approaches. “**Warn** the unruly, **comfort** the fainthearted, and **support** (uphold) the weak.” It is quite possible for each class to be doing the same thing, overtly:

1. Sister Worldly seldom shows up for services. She is approached and gives you to understand that what she does is her business and no business of the church. She and her husband like to go boating on week-ends and she intends to do it as long as the weather is pretty. She will be at services when and if she gets ready. She knows what the Bible says about assembling as well as you do and when she gets ready to start attending she will let you know.

2. Sister Battered seldom shows up for any services. She is approached and you find out about her husband. He hates the church with passion. He makes sure that she pays dearly for every service she attends. The ones she does attend are attended over his protest and sometimes physical abuse. When she gets home 5 minutes later than usual because of a long-winded preacher, she catches the full blast of his fury. She is near the point of “throwing in the towel” and saying it is not worth it to attend.

3. Sister Novice seldom shows up for services. She is approached and you see that she just does not

understand the importance of attending. She has not been a Christian very long. She was a member of a religious order that did not stress attendance to all services. While she learned and understands what she needed to do to become a Christian in the New Testament sense of the word – she still has a bit of the old concept of attendance as a hold over from her former religious life. Once convinced of the necessity and importance, she would likely attend every service.

Now, all three sisters are doing the same thing outwardly. But the approaches taken to the problem are quite different. Sister Worldly is **unruly** (disorderly), so you warn her and if she doesn't heed the warning you withdraw from her (2 Thess. 3:6). Sister Battered is about to give up. She is fainthearted. You comfort and encourage her at this stage. Sister Novice is a weak babe, who needs teaching, so you set about to teach her, with patience, her responsibilities as a Christian.

Now the "quick fix" approach to the problem would be that since all are not attending as they should – that we will just treat them all alike. If we comfort one – comfort all. If we withdraw from one, then withdraw from all – regardless to any extenuating circumstances. That might simplify matters for those who have to make the day to day judgments about church discipline – but would it be right?

Brethren let's be careful with "quick fixes".

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Giving Thanks During the Lord's Supper.

by R. J. Evans

When instituting the memorial of the Lord's Supper, Jesus gave thanks before passing the bread and before passing the fruit of the vine. Such also was the practice of the church after He returned to heaven (1 Cor. 10:16; 11:17-34). Sometimes the men

who serve on the Lord's table fail to "give thanks" for the bread and the cup in their prayers. This may be an oversight, or perhaps it may be attributed to a lack of understanding and knowledge concerning this matter. It's as if you were asked to give thanks for a meal and failed to do so in your prayer. Of course, this is a much more important occasion.

I remember years ago, a brother who was serving on the Lord's table failed to "give thanks" for the bread or the fruit of the vine in his prayer (I can't remember which one). After services, an older brother put his arm on his shoulder and pointed out to him that he failed to give thanks at the Lord's table. He pointed out essentially the same points made in this article, and stressed how we need to follow the example that Jesus has provided. Christ offered thanks. We should do so too. The brother was ever so appreciative and grateful to this older brother who had called this oversight to his attention. From that point on, I observed that he always remembered to "give thanks" for the bread or for the fruit of the vine when he served the Lord's Supper.

Before we can know how to lead these two prayers (one for the bread; one for the fruit of the vine), we must understand what they are. They are prayers of thanksgiving. When Jesus took the bread and "blessed" and gave it to them, that doesn't mean that He just pronounced His blessings upon the bread. The verb "blessed" both in the English and the original language, sometimes does mean "to bestow blessings upon," but that is not what the word means when Jesus instituted the Supper. It is the Greek word *eulogeo* (Matt. 26:26; Mk. 14:22) which also means "to give thanks" (*W.E.Vine & Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*). There are other times when "blessed" means "to give thanks." When Jesus fed the 5,000, it is said He took the food and "blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples"; but when Jesus fed the 4,000 it is said He took the seven loaves and the fish and "gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples" (Matt.

14:19; 15:36). He did the same thing on both occasions – He gave thanks – just as we are commanded to give thanks before eating our food (1 Tim. 4:4-5).

Of the four accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper, two in the King James version read that Jesus took bread and "blessed," and the other two read that He "gave thanks" (Matt. 26:26-27; Mk. 14:22-23; Lk. 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:24-25) Thus, "blessed" (eulogeo) and "gave thanks" (eucharisteo) are used interchangeably. What one means, the other means. It is evident that "blessed" and "gave thanks" in these passages mean the same thing – He gave thanks.

Are our prayers at the table for the purpose of expressing gratitude "for the opportunity to be here," or "for this beautiful day"? Obviously not. It isn't that it would be wrong to be thankful for such things at the table, or at any time. Nor would it be wrong to ask God to bless the bread and the cup (i.e., pronounce His blessings upon), or on anything which is received or done according to His will. However, when Jesus "blessed" the bread, He gave thanks for it. We must do the same in our prayers when we are serving at His table.

The Psalmist stated: "It is good to give thanks to the Lord" (Psa. 92:1). Paul said, "in everything give thanks" (1 Thes. 5:18). These words certainly apply to the Lord's Supper, especially in light of the fact that Jesus taught this by word and example when He instituted the Supper. It is important when praying at the table to give thanks for the bread which represents our Savior's body and to give thanks for the cup (fruit of the vine) which represents the blood of our Savior. As a rule, practically every "opening" and "closing" public prayer includes expressing thanks (and rightly so; we have so much for which to be thankful). Surely the same should be true of every prayer at the Lord's table. Most who serve the Lord's Supper say good things to God; but sometimes the problem or mistake involves what is not said – a failure to give thanks for the bread and

the cup (fruit of the vine). Let us strive to word our prayers of thanks clearly and properly so that all can say, "Amen."

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Poor Man's Country Club.

Greg Gwin

What are you looking for in a church? That's a fair question, and more than a few studies have been done to try to determine the things that most often appeal to the average church-goer.

Surveys suggest that the majority of people are looking for social activities and recreational opportunities. They are attract-ed to religious groups that spon-sor parties, softball, volleyball, dinners and other occasions to enjoy food and good times.

We have pointed out that this sort of thing is not authorized in the Bible. Individuals may organize such activities (1 Cor. 11:34), and we encourage them to do so. But such things are NOT the authorized work of the church.

Having said all that, let us comment about a disturbing trend in the Lord's church. Many who would agree with the things previously stated have still been heard to complain about local congregations on the basis that there are not enough "social" things to do. If someone is not always having them over, or if they are not occupied with a wide variety of other "fun" activities, they are quick to voice their dissatisfaction. Our ques-tion to such folks is, "What are you looking for in a church?" — a church that emphasizes spiritual things, or one where there's lots to 'do' socially? – a God-ordained institution, or a poor man's country club?

Think!