

You and the Church

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The church is people (Acts 2:47). It is composed of those “called out” persons who have obeyed the gospel of Christ and have thereby been sanctified (Ephesians 5:25-27). Since the church is people, its strength as a local force for good is dependent on the people who comprise it. In other words, the local church can only be as strong as the members in it. This does not argue, nor do I believe, that the church is only as strong as its weakest member. But it does argue that the local church derives its strength from the dedication and fidelity of its individual members.

We should be very grateful for those who are strong in the Lord’s church (and we have many). They give stability to the fellowship. They give courage to the weaker ones. They hold up the distressed and comfort the disheartened. And strong members give more. They give more time to the cause; they give more effort to winning souls to Christ. They will likely give more financial support to the work of the congregation. It is an apparent fact: the strong among us help us to become stronger. Read I Peter 3:8.

The weaker member—the member who is indifferent, uninvolved, disinterested—weakens the local congregation. That member shows a lack of interest in the spiritual things of the church and that results in the world getting a poor estimate of the cause he ostensibly professes. He often manifests a kind of half-hearted devotion to his various duties, thus causing those in the sphere of his influence to see little or no conviction or determination to adhere to the truth in his life. His manner of life does not show to others his determination to conform to his profession of faith. Such members weaken the local church.

Those who are irregular in their attendance have a weakening effect on the church. Attendance is a manifestation of interest, no matter the project or endeavor. In fact, such a purpose is stated in Hebrews 10:24, when the writer enjoins, “consider one another to provoke unto love and good works” with “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.” Such assemblies were obviously meant to cause us to be regularly reinforced for our encounters with the world, as well as for our personal spiritual progress. But when people do not attend as they ought the opposite impression is forthcoming. We become discouraged. Nothing encourages a local congregation of God’s people more than having everyone present for the services; and few are the things that are more discouraging than the sight of un-occupied pews. If you don’t attend regularly and as you have the opportunity, please be advised that you are a possible discouragement to those who do.

Uninformed members have a weakening effect on the local fellowship as well. Those not willing to expend the effort to grow in spiritual knowledge are more likely to make mistakes in judgment as they go about their daily lives. The person who will not “give

diligence” to find out what life is about and how to live it, cannot, in the very nature of the case, “rightly divide the word of truth (see II Timothy 2:15), or apportion it out in his daily living. That person’s tendency to compromise will be compounded by his not having truth in such a close proximity that he can apply it accurately to some given set of circumstances. As a result, he can easily bring disrespect for the cause he is supposed to represent—as well as to those of the congregation who profess to follow the Lord. Such mis-management or disregard for the gospel he is professedly following often causes the world to scream out “Hypocrite!,” even at the faithful. Spiritually educated members bring strength to the church and will resultantly cause the people in the world to both note and be impressed by their use of high ideals and noble principles in life (I Timothy 4:12).

Every member of the church is important. Christ died for every person and He is interested in every person being saved. In fact, the final consideration is not the local fellowship as an organized entity, but the individual members which comprise it. “Every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess,” and “each one shall give account of himself,” we are told by the book of God. (See Romans 14:11-12). The recognition of such should cause every person to put forth greater effort to be saved. But we need also to realize that we have an influence on others and that that influence will be a part of the assignments for which we will be held accountable in the judgment. Let us resolve to be strong, let us redouble our efforts to be faithful to our commitments to the Lord, thereby becoming an even greater influence for good both, inside and outside our spiritual community.