

Drifters

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West Texas was cow country in the early days. Its prairies stretched out in meandering waves of knee-high gramma grass as far as the eye could see. The “cowboy,” or “cowhand” was a familiar figure in this half-parched area. His leather-like skin and unkempt appearance was a far cry from the fancy-duded, guitar-totin’, class-B Western movie star which was popular in that era. His main work was not that of saving the rancher’s daughter from the “dirty-dealin” foreman who had the owner “hood-winked” and was actually trying to “dry-gulch” him. The cow-poke’s real task was the tedious (we said it “tee–jus”) work of branding, doctoring, and fence-mending. He spent most of his time in a boring manner and that was made even more difficult by the sheer loneliness he had to endure. Actually, most of his “cuttin’ ‘em off at the pass was done to cattle, bobcats or coyotes, not to black-hatted, low-down, side-windin’ crooks.

As a result of the privations encountered in such a hard life, a good cowhand was hard to find, and even harder to keep once found. Many of them were young men without a close family, and only a scant educational background. They were actually fitted for not much else. And because of the seasonal aspects of the work, many of them held a variety of simple jobs, and at various times.

They were called “drifters” because they came and went so often. Not only did they drift in and out of different ranches, they drifted in and out of working, period. As they needed money they worked, and when they had money, they didn’t. They were drifters.

It’s sad indeed to say that there are far too many drifters in churches today. They seemingly can’t find a place of service in the Lord’s kingdom, and as a result they just drift in and out. They seem to have only minimal feelings concerning their spiritual obligations and so they come and they go—they just drift in and out.

Drifting is caused by a lack of resolute determination. The person who drifts about has not developed the moral stamina and spiritual fortitude needed to attach himself firmly to his obligations as a child of God. As a result, the drifter is a prime candidate for wavering vacillation and indifference. “Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord (I Corinthians 15:58) has only passing importance to him and so he is “tossed to and fro and carried about” (Ephesians 4:14). If the scriptures teach anything at all, they teach that God is not pleased with drifters.

The drifter—as was the case in the old West—is easy to recognize, but difficult to deal with. The drifter is quick to profess, but slow to act. He is quick to agree with gospel news and principles, but not easily motivated to action concerning them. He may even agree with the fact that he needs to do better, but then he soon wanders away again.

Sadly, his vocal confessions while in the presence of other Christians are mere affirmations of faith, and they are apt to disappear again when that presence is gone. In fact, we may not see the drifter again for two or three weeks—until he decides to drift back in again.

The sad thing about most drifters is that they know what is necessary to correct their lack of continued faithfulness, they just can't seem to recognize their errant lackadaisical reactions to what they know; nor do they seem motivated to make any corrections so as to energize themselves to continual spiritual action. They're just satisfied to drift in and out and participate when the mood strikes them.

Listen! "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Hebrews 2:1). What does that say to you?

Let the drifter take careful notice: you cannot drift your way to heaven. If you don't have a firm determination to go, you're apt to just slowly float along and then be lost at the judgment.

"For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?" (Hebrews 2:2-3)

Are you a drifter? Better be careful, podna!