

A Denominational Dilemma

Why do denominations offer so many social, recreational and entertainment activities? They did not get it from the Bible. No command is given to churches to provide these activities. In fact, they are condemned (1 Cor. 11:22, 34). No church in the New Testament engaged in these activities. Rather, they were busy spreading the soul-saving gospel, being a pillar and ground of truth (1 Thes. 1:7-9; 1 Tim. 3:15). So, why do denominations participate in social, recreational and entertainment activities?

To understand this, we must look at what they have taught over the course of many years. First, denominational preachers teach people the church is unimportant. They say the church is a temporary institution established at the last minute when the Jews rejected Jesus. This is contrary to the scriptures that state the church is part of God's eternal purpose (Eph. 3:9-11). Second, they also teach that we can have a personal relationship with God without being a part of any church. This is opposed to plain teaching that says glory is given to God in the church (Eph. 3:21). Besides, how can a person honor Christ and not be a part of His body, the church (Eph. 1:22-23)?

Third, denominational preachers teach that faith alone saves and once one is saved, he cannot be lost. Again, this contradicts the Bible that says we must believe, repent, confess Christ and be baptized to be saved (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 10:9-10). It also says that faith without works is dead (Jas. 2:24). So, if you do not remain faithful, you are spiritually dead, separated from God, and will cast forth (Jn. 15:1-6).

When you combine these denominational doctrines, you have a recipe for dying churches. If the church is unimportant and I do not need to be a part of it, and all I need to do is believe in Jesus and go to heaven, no matter what, then why should I go to church? Why should I give money to it? Well, denominations have been bleeding members for many years. This put them in a dilemma. How do they keep people from leaving? The way they decided to do this was to offer social, recreational and entertainment activities. Do you think I am wrong? Have you ever heard it said, "We need some way to keep the young people"?

Another aspect of this is, how do the denominations keep up with each other? They do not compete for people based on truth. They do not condemn each other, rather they extend "fellowship" to one another. So,

how do they compete? They see who can build the nicest "Family-Life Center." They see who can offer the most exciting sports, retreats, camps, etc. They see who can have the biggest production at Christmas or Easter, or who can get the "big-name" speaker. And, when you have trained people to fall for such things, the people will go from one church to another. "Where's the best deal this week?" It is all very shallow and soul-damning.

Churches that belong to Christ do not engage in such things. They realize the kingdom of God is not meat and drink. They understand the power to draw people rests in the gospel (Rom. 1:16; Jn. 6:44-45). If people are not drawn to Christ by His word, then they will not be truly converted. If they are drawn by pizza and parties, that is the kind of "Christian" they will be, carnal, "whose god is their belly" (Rom. 8:6; Phil. 3:19). Churches of Christ reject and denounce such things. No, they are not "exciting" to the carnally minded person. Worship services consist of reverent prayer, singing and preaching, as well as the memorial supper of the Lord and giving for His work (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Eph. 5:19). Class time is spent studying the Bible, not planning the next rafting trip or financial seminar (Acts 17:11). This approach does not draw many people, just the honest and humble.

There are some among the denominations that are honest and sincere. These are the one we want to reach. They love the Lord, but have been misled by their preachers. They will accept the truth, maybe not at first, though. Let us look for these precious souls and help them see the denominational errors--and get out.

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