

The Lakeview Lamp

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”-Psalm 119:105

April 18, 2004

Nails

John Scott

“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23).

Why are these familiar words of Jesus so hard to put into practice? We know the cross was an instrument of death that gave Jesus no comfort. We know too that Jesus took up His cross of His own free will. No one forced Him to do it. It was not a circumstance beyond His control, but a decision he made, like our early morning decisions to “take up our cross daily.”

We tell the Lord in the beginning of the day that we want to do His will regardless of the cost. We often find by nightfall that our cross, so earnestly accepted in the morning hours, has been dropped somewhere along the way.

Why is our cross so difficult to hold on to while Christ persevered to the end? What did the cross of Christ have that ours lacks?

Nails.

When Jesus let the soldiers drive the nails into His hands and feet, the cross took on new meaning. It was no longer simply a burden or a mere symbol of death. It was death as reality. The nails were not very large, but they made the cross very real. A cross, after all, is not for simply carrying around. It is something you get nailed to.

Those few nails Jesus accepted were small, but painful. Have you noticed the three or four small “nails” that are offered you each day? They are momentary situations in which you have a choice to make: not exploding in anger at the driver who cut sharply in front of you on your way to work;

helping someone when you're rushed for time and don't feel like helping; being honest even if it costs you time, money, or position; not insisting on having things done your way, though you are right.

The nails are to the cross what your obedience is to Christ's lordship. Obeying means always saying yes to these nails — so small, yet so essential.

When you take up your cross today, don't forget the nails.

“God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.”
—Psalm 67:7

“Things to Consider” Troy Nicholson

Last week we considered some things mentioned in a Tennessean article on “church shopping.” Accompanying the article was a column entitled “Things to consider” which offered some do's and don'ts when visiting a church. Some of the recommendations would be good for all of us to keep in mind.

“Do make arrangements to speak with the pastor of the congregation as soon as possible.” It would do us all good to make arrangements to speak with the pastors of the congregation where we attend. Too often people talk about them but never talk to them. Pastors have the great responsibility to “shepherd the church /flock of God” (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-3). As the flock, we have the responsibility to share our needs and concerns with them (James 5:14).

“Do introduce yourself to congregation members and talk with them. You'll learn a lot. Don't sit on the fringes. Christianity is not a spectator sport.” Too many members do not seem to realize this fact. They have no interaction with other members outside of worship, and hardly any then. They come to worship – the few times they do come – at the last possible moment and hit the door as soon as the last “amen” is said – if not before.

Are there members here whom you do not really know? Then get to know

them. Make a special effort to speak to them after worship, invite them into your home or out to eat, etc. Are there members who are regularly mentioned as sick or shut in whom you do not know? Then give them a call; or even better, go visit them. "You'll learn a lot."

"Don't get sucked in by overdone programs and music. Remember, this is worship, not entertainment." Any programs and music that we have as the Lord's church must be for the Lord's honor, not for our own gratification. For it to be in His honor, it must be according to His name or authority (Colossians 3:17).

"Don't lead with your heart; use your head. Christianity is about the objective fact of salvation in Jesus Christ, not feelings." Solomon encourages us to "lean not on your own understanding;...Do not be wise in your own eyes"(Proverbs 3:5-7). Why? Because"there is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (14:12; 16:25). The way of salvation is only through Christ (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

"Do plan on joining. Church shopping should be a temporary phase, not a way of life." Some people make fluctuating between various churches a way of life, with no real commitment or accountability to any of them. When Paul became a Christian and went to Jerusalem, he sought to join the disciples there (Acts 9:26-28). We each need to join the disciples where we can be the most beneficial in the Lord's service and be fully committed to doing the Lord's work with them.

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"This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it"
(Psalm 118:24)