

The Lakeview Lamp

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." – **Psalm 119:105**

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A Faithful Church Can Grow

Mark White

Information from church growth experts tells us that if we want to grow, we must meet the “felt needs” of our society. Most churches in our time are more interested in having their building filled than in being faithful to the Lord. This is why some modern churches are nothing more than glorified day-care centers, recreation halls, and social support groups. Many churches of Christ have given up the idea that a church can grow today if it holds the line of truth and exalts the will of God above the will of man. Some brethren have even been fooled into believing that the “baby-boomers” and “generation X” will not be attracted to churches which simply preach the Gospel and provide a warm, nourishing environment for converts to grow and develop into mature, faith-filled Christians. Perhaps not; but the church is the Lord’s, and it will truly grow when it does what the Lord says do.

Certainly not everyone will be attracted to a church which is content to be the church you read about in the Bible. The simple Gospel of Christ does not appeal to every mind. Even Jesus was not successful in converting everyone He taught (**John 6:41-66**). But the Gospel always reaches the heart it is intended to reach. As one fellow put it, “We’re just looking for them who are looking for Him.”

So, can a church adhering to the New Testament pattern grow today? To say that it cannot grow is to abandon the necessity of preaching the Gospel. To conclude that “doing Bible things in Bible ways” will not appeal to folks – so let’s start having “celebration worship,” drama skits, instrumental music, or charismatic “testimonials” – is to deny the power of the pure Gospel of Christ. Paul was unashamed of the simple message of salvation he preached (**Rom 1:16**), and neither should we be ashamed to lift up the cross and point men and women to the Savior. There is no need for sensationalism or “food, fun, and frolic.” In fact, these things are beneath the dignity of the Gospel! A church which belittles the Gospel by “converting” men with such carnal inducements is guilty of spiritual harlotry. It is cheap and tawdry to produce numerical growth at the expense of truth and genuine spirituality.

How Am I Doing?

Ron Adams

How am I doing? Call 1-800-555-1234.

Having seen signs like this on a number of commercial vehicles, my first thought was that the owner wanted to know if the operator was driving in an unsafe manner. The reason the sign was placed on the vehicle was so that a reckless and discourteous driver may be reported. But is this the only reason? Could there be another purpose?

After considering it for a while, I thought, “What if the driver is being extremely courteous? Would the employer appreciate someone taking the time to write down the number and call to report good driving?”

On one occasion I did place a call to commend an especially courteous driver. The person who answered the phone said, “What is your complaint?” Complaint? I said I was calling to express my approval. After a few moments of silence, a shocked but pleased employee took my statement.

Then I pondered, “Are we more prone to report bad behavior than good behavior?” It certainly seems easier to spot poor behavior and complain about it than to recognize good behavior and commend it.

Condemn and commend sound alike but are worlds apart in meaning: one deprecates, the other appreciates. While both are needed at the appropriate times to achieve the desired results, commendation is often omitted. At times we simply fail to express approval and appreciation.

Maybe it’s because it takes effort to see the good in others. Maybe it’s because we have a fear that such praise will produce arrogance in another (or in ourselves). Or, maybe, it is because we misunderstand or misapply the teaching of Jesus in **Matthew 6:1**, “*Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.*” Do we feel that in giving praise (even if unsolicited) we may jeopardize one’s salvation?

Good deeds are not to be done for the praise of men; but words of praise, credit, and appreciation reinforce good behavior. They acknowledge the great value of such actions (Let it be noted that self-depreciation is a form of false humility. Running oneself down in order to feel humble is not a Bible concept.).

Paul, in his letters to churches and individuals, wrote words of praise and commendation, even to a church that had numerous problems. Not that he overlooked their problems – he addressed them as well he should. In his first letter to the church at Corinth, in one chapter he wrote, “*Now I praise you...*” (**11:2**), and shortly thereafter he wrote, “*I praise you not*” (**11:22**). In some things they did well, in others they did not. Paul mentioned both.

Paul, in writing to the church at Rome, commended Phoebe and many others. John, in recording what he was told to write to the seven churches of Asia, penned words of praise as well as criticism.

Commendation is sorely needed for one to maintain a proper balance in life, and to maintain a proper view of oneself. This especially applies to those who are trying to live for the Lord. When one fails to do what is right or sins, his or her actions need to be denounced. Conversely, when one does succeed in living righteously, such actions need to be recognized and appreciated.

The Lord knows the makeup of His crowning creation: mankind. He knows that poor behavior needs to be addressed, and changes need to be forthcoming. He also knows that those who strive to do right, and labor to maintain a good conscience, need words of commendation and approval. The words, “*Well done, good and faithful slave*” (**Matthew 25:21**) were spoken to those who did their master’s bidding; and “*...you have done well...*” (**Philippians 4:14**) were spoken to the brethren in Philippi.

Let’s imitate our Master. Let’s be as quick to commend as condemn. As ready to show our appreciation as our disapproval. As eager to praise as censure. By all means, let’s be as quick to commend as condemn!

News and Notes

Members:

- * Mary Burnett had a bad night Friday night but was sleeping well yesterday. She has good and bad days.
- * Metty Fain remains in Highland Manor Nursing Home; Room B2; 215 Highland Circle Dr; Portland, TN 37148.
- * Bill White was taken last night to Sumner Regional with what first appeared to be a stomach virus. He is losing a lot of blood and is in CCU.

Friends and Family:

- * Sandlyn Fultz is scheduled for reconstructive leg surgery on both legs on Dec 31. For details see www.caringbridge.org/visit/nathanandsandlyn

Absent: None known.

New Reports: None known.



“The LORD is high above all nations; His glory is above the heavens.” – Psalm 113:4