

REMINDER

Volume XV

April 26, 2009

Number 17

COUNT ON ME!

A woman in a certain church was growing steadily unable to hear. Yet she was unwilling to consider a hearing aid. And in spite of the fact that she had gotten to the point that she couldn't follow much of what was said or sung, she continued to attend church services. One day the pastor visited with her and summoned up the nerve to ask her, very loudly, "I know you can't hear anything that's going on in church. Why do you continue to come?"

The woman's reply was quick: "*I come because I want everybody to know whose side I'm on!*"

Sometimes the core of Christian behavior is just this simple: letting others know whose side you're on. At such times, our actions need to say, "Lord, I'm on your side - you can count on me!"

God knows our hearts, and whether or not we love him truly and are his completely. He knows whether or not he can count on us. But others - like our churches - also need to know. God wants his church to be able to count on its members to stand with it in ministry and witness. Is it enough to attend worship services regularly? Can anyone infer from this that we can be counted on to help move the church forward? Could church leaders plan for challenging outreach ministries based on the assumption they can count on us? Can a church commit itself to support a mission, after reassuring itself that its members will pray, and give,

and work? Can your church count on you? Can God?

One of the most important issues for a church is its members' faithfulness to give. Stewardship is certainly about more than giving money; but when it comes right down to converting the resources of individuals into the stuff that runs the nuts-and-bolts operations of Christian ministry, churches need their members to be good givers.

Some people complain about churches which - in their opinion - spend too much time talking about money. Admittedly the subject can be overdone. But look at it this way: churches challenge their members to become generous benefactors of the most important and most rewarding cause in the world, the cause of Jesus Christ, the only Savior. Churches challenge us to take our minds off only what we want to buy, do, or have. They teach us to think of others, to think of spiritual needs, to value more than anything else the advancement of the kingdom of God and the salvation of the world's people. All this is part of what our churches do through the resources their members give Sunday by Sunday.

Can you be counted on to support your church's work? The Bible teaches us that stewardship is the handling responsibly everything God has put at our disposal or entrusted to us. We are charged with the necessity of giving, the grace of giving, the urgency of giving. Look how the scriptures teach us we should be people who can be

counted on.

1. Counted on to Do What We Ought:

One of the basic reasons for our being givers who can be counted on is simply that we are commanded to give - it is a responsibility that has been part of God's law for thousands of years.

The Old Testament contains clear commandments to bring offerings to God, not just the sacrifices that symbolized the price of sin, but the offerings of grain, fruit and other products that came from the living the people made every day. We learn from Numbers 18:21 that the institutions of worship and ministry, and those called to lead them, are to be supported by the tithes of God's people. Other places we read about how the poor are to be fed through the offerings God's people give. There's no debate about what God commanded in the Old Testament.

But many wonder if the New Testament, and specifically Jesus, reaffirmed the importance of giving a tithe, or if He overturned it or brought it to an end. The full answer to that question is not as simple as saying, "We don't have to tithe anymore," or "We do." But starting with the very words of Jesus, we get an idea how He regarded tithing. Read Matthew 23:23, for example:

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the

(continued inside)

weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

Notice the "oughtness" in this verse. He tells the Pharisees that instead of just following the letter of the law they should obey its spirit. But notice that instead of saying they should *substitute* the spirit for the letter, He says they should keep the letter *after* keeping the spirit, or perhaps *as a result* or keeping the spirit of the law. The words "**not to leave the other undone**" refer to tithing, and constitute Jesus' reaffirmation of God's intention that His people should give the tenth back to Him.



Since Jesus wanted His followers to continue to tithe, He showed us in a number of his parables what kind of spirit we should do it in. We should be the kind of people who are faithful with what God has put in our keeping. We *ought* to faithfully handle even the least of our trusts, and we ought even more to be faithful in the things that lie at the core of life: justice, faith and mercy. All of these we owe God. It is wonderful that the Christian has the word written on his heart, the love of Christ inside him, the righteousness of faith clothing him as a gift of grace: but never let any of us who know Jesus Christ believe that we owe God any less in the matter of giving, just because we're in the age of grace. And we are bound by our duty to the Saviour Who died for us to render unto God the things that are God's, even when we may not feel the inward urgency we *ought* to feel to be stewards.

Another way of putting this is that we cannot use our status as people "under grace" instead of "under law" to avoid what the heart of the law taught and what God expects. It is inconceivable that in the matter of stewardship the Holy Spirit would lead us to give less as children of grace than we would have to have given (if perhaps grudgingly) under the law.

An elderly man who had been won to Christ as a young soldier in World War I recounted his years in church, and commented that there were many times he didn't agree with something the majority in the church had decided or the preacher had done, but that it had never affected his tithe. He explained, "If the preacher or some members and I disagree, they may be wrong, but so may I. And my tithe isn't given to any of them, but to God. I can't let other people tempt me to disobey God." His giving record proved his claim. He had given above a tithe for many years, without interruption.

God wants to be able to count on you like that. Your church needs more men and women, boys and girls, who can be counted on to do what we ought.

The bottom line is that the Christian has a responsibility to abide by God's unchanging expectation: that we will be generous with his work. But as we will see, he expects us to do that not out of sheer duty, not because we are threatened or browbeaten to do so, but because of something that arises from deep within us.

II. Counted on to Act from the Heart:

God has given the Christian a new heart through the new birth.

Upon this heart he has written his word and his law. And out of that new heart, as we grow to recognize the life of Christ in us, we will want to be good stewards.

In his first great sermon, Jesus announced that the law, that ancient God that had commanded the Israelites what they must do, was being fulfilled in his own life and ministry.

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:17-20).

The concept of "fulfilling the law" is very important to the New Testament teaching about stewardship. Since tithing is part of Old Testament law, we need to understand what it meant for Jesus to *fulfill* the law, in order to know how we are to think of tithing. Some people, for instance, believe that since tithing was a law, and the law has been fulfilled, tithing is irrelevant to our day and time, and has no place at all in the Christian's discussion. Are they right?

Jesus meant to set straight the thinking of those Jews who believed that he was on the verge of overturning everything they had ever lived for. One version of Jesus the Nazarene had it that he was turning Judaism on its ear, offending every righteous person and blaspheming God. None of this was true. He emphatically told his hearers that his mission was to fulfill the law.

To fully understand what this means we have to understand how the law as a whole was incomplete, or not yet "full," and we must identify specific parts of the law that looked forward to identifiable things or persons to come.

I. Fulfillment Means What Is Incomplete Becomes Complete. The sense in which the law was incomplete on the whole is simply that it could only require behavior from the outside, but could not motivate that behavior from the inside. Paul expressed this well in the letter to the Roman church:

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit"
(Romans 8:3-4).

Jesus boldly declares that his life and ministry were designed to complete the law of God, by bringing to man the inward motivation to obey God. This is one of the primary meanings of "fulfill," here in Matthew.

(continued next week)

Pastor's Corner

Todd M. White

Participation: KEY To A Healthy Church!



oday, we live in a society filled with *spectators*. We *watch* television. We *watch* sports. We *watch* movies. We *watch* our kids do their things. We even *watch* our lives tick away every hour of every day, and think little of it. The list of things we allow to entertain us is seemingly endless. It seems today that precious few in America do much more than sit back and watch *someone else do something*. Isn't that sad?

It used to be that Americans were the most industrious people on the planet. Not anymore. We've become the most lazy - allowing others to work at those jobs *we* won't do anymore, paying others to do things we *could have* done ourselves, and we've even degenerated to the point we expect *everyone* else to do *everything* else for us, even to the point of paying our way through life. Isn't that sad?

The Apostle Paul exhorts all believers that with "...*quietness they work, and eat their own bread*" II Thessalonians 3:12b). Of course, the Church is supposed to care for those who cannot

care for themselves, such as widows and orphans, but most churches have left that up to the state. It seems even believers would rather *watch* someone else do it!

We see this even in Christians who are looking for a church home. One of the first things they will ask a pastor will invariably have something to do with the programs that his church offers. What they're usually looking for, in reality, is a church where they can sit around, shirk responsibility, and "*let George do it.*"

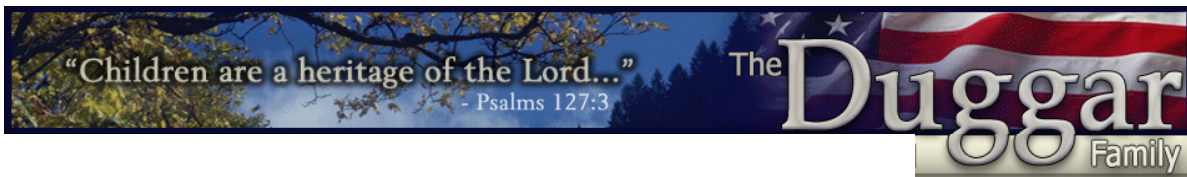
Well, "George" doesn't go to church here. At least I don't think he does. Therefore, we, as members of the Church of Jesus Christ, mustn't sit around waiting for ol' George to pick up the slack for us. *Whatever is going to get done will have to be done by us!*

One of the first steps in seeing to it that your church grows is to **participate** in what it does yourself! During the rest of this year, we will be having a large number (for a small church) of important activities planned that will help you in your walk with the Lord, *but you have to participate in order to reap the benefits!*

Church services, Sunday School, fellowships, activities, opportunities to win the lost, etc. - all these and more are available for you to participate in so you can grow in Christ!

Why not purpose in your heart - right now - to get involved in everything God has planned for you? You'll be glad you did, and when you get to Heaven, others will be there that were glad you did, too! ■

BE PLANNING NOW TO BRING SOMEONE TO MEET -



Sunday Morning June 28, 2009

- ❑ *Duggar-family Musicians Will Play and Sing For Our Service!*
- ❑ *Jim Bob Duggar Will Be Speaking In The Morning Service!*
- ❑ *Michelle Duggar To Give Devotional At Rebekah White's Baby Shower At 1:30 p.m.*

PLAN NOW TO BE HERE!

NURSERY MINISTRY WORKERS FOR THIS WEEK

10:50 a.m. Service ----- Cradle Roll 1: Shirley White
 Cradle Roll 2: Merri Geroux
 6:00 p.m. Service ----- Cradle Roll 1: Kristi Hooper
 Cradle Roll 2: Andrea Hooper
 Wed. Eve. Service ----- Cradle Roll 1: LeAnna White
 Cradle Roll 2: Seth White

AND THE PEOPLE CAME...

Week of April 19, 2009

Sunday School ----- 18
 Sunday Morning Service ----- 34
 Sunday Evening Service ----- 28
 Wed. Eve. Service, 04/22/09 ----- 23

AND THE PEOPLE GAVE...

Week of April 19, 2009

Undesignated Tithes & Offerings ----- \$ 2,297.00
 Love Off'g, Malcom Ellis (saving up for next year) --- \$ 5.00
 New Hymnals Fund ----- \$ 90.00
 Parsonage Renovation Fund ----- \$ 5.00
Total Received for Week of 04/19/09: \$ 2,397.00

Average amount of Undesignated Offerings needed to operate the church EACH WEEK, as a minimum = \$ 1,400.00 📢

FUND DRIVE REPORTS

NEW HYMNAL FUND

Offerings Received To Date: \$ 1,330.00

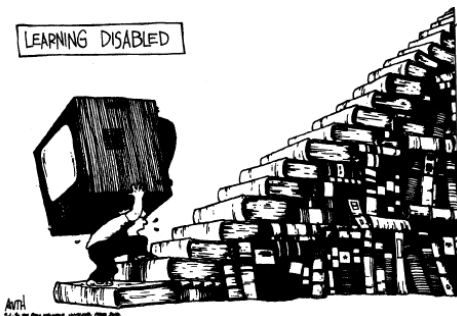
NEW PIANO FUND

Offerings Received To Date: \$ 570.00

PARSONAGE RENOVATION FUND

Total Received, To Date: \$ 329.00

LEARNING DISABLED



WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SAVED

1. *Admit that you are a sinner.*
2. *Admit that God says all sins must be paid for.*
3. *Accept the fact that Christ took upon Himself the suffering necessary to pay for all your sins.*
4. *You must change your mind about sin and sinning (God calls this repentance).*
5. *By an act of your will, accept by faith the Lord Jesus Christ, who can save you from the penalty of sin. Then, tell God about this in a simple prayer. Believe that God keeps His promise to save you, and thank Him for His salvation.*



Please Remember To Be Faithful to Give!

As with everything else, the costs of keeping a church going never go down - they always go *up*. Bills wait for no one, and churches are no exception to this. An extra, sacrificial gift today by everyone present would go a long way...

We encourage all of our membership to practice obedience to God by being faithful every payday to give back to Him His tithe (10%). *If every family in our church would practice this one simple discipline, we would never have weeks where we have to put off paying some bills until the following week!*

Everything is expensive, especially for a small church like ours, but ours is a BIG God, and He LOVES to bless His children when they are obedient to Him!

If you are already a tither, we thank you, and encourage you to also give offerings as well. If you're currently not tithing, won't you please start *today* - **OK?** Thank you.

Church Directory

Todd W. White ----- Pastor
 Mickie Shatwell ----- Pianist
 Dickie Eberle ----- Greeter, Custodian
 Larry Mathews, Caryn Quinnely, Todd W. White ----- S.S. Teachers
 Larry & Mary Byars, Brian & Charity Crawford,
 Nathaniel & Rebekah White ----- Outreach