

# Plain Path

Weekly newsletter of the Fry Road church of Christ

Sunday, October 12, 2014

Volume 19, Number 41

“Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path... Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart” (Psalm 27:11-14)

## THE CHURCH WHERE PAUL PREACHED

by Bob Pulliam

**Y**OU KNOW WHAT'S POPULAR IN RELIGION TODAY. But how would that compare to the churches where the apostle Paul did his work? The common notion is that *the church I go to isn't much different than what they had when Paul was alive*. Let's see if that is true...

### Popular Churches Today...

What is popular in churches today? Now I know there are a lot of little things involved, but what makes them really popular? I've heard the usual list of things that people are looking for when they shop around. Here's a little list:

- Lively Services
- Youth Programs and Facilities
- Nursery Facilities
- Inspirational Sermons

Now it is important that we define what is meant by each item in this list. Lively services refers to popular toe-tapping music that is performed as if in a show, with a constant flow of events intended to raise money, entertain the youth, and lure the community. Youth programs refer to basketball, soccer, camp-outs, eating halls and regular “church dinners”, etc. All expected to be sponsored by the church. Nursery facilities is sometimes referred to as “children’s church”, and means baby sitting services. Inspirational sermons refers to lessons that have no lesson other than what might be applied in a general way to one’s life. There isn’t a great deal of mention of sin, or the need to repent. This makes people feel bad.

So, is there much difference between then and now?

### REGARDING LIVELY SERVICES...

There is nothing wrong with “lively services” if they do not overstep scriptural bounds. Worship to God must be in “spirit and *truth*” (Jn 4:24). Worship is vain when we teach as doctrines the commandments of men (Mt 15:9). Many gimmicks have gone into religious services under the banner “it feels good”. Lighting a candle and holding it does not bring one closer to God, no matter how the feelings may indicate otherwise. Being close to God is not indicated by “feeling”. As James wrote, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” (Jms 4:8). Drawing near to God consists of forgiveness and sanctification.

Now if all of this isn't enough, look around at all of the religious groups that *feel* close to God. Would you believe that the Jehovah's Witness is close to God?...

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Even though he *feels* close to God? What about the Mormon? He *feels* close to God!

Now contrast all of this with the ancient church. In that day, all things were to be done in an orderly manner (I Cor 14:40). Jumping up and shouting spontaneously while another was speaking was condemned by Paul (I Cor 14:30-33). It may be lively, but it is confusion. The emphasis on religious music today is its entertainment value. Not so where Paul preached. "*speaking* to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord," (Eph 5:19). The words were of supreme importance as they conveyed the sentiment of the heart. Paul also indicated this when he wrote, "Let the word of Christ

dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (Col 3:16)

REGARDING YOUTH PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES...

Nothing would be wrong with these if they simply involved teaching God's word, and molding minds and attitudes to obey God. This is not what people have in mind when they speak of "Youth Programs". Gymnasiums and fellowship halls; constant parties, games and shows; these are the things that make a "successful" youth program in the religious world today! And you may have noticed that I put the word *successful* in quotes. Because *success* is measured in numbers and enthusiasm. The church with the greatest amount of fun activity "wins"!

Note the following observation by someone who promoted the "youth program" approach:

*"We thought, 'Get 'em to the church and have a party (If they're at church, at least they're not out partying someplace else. So we've done our job.' But the problem was, Ruhlman says, they were coming to church to be entertained, and they were going home - entertained. 'They endured the message'"*

(Quote from John Ruhlman, high-school pastor at Shadow Mountain Community Church, El Cajon, California, in *Christianity Today* [February 3, 1997])

They "endured the message". Not a very promising outcome for something intended to set the world on fire! They could get the youth there consistently, but they

weren't choosing their church on the basis of true edification.

Now think for a moment about the church you can read about in the Bible. Where is its youth programs and facilities? Jesus had the perfect opportunity to teach regarding the fellowship hall in John 6:26-29. He had a hungry crowd, wanting Him to feed them; but instead He rebuked them! Paul had a great opportunity to sanction the gymnasium in I Timothy 4:8. Instead he wrote, "For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things,..."

REGARDING NURSERY FACILITIES...

There is nothing wrong with providing a separate room for parents to train their children at services; but that is not what is sought. It is usually called "children's church", and some of our own brethren have taken up this practice. The only people in the Bible who were ever in the church were adults who had believed and obeyed the gospel. When we call a day-care service "children's church" we betray our ignorance in biblical matters. We also exclude children from the discipline of sitting still.

REGARDING INSPIRATIONAL SERMONS...

I wonder how inspirational people today would consider Paul's sermon from Acts 20:7. In verse nine we read of Eutychus who fell asleep during that sermon. I contend that Paul's preaching would not be welcome in a vast majority of churches today. Not only did he not engage in sensationalism and comedy to keep his audiences pumped up (and awake); but he also condemned sin wherever he found it. Interest in sermons only comes to those who are truly

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**THIS WEEK'S DAILY BIBLE READINGS**

**NEW TESTAMENT READING**

GALATIANS 1 - 6

October 12 - 14

**OLD TESTAMENT READING**

I SAMUEL 16 - 22

October 15 - 18

**I TIMOTHY 4:13**

# FAMILY NEWS & NOTES

*News and Notes of Interest  
to Fry Road Members*

Because of the large number of visitors to our services, we would ask those wishing to identify with the congregation to do so by expressing this interest directly to the elders.

## Upcoming Meetings & Events:

**Gospel Meeting (Dee Bowman)**  
January 11 - 14, 2015

**Gospel Meeting (Carl McMurray)**  
April 12 - 15, 2015

**V.B.S.**  
June 21 - 25, 2015

**Annual Singing**  
September 12, 2015

**Gospel Meeting (Jim Deason)**  
September 13 - 16, 2015

## Sick and Shut-Ins

*Sections have been removed to preserve members' privacy*

## Sermons:

### Next Sunday:

Remember Lot's Wife

### Tonight:

The Battlefield  
– Then & Now –

*"...I was sick, and you visited me..."*  
*Matthew 25:36*

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interested in the subject material being discussed. When we need a constant barrage of comedy and cheerleading to keep our interest, we show a deficiency in our own spiritual-mindedness.

## Conclusion...

The Lord's church is not welcome among many who claim to be following the Lord. It does not have the social elements that they have become accustomed to. Because they are used to these, and can find them in so many modern churches, they assume that we are "out of touch"; "stale"; or simply "downright boring". They are unable to see that the churches having these social elements are not the Lord's church. But that blindness is due to assumption, not careful Bible study. The church of Jesus Christ retains its identity only as it follows the Lord by whom she is named. The church is the body of Christ (Eph 1:22f; Col 1:18), and as such will be recognizable as under His complete control. Rather than earthly headquarters, the body will appeal solely to the New Testament for direction and edification.

Remember: Just because it's popular in churches today doesn't make it popular with the Lord. 

## Ladies Class...

Ladies, don't forget the **Fall Ladies Bible Classes**. The morning class will run until 11/18/14, meeting every week at the Fry Road Building at 10:00 a.m. The evening class will run until 11/11/14, meeting every other Tuesday evening at 6:30 p.m. at Cinco Ranch Library. On 11/18/14 there will be a Special Topics class for one evening.

# FOR THE RECORD

## WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

## MONTHLY ASSIGNMENTS

*Sections have been removed to preserve members' privacy*

IN KEEPING WITH OUR LONG STANDING AGREEMENT, THOSE SERVING PUBLICLY ARE REMINDED TO PLEASE DRESS IN A MANNER RESPECTFUL OF THE GOD WHOM WE SERVE.

### ELDERS:

Ruben Amador  
Matthew Heaton  
Donnie Mangrum  
Steve Voss



### DEACONS:

John Coleman	Ken Dunsmore
David Ellison	Ray Farrell
Aubrey Garner	Steve Geraci
Steve LaGrasta	John Light
Steven Martin	Mike McMurray
Jason Mock	David Stevenson
Glenn Tomblin	

### TIMES OF SERVICES

Sunday Bible Classes	9:30 AM
Sunday Morning Assembly	10:30 AM
Sunday Evening Assembly	6:00 PM
Wednesday Bible Classes	7:30 PM

### EVANGELIST & EDITOR:

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