

Why Do You Wait?

Although this article bears the same title as a familiar hymn, the only similarity between the two is that both encourage action. While the hymn exhorts obedience to the Gospel, this article urges active involvement by Christians in the work of the Lord's church.

Does it seem to you that very little takes place in the work of the church unless it is part of a "program"? Think about that for a moment. We have visitation programs, youth programs, personal work programs, benevolence programs and more. We have "ministers" for children, older youth, young adults, older adults and more. This article is not a criticism of scripturally organized work. The Bible shows in Acts 6 that there is need for organization (although the abundance of specialized "ministers" does seem to have gotten out of hand). Instead, the article deals with the notion that we have to have some type of program before we can do the Lord's work. Such is surely not the case. Can we not individually as Christians visit the sick, help the needy and teach the Gospel? Do we need to wait until someone organizes a program for these deeds before we can get involved in them?

When a congregation becomes stagnant or begins to dwindle in number, the rumblings for change in the church begin to stir. Some think a change in preachers would fix the trouble. Others think a change in leadership would reverse the downward spiral. Of course, there are some who think the trouble is with the Gospel so they seek to change it and turn the church into a social club, but that's another article. Then there are those who think a new program would be the solution. The trouble with these fixes is that none of them addresses the real issue. The real issue is personal commitment on the part of each and every Christian to faithfully serve God. If that is not there, then no amount of organization is going to help the local congregation.

Do you have neighbors, friends or co-workers who are not Christians? Have you talked to them about their souls, invited them to worship, or asked them to engage in a Bible study with you? If not, why do you wait? Is there someone you know who is sick, perhaps even in the hospital? Does he or she have a family in need of transportation, food or just a listening ear? Have you offered any of these services to them? If not, why do you wait? Are you familiar with anyone who is downtrodden, who is having some difficulties in life and maybe even some financial hardships? Have you personally extended a helping hand to these folks? If not, why do you wait? Do your children need more study of the Bible, more association with other young people from Christian homes or more hands-on work in service to God? Are you as the parent leading the way to make sure they are getting these opportunities? If not, why do you wait? Do you find there is a greater need for Christians to spend time with one another and to get to know one another better? When was the last time you invited a fellow Christian into your home for a meal and an evening of fellowship? Why do you wait?

An active, thriving congregation of the church of Christ is not due to the number of programs or ministers. A congregation can have all kinds of activities going on day in and day out and still be in the condition of the church in Sardis of whom Jesus said, "thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." (Revelation 3:1). No congregation is going to grow without diligent effort on the part of its members. Neither a plethora of programs nor a myriad of ministers will change that. Even the scripturally organized congregations with elders in the lead and deacons in service cannot grow simply because they are scripturally organized. There must be active participation in the work of the church by each member.

Dear Christian, what are you personally doing in the work of the church that Jesus purchased with His blood? Are you sitting back and thinking that if someone could just put together a program or organize an event, the church would suddenly begin to grow at an amazing pace? If so, you'll soon be sitting back covered in moss while you wait for someone to do something. Remember this maxim: "Everyone thought someone should do something. As a result, no one did what anyone could have done." There is much to do. There's work on every hand. It's up to you and it's up to me. Why do we wait?