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REFLECTOR

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ARE YOU DOING YOUR SHARE?

• Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

"From whom (Christ) the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes the growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. -- Eph. 4:16

It not enough to be members of the church by identification and association - one must be a member by participation.

Too many Christians feel that if, after baptism, they identify and associate with a good congregation that they have done all that is expected of them as Christians. These would not hear to attending an unsound church or want to be associated with one in any way.

A congregation is not edified (built-up) by members who just identify with it, but by members who are effectively working and doing their share. Too many are just looking for a place where they can "worship in spirit and in truth", where what money they give is "used right", and where the work the church does can be found in the Bible. They will be heard from if they think someone is going to corrupt the worship or work or misuse the funds. Such would then mean they would no longer feel secure as members of a sound church. (All of this is good as far as it goes) However, don't expect them to really get into any positive work that must be done for a

church to really prosper. One must work to keep the church pure, but he must also effectively work to build it up.

A congregation is a group of Christians working together as a unit. To be effective, each member must effectively do his share of the work. That is more than just showing up at the services. Many feel that if they regularly attend that they are doing their part to keep the congregation going. Not necessarily. Being at the services is important (cf. Heb. 10:25), but that's not all that is needed to build up the church.

I notice people who are always in attendance at Bible classes, but seldom look at the lesson until the next class period - not even carrying lesson material home. Is this really effective working in doing one's share to build up the church in knowledge? Others would not wilfully miss a worship service but never volunteer to do anything more that may be needed so that such services can be held. Others come together and pray for the growth of the church, but do little in the community toward that end.

What is one's fair share? How is it determined? Not by looking at all a church needs to do and then dividing it by the number of members. Each one looks at his ability and opportunity and does whatever he can to build up the church. (cf. Acts 11:29; Rom. 12:4-8).



HOLDING A CHURCH HOSTAGE

• Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

"I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish do, putting them out of the church." -- 3 John 9,10.

During the Iranian hostage crisis, a TV news series was called: "America held hostage". It showed how a few fanatics with a few weapons were virtually holding the most powerful nation in the world hostage. It was a trying time for our government's officials. If the nation gave into their demands, it would encourage them to more such actions. If it acted against them without meeting their demands, someone was bound to get hurt - maybe innocent people. There seemed to be no good solution.

The daily news tells us of new instances. Some at home. Some abroad. A few zealots demanding that the world dance to their tune - or else. One shudders at what might happen if such ones rose to the top in some powerful nation. Perish the thought.

Diotrephes was a spiritual terrorist who held the church where he was member hostage. He loved preeminence. Somehow he gained the control of the church. The results are well known. He opposed the apostles. He refused to receive those sent by them. He used malicious words against them. He was not content with not receiving faithful brethren, he forbade others from doing so. If they did he put them out of the church. Can you imagine what it must have been like to have been a member of that church? Can you imagine the tension that must have existed? Brethren would almost be afraid to breathe for fear of crossing Diotrephes.

Not everyone who loves preeminence has the ability to gain control of the church

like Diotrephes. One may not have enough power and support to put anyone out of the church. He is not qualified for real leadership or scriptural oversight. (If he were he would not love preeminence or be self-willed nor would he want the kind of power he now desires). He or she can still, to a great degree control the church by holding it hostage with an ungodly temperament. Other members live with the constant threat of trouble or embarrassment if his demands are not met. Often brethren will meet his demands to avoid the scene he can create.

In a business meeting several options (authorized under generic Scriptural authority) for doing the Lord's work may be discussed. Brethren try to decide which option is the most expedient for this time and place. It is obvious to all present that one method is likely the best choice for them. Obvious to all, that is, except Diotrephes, Jr. He must exercise his power of objection. If the method is not the one he suggested, no telling what he might do or say. He might threaten to go elsewhere. He knows no church likes losing a member. He might just sit back and take verbal pot shots at those who are working the option adopted by the brethren. He might just pout and dare anyone to try to involve him in the work.

A brother may unilaterally decide on a course of action for the church. He may be unable and/or unwilling to reasonably try to persuade the church of the validity of his judgment. He simply tells them what he thinks they ought to do or not do. He usually couples his demand with a threat - either stated or implied.

If something is his idea, then he will work his head off for it. If not, then he finds ways to hinder the work. If brethren want his cooperation and/or avoid trouble, then they had best follow his recommendations. All too often, brethren

(See HOSTAGE, Page 4)

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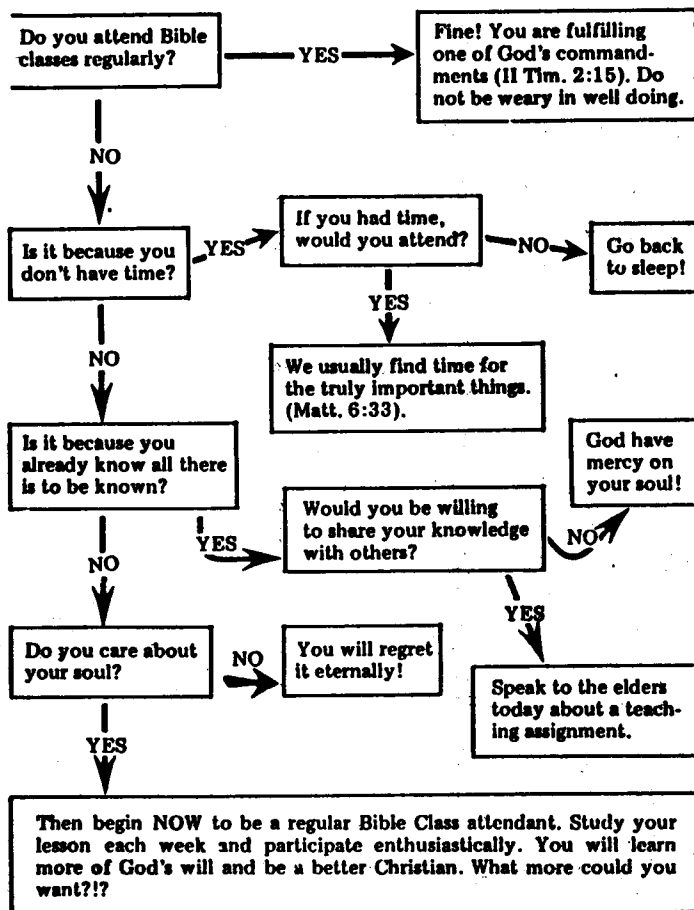
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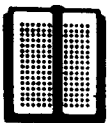
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---Kosciusko Keynoter, 2/20/85.



HOSTAGE . .

will give into his demands to avoid the hassle.

A favorite sport a few brethren is nit picking. Legitimate constructive criticism, properly discussed with those who can help and be helped it, is good. This is not what I am talking about. Capable, but sensitive brethren are discouraged from preaching, teaching, leading singing or some other work that needs doing because of such nit pickers. They know the price they will have to pay. If one does accept a work, he is constantly aware that anything he says or does could be a target for the nit picker. So, the work of the church is held hostage out a real fear of being picked apart by such characters.

Let us have more "fellow workers for the truth" (v. 8) and fewer like Diotrophes who seek attention and power - even if it means controlling the church by pettiness. The Bible does not teach that a congregation should be ruled by majority vote - nor does it teach that it should be ruled the whims of some sorehead.

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

James P. Needham

Have you ever stopped to think just

instrumental music in worship? From the way some religious bodies use it, one would get the idea that it is mentioned on every page, but let read every passage in the New Testament that has anything to do with music in worship, and see for ourselves:

Matt. 26:30 - "And when they had SANG an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives."

Acts 16:25 - "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and SANG praises unto God."

Rom. 15:9 - "As it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and SING unto thy name."

1 Cor. 14:15 - "I will SING with the spirit, and I will SING with the understanding also..."

Eph. 5:19 - "Speaking to yourselves in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, SINGING and making melody in your hearts to the Lord."

Col. 3:16 - "Teaching and admonishing in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, SINGING with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

Heb 2:12 - "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I SING praise unto thee."

Jas. 5:13 - "Is any among you merry? Let him SING psalms"

The conclusion is simple: The New Testament says a sum total of NOTHING about instrumental music in worship. It is thus a doctrine of men that renders worship vain. (Matt. 15:9).

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