



The Reflector

Seeking Jesus

Leo Rogol

During the course of Christ's earthly ministry, many were constantly seeking him. There were those who sought him for selfish, carnal reasons. There were those who were filled with envy and hate that they too sought him so that they might put him to death. And there were those who revered and honored him and sought to hear his words of truth and eternal life. Though many sought him for different reasons, they had one thing in common: they were very zealous in seeking him because their desire to find him was very intense. Let us observe some cases to determine this matter.

1. SELFISH, CARNAL REASONS.

In John 6:1-2 we read of a great multitude following him because of the miracles he performed. In vs. 8-11 we have the account of the miracle of feeding the five thousand by multiplying five loaves and bread and two fish. They believed on Jesus because of this miracle and wanted to take him by force and make him their king. After all, there would be no more health insurance to buy, no hospitals, no grocery bills to pay. But sooner or later they would all die. But Jesus knew their motives were wrong. He simply disappeared.

When they couldn't find him they made great efforts to seek him. In vs. 24 we read: "they took shipping and came to

Capernaum, SEEKING JESUS." How happy they were when they found him! We would think this would have greatly pleased him. But this did not please him at all; he did not feel honored in the least. He knew and plainly pointed out they didn't seek him for the true purpose for which he performed the miracles, that they would not hear the word of eternal life, but only to be fed more food.

Jesus told them the more important thing to seek after: "Labor not for meat which perisheth, but that which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give you: for him hath God the Father sealed" (John 6:27). But this did not suit them at all; it irritated them greatly. They were more concerned over the loaves and fish than spiritual food for eternal life.

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Proselyting Disciples Away

H. E. Phillips

'For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of you own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29,30). The inspired apostle addressed the elders of the church in Ephesus whom he had called to Miletus (vs. 17). The warning involved the attempt of a false teacher who would come among them to deceive and mislead disciples, and even one or more of the elders would lure the disciples away after them.

There is a principle in this statement that has an application to some situations in the church today. That situation

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GOSPEL MEETING

NOVEMBER 13, 14, 15, 1988
SUNDAY MORNING 9:45 & 10:45 NIGHTS 7:30

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FULTONDALE CHURCH OF CHRIST

How quickly their attitudes toward him changed! In vs. 41 we read that they murmured. They said: "This is an hard saying; who can hear it" (vs. 60). They turned their backs on him and walked away (vs. 66). How eager they were in seeking Jesus for physical food, but what contempt they had for him later when he told them they should seek the most important -- spiritual food. Now they despised him.

In Luke 17:1-18 we have the account of the ten lepers who came to Jesus for healing. They cried out: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us" (vs. 13). They recognized him as Jesus -- Savior, and Master -- the great teacher. Jesus showed mercy on them and healed them. All but one went by without thanking or praising him. What ingratitude! In calling him Jesus (or Savior), they were interested in him as "Savior" only in salvation from their physical afflictions, not spiritual salvation. They cared not to hear the teachings on eternal life by the Savior and Master.

People are no different today. Churches and other religious institutions think the most important work is the Social Gospel. Social, economic and welfare reforms. The church is to act as a Red Cross or Salvation Army agency, become involved in politics to improve the social welfare of society. Feed the poor, clothe the hungry, etc. They place little or no value on the most important thing: spiritual salvation. They show little or no regard for the gospel of Christ. Tell them the mission of the church is not in the realm of social reforms or progress and they consider you an infidel.

And many churches of Christ are no different from the denominations. They are more interested in the "loaves and fishes" than the "bread of God" that "giveth life unto the world." They boast of their great in-

stitutions that provide physical things, secular knowledge. Their "religion" is church socials, suppers, recreation and many have little desire for Bible study, teaching and preaching. Those who oppose their practices are "narrow," "un-feeling," "bigoted," -- to sum it up, "anti." Yet I dare say that more of them put more effort in social affairs than service or worshipping God. (And many corrupt the worship services with unscriptural practices.) Putting forth efforts in their secular programs is more important than putting forth efforts in service to God. But, of course, they consider their secular efforts as service to God.

To visit the fatherless and widows" (1:27). You don't hand that over to some institution; that is a personal commitment of a saint practicing "pure religion and undefiled." We are to do good to all men as we have opportunity (Gal. 6:10). But the mission of the church is not to become involved in marches, demonstrations for social or political reforms in society. The church is a spiritual institution with its most important function, teaching and preaching the gospel of *spiritual salvation*. It's main objective is to teach people the truth of the gospel so that they can purify their SOULS in obeying the truth. (1 Pet. 1:22).

And like the lepers who were

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And I dare say it is easier to attract more people, larger crowds to those functions than to services or worship to God. Ask them to take part in arranging church socials and they put their heart and soul into it. Ask them to do personal work, restore the lost, and they turn their backs on the Lord.

Yes, it is our duty to care for the needy and the sick. In apostolic time churches sent relief to the needy saints in Jerusalem. Now, I know there were more than saints that were in need, but we specifically read of churches helping needy *saints*. James said that "pure religion and undefiled ... is this,

healed, many churches believe the most important work is physical healing. Pentecostal and other charismatics place great emphasis on healing campaigns. They advertise miracles and wonders, anything sensational in order to attract large crowds. And many gullible people come to such gatherings solely for the purpose to get healed or see "miracles" of healing. They haven't the faintest idea of what the word of God teaches about truth pertaining to eternal life. They don't seem to care for the word of God; they simply want miracles.

And yet, who has ever witnessed sight restored to the

blind, a man who never walked in his life suddenly leap and walk (Acts 3:1-8)? Take a loaf of bread and a fish and see if they can multiply them into fish sandwiches to feed 50 people, let alone five thousand! They come to "seek Jesus" with great enthusiasm and earnestness. But like those who sought Jesus simply for food or to be healed, they too seek Jesus for the wrong reason.

2. ENMITY AND HATE

Christ's worst enemies sought Jesus. and that with as much earnestness and effort and desire as others. They really wanted to find him. In John 11:53, we read: "Then from that day forth (after the resurrection of Lazarus - LR) they took counsel together to put him to death." They wanted to find him just as much as the sincere seekers of truth. But what a difference in the reason or purpose of seeking him!

If Christ were here today, many would earnestly seek him as the chief priests did. The atheists and humanists who hate the name and religion of Christ would want to put him to death

because they have the same regard for him as the priests and other rulers of Israel. And perhaps some in certain religious circles would be just as eager to seek him in order to put him to death because he would expose and condemn their false doctrines and practices. People today are no different from the people in Christ's day.

But do you know what? Those who once were saved but later renounced the faith, denied Christ, are no better because they "crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to open shame" (Heb. 6:6).

3. THOSE WHO REVERE HIM AND SEEK HIS TRUTH.

After the Jews turned their backs on Jesus (John 6) he turned to his disciples and asked, "Will ye also go away" (vs. 67)? Peter answered: Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the WORDS OF ETERNAL LIFE. And we believe and are sure that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God" (vss. 68-69). Peter was there when Jesus fed the five thousand. But unlike these people, he realized the real mission of Christ and the things of greatest importance or value:

WORDS OF ETERNAL LIFE. And later he spent his life and became a martyr for preaching the "word of eternal life." The word of God was more dear to him than the loaves and fishes -- and even his physical life.

Seeking Jesus is not a casual, slight matter. It takes more than a feeble effort. We must "diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). Some who claim to love Christ and consider themselves faithful serve him only when they have a "convenient season." We must "be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know your labor is not vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). It is not simply a matter of seeking Jesus. But how earnest and faithful we are in our lives, our worship to him? Are we concerned with "loaves and fishes" so much that we serve him only when we have enough of these? It is not enough to condemn the denominations and brethren who practice unscriptural things. If we neglect to faithfully discharge our responsibilities, it is sin. (Jas. 4:17).

PROSELYTING

FROM PAGE 1

concerns the growing efforts to move Christians from one congregation to another in the pretense of building up the church. Some want to build a reputation as a great and powerful preacher who can command his place and financial reward. But this is a dishonorable and offensive way to try to build the membership of a congregation. Others have labored to increase the membership in the kingdom and the local church, and someone else persuades these disciples to leave that work and join another for no reason but increase that membership at the expense of others. This process converts no one to Christ.

Several years ago James P. Miller wrote an article on "Sheep Stealing" in which he took to

task those who were seducing members from the congregation where he was then preaching. That problem is still around and it is not localized either in time or place.

The practice has a sinister motive: to reduce the membership of other congregations and pocket the proceeds for self praise and glory. It has the same motive as one who lies and gossips about another; he hopes to reduce as much as possible the name and reputation of the other, and at the same time gain favor and position with his hearers. In my judgment, one who steals members from other congregations in the general area where he preaches, is an insensitive, self centered promoter who does not scruple to boast at the expense of others. One

who secretly calls, writes and visits members of other congregations, with the express purpose of soliciting members for the congregation where he labors, is not building up the kingdom of Christ.

Of course, if a congregation supports and endorses false doctrine and practice, those members ought to be taught the truth, and they will leave when they are convinced that they cannot continue to serve God where they are. But efforts should be made to teach ALL members of congregations promoting false doctrines. Are not their souls as important as any other?

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evangelist is to edify the church, not move around members from one congregation to another. The work of an evangelist is to: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine... but watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Tim. 4:2-5).

We have come to expect the business corporations of the world to use disreputable tactics to destroy one another and gain by base methods, but who would have thought that preachers of the gospel could conscientiously use such tactics to entice members of one congregation to the one where they labor and claim that they are causing the church to grow?

On the other hand, any Christian has the scriptural right to move from one place to another, and he may move his congregational membership from one place to another, if he thinks he is increasing his opportunities to learn and contribute to the work of the body of Christ. But that is a far cry from a preacher or some zealous member seducing one away from the congregation where he is serving the Lord scripturally.

Some of the highly motivated "personal work" enthusiasts have a reputation for their abili-

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ty to teach and direct their disciples to use any method to increase the membership of the congregation where they are. Some of it is high pressure sales, and some of it involves an unscriptural organization. "Personal work" that stresses converting sinners to Christ by the gospel of Christ, and only that, in leading them out of darkness into the light of truth, is important and essential and should be a part of every Christian's life. This is sound Bible study in homes and wherever people will listen. But transferring members from one congregation to another is not converting anyone to Christ, and is not increasing the church of

Christ. Jesus said teach, baptize, and teach (Matt. 28:18-20).

If it is a righteous thing to lure members from one congregation to another, by all means let all of us do it. Let us open the door for teaching and exhorting all evangelists to use all their efforts to persuade members of other congregations to leave and become a part of the congregation where they work. I will assure you of one thing: the material and social side of life will be emphasized far above all other interests. The large, beautiful church buildings will be promoted because they are an enticement to members of other congregations. Socials, food and frolic will be held forth as an encouragement for members to move from one place to another. Young people with the dating format and possible mate matching will be advertized as a means of encouraging the youth and parents of young people to leave one congregation to go to another.

One of the sad consequences of this operation is that the old, weak, poor, uncommitted, small talented and lazy members are not wanted. These are encouraged to go to other congregations. The only disciples they proselyte are those they believe will enhance their group, their reputation and glory. What a shame! Think on these things!

From Searching the Scriptures, Oct., 1988

THE REFLECTOR is published monthly by the church of Christ meeting at 2005 Elkwood Drive, Fultondale, AL 35068. It is edited by Edward O. Bragwell, Sr., 3004 Brakefield Drive, Fultondale, AL 35068

SERVICES

Sundays:

Bible Classes	9:45 A.M.
Worship	10:45 A.M.
Worship	6:00 P.M.

Wednesdays:

Bible Class	10:00 A.M.
Bible Classes	7:30 P.M.

Volume 28 October 1988 Number 10

The Reflector
(USPS 606-140)
3004 Brakefield Drive
Fultondale, AL 35068

Second Class Postage
PAID at
Fultondale, AL
35068