

*In
search
of*

Truth and Right

Tim Henderson, Editor

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"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things." Phil. 4:8 (NASB-U)

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Christ**

TOGETHER TIME

By Edwin Crozier

"Communal socializing also appears to be on the way out. Putnam finds that Americans in 1997 were entertaining friends and acquaintances at home 40 percent less often than in 1975, attending club meetings nearly 60 percent less often, and giving half as many dinner parties. Families are also eating together less often. In 1975, 50 percent of married Americans agreed that 'our whole family usually eats dinner together'; in 1997, only 34 percent did... What we are doing more of, to replace this communal activity, is watching TV, renting videos, and Web surfing and working on our home computers," (David G. Myers, *The American Paradox*, 2000).

As goes the world, so goes the church.

I cannot even count the number of times I have heard Christians talk about how the folks in their congregation used to get together, but not so much anymore. I ask, "When was the last time you had folks into your home?" More often than not, the response is, "I plan to, but..." We all want to spend more time together. We know it is important. But, in general, we just are not doing it.

The Jerusalem church did not have this problem.

"And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved," (Acts 2:46-47).

What most amazes me about Jerusalem is they did not have deacons to set up a "group program". No one

TIMES OF SERVICES	
SUNDAY	
Bible Classes*	10:00 AM
AM Worship	10:45 AM
PM Worship	6:30 PM
WEDNESDAY	
Bible Classes*	7:00 PM
(* Bible Classes for All Ages)	

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went through the directory dividing the congregation into cross-sectional circles. They just spent time together.

Why did they do that?

The primary reason is they depended on each other. They had no illusions of independent Christianity. Many of them had extreme physical needs. They had traveled to Jerusalem for Pentecost and planned to return home. Instead, they became Christians and stayed. They had no Holiday Inn, no ATMs to withdraw extra cash, and no McDonald's for a quick lunch. They needed homes, finances and food. The local brethren provided these. They also had extreme spiritual needs. They had made a major change from Judaism to Christianity. They needed support they couldn't get from the normal Jew. No wonder they were devoted to "*apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers,*" (Acts 2:42). They knew they could not fight the battles with sin and Satan on their own. They had to have companions upon which to lean. Perhaps we do not spend much time with each other because we do not feel that need. Sure, we will "go to church", but mostly we can go it alone. After all, we are Americans. We have "pulled ourselves up by our bootstraps". We do not need anyone else. But we do. We cannot beat the devil alone. We need to stimulate one another to love and good deeds.

Another reason these early Christians spent time together is that they had more in common with each other than with anyone else on account of their shared faith in Jesus. The driving force of their lives was their Christianity. It defined them. No matter their job, economic background, native home or language, they had more in common with another Christian than they did with a person in the world. If our lives are defined by our jobs, we will spend more time with people of similar occupation whether or not they are Christians. If our lives are defined by our hobbies, we will spend more time with people of similar interests whether or not they are Christians. If our lives are defined by our family, we will spend more time with our family or with people of similar family background whether or not they are Christians. But when our lives are defined by Christ, no matter all the other differences, we will spend more time with other Christians. Perhaps we spend so little time together because our lives are defined by our occupation, education and recreation.

A third reason they spent time together is that they made it a priority. How many things did these Christians not do because they were spending time with other Christians? Perhaps one of the reasons we spend so little time together is because it is a wish, not a priority. We will spend time with our co-workers and extended family. Our children will spend time with their baseball teammates or Scouts. Perhaps someday, if we can squeeze in a few extra hours, we will spend some time with our brethren, but not this week. We have more important things to do. Besides, we have already spent four hours together in assemblies and classes, what more can anyone expect of us? We have enough time to do anything we want, but not enough time to do everything we want. We have to decide what is most important and prioritize accordingly.

What should we do together?

Acts 2:46-47 answers this. We should spend time doing social things together. These early Christians ate together with gladness. The point is not just about eating in proximity. Rather, consider what happens when we spend social time together. We

talk with each other. We learn about each other. We learn to read each other. We learn to tell when things are going well and when they are going poorly. We encourage. We provide time to vent frustrations and share victories. We can be comfortable around people we know will uphold our core values. If nothing else, we are at least spending time with people who will not exert evil influence by their speech and actions.

The early Christians also did spiritual things together, praising God. More than once I have heard people say they do not want to go to a Bible study, a singing or a gathering for prayer because they have already had enough "church". For these early Christians, "church" was not a place to go or something to do; it was a way of life. How could they not talk about spiritual matters together? How could they not pray together? How could they not sing together? How could they not praise God together? They were not trying to get in enough "worship time"; they were simply doing what defined them. They praised God. How much better our individual lives would be if we spent more time together praising God and talking scripture with one another.

The worldly are drifting farther apart. We in the church must not follow their lead. We must stand out from the world and stand together. We can only do that when we spend time with one another praising God and taking our meals together with gladness.

Via, Renewed In Spirit (www.renewedinspirit.org)

"...I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead." (Rev. 3:1)

A German soldier was wounded. He was ordered to go to the military hospital for treatment. When he arrived at the large and imposing building, he saw two doors, one marked, "For the slightly wounded," and the other, "For the seriously wounded." He entered through the first door and found himself going down a long hall. At the end of it were two more doors, one marked, "For officers" and the other, "For non-officers." He entered through the latter and found himself going down another long hall. At the end of it were two more doors, one marked, "For party members" and the other, "For non-party members." He took the second door, and when he opened it he found himself out on the street.

When the soldier returned home, his mother asked him, "How did you get along at the hospital?" "Well, Mother," he replied, "to tell the truth, the people there didn't do anything for me, but you ought to see the tremendous organization they have!" (From John Seamands)

The soldier's comment describes many churches of our day. They are well organized, but they accomplish very little.