

Looking in the Wrong Places

John M Buttrey II

It is frustrating when we have misplaced something important and cannot find it. We search and search for that which is lost, hoping it can be found. The frustration of the search is compounded in that we often keep looking for that which is missing, in the wrong places. We think, it must be here, or it must be there. Until we remember where it will be found, it will remain lost.

As a Christian, there may be times when one feels like something is missing in their walk with God. In the experience of worship in the local church, they may feel like something is lost. What is missing could be (and often is) described as a truly fulfilling experience as a Christian. In a desperate search for this something that is missing, I have found that brethren often look for it in the wrong places.

Some search for that which they think is missing in inspiring sermons by the preacher. Week after week, they look to a man's presentation of the Word of God to provide the something lost in their walk with God. This is a heavy task for any preacher to consistently fulfill week after week. Sermons can indeed inspire. Sermons instruct, challenge, and correct. However, if you are looking for sermons, or a certain entertaining style of preaching to provide lasting fulfillment as a child of God, you are often going to be disappointed.

Others search for the missing part in the congregation's singing. Songs sung with lots of voices and beautiful melodies are certainly nice to hear. It is wonderful when songs are sung in tune with encouraging or comforting words. While songs can indeed inspire, they are not the source for true and lasting fulfillment as a Christian.

A number of Christians look for fulfillment in large congregations. Lots and lots of people in the pews can certainly be encouraging. More voices singing. More people in classes adding comments. More hands to shake and hugs to give and receive. However, true and lasting fulfillment as a Christian will not always be found in large congregations, nor in those that are small.

What about social activities with other Christians? Getting together with brethren to share meals, or pot lucks at the park, or game nights are fun. Laughing, talking, and sharing together with others is almost always enjoyable. However, sad to say, this too will not give you lasting fulfillment as a child of God.

So where is one to look? I would suggest one look to the cross. It is there we see the love of God (John 3:16). It is there we see the price for our sins being paid (Acts 20:28). It is at the cross we find the meaning of sacrifice (Matt. 16:24). It is at the cross you will find what has been missing in your walk with God.

Yes, preachers can point us to the cross. Yes, songs can remind us of the cross. Yes, relationships with brethren can help us to remember. However, the cross must be found and remembered *by each individual* as they seek to develop a deep, personal relationship with God. This way, when the preacher has a bad week (and he will), when the song leader leads off key (and he will), when there are not a lot of people, or the people let you down (and they will), when there are no social events planned, one can find the cross all on their own.

My dear brethren, let's stop looking for men to do what Christ and His sacrifice ought to be doing: Inspiring us each and every day of our life. I can guarantee, this will make the preaching, singing, and people, all the more enjoyable.