

“Is the Center of My Life The Church?”

Marvin Kamps

Have you ever met Harry? He is one of those fellows who is not so very interested in the worship service or various activities of the church. The first thing Harry does after he is ushered to his seat in church is settle down as comfortably as possible. Then he struggles through a tradition prayer. During congregational singing, Harry mumbles along as best he can. The songs of God's praise don't stir his heart. When the minister leads the congregation in prayer, Harry sleeps. When Christ speaks to His people through the minister, Harry is restlessly watching his watch or he is far off in some distant land to which only sound sleep can bring him. Harry is the first to complain about the long windedness of the servant of God. Harry wasn't spiritually fed and strengthened because he never listened for the voice of Christ as He spoke through the minister. Harry says to his friends that he doesn't get much out of the sermons either. In societies Harry is a quiet fellow – bored to death really. He hasn't prepared for the society meeting and he doesn't participate in its discussions. You can't discuss the things of the church with Harry because Harry doesn't know much about these things. Harry doesn't read much either you know. But Harry is a most interesting fellow during the week. He plays softball two or three nights a week. He is the real hot shot on the ball diamond. Harry is a real talkative fellow when it comes to sports, cars, girls, or most anything else, but he is mum concerning the church and the things of God's kingdom. In the sphere of the church Harry is deaf and dumb.

I pity Harry.

The center of Harry's life is not the church of Christ. It certainly is a most blessed thing, however, when one can say that he finds his delight and joy among the people of God and in worship with them. There are families and individuals who express by their walk that they find their life's purpose solely in the church of Christ. You can tell by their walk among us. Many may say that they find their joy in the church, but does their walk confirm their speech or betray them? There are a few elements of church life which we should consider in this connection to determine whether or not the center of our life is the church of Christ.

The spiritual names of the child of God are “thirsty one” and “hungering one.” Such a one comes to church regularly. But he is not there just to fill his customary place in the pew. He is there with a desire to partake of the bread of life and of the water of life- Christ Jesus Himself. He is not there to take a “cat nap,” but to feed his soul. Such a one worships God! During the congregational prayer, he prays. He too brings the needs of the congregation in prayer before the throne of God. When he has the opportunity to praise God with his fellow saints in song, he sings making a joyful noise unto God. Maybe he doesn't have a good voice, but he sings anyway because he is conscious of the fact that congregational singing is part of the worship service - something which some of us seem to forget. Do you sing in church or just mumble along which is dishonoring to God?

Also the people of God desire and seek the communion and fellowship of one another especially as they are one in public confession. They desire one another's fellowship because the truth of God's Word lives in their hearts. They come to young people's societies so that as individuals and society they may study the Scriptures and enjoy an hour of Christian fellowship. Young people's societies are not just another social club, but a society which has the study of God's Word and related matters as its uniting force.

To live along with the church also means that we read the *Beacon Lights* not only but also the *Standard Bearer*. If you do not read the *Standard Bearer*, I would urge you to do so. Of course, it is not the official church paper as some have mistakenly imagined, but it is a source of edification and an opportunity to keep up with developments in other churches. It certainly is sad when the people of God cannot because of ignorance of the facts discuss intelligently developments in our own churches and in the church world in general.

When we find our pleasure elsewhere than in the church of Christ it is an occasion for humility and repentance. All too often, our major concern in life is sports, money, recreation, etc.; but those who live with the church, walk with her in all her manifestations, experience the joy of communion with God and His people.

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