

March 8, 2020

Viewpoint from the **Valley Grove Church Of Christ**

True Reflections In God's Mirror

By Jeff Smith

We go to great lengths to make sure we are always presentable before others. Many of us spend literal hours in front of a mirror, making sure each detail is in proper order. Do we care as much about our “real” presentation? Consider the passage in Jas. 1:22-25 in light of this notion.

After admonishing us to be doers of the word and not hearers only (v. 22), James compares one who hears but doesn't do to a man who looks at his reflection in a mirror and then walks away, forgetting what kind of man he is (vv. 23-24).

The lesson is obvious. Such is a man who hears the word of God but doesn't think it applies to him (that is the reason why he doesn't do what he hears). So, upon walking away from God's “mirror” he thinks himself to be all right, forgetting what he saw as his need for improvement. We've all seen this person around or, God forbid, maybe even have become this man. Always thinking of someone else who better be listening when the word is preached, or thinking “someone ought to do that” when a suggestion is made. If this describes us, then we have truly deceived ourselves (v. 22).

James then contrasts such a pitiful man to the one who does what he hears. He concludes that such a one “will be blessed in what he does” (v. 25). However, notice how this man is described. The one who does what he hears is the one who “looks into the perfect law of liberty” or the gospel of Christ. Upon seeing his real reflection, he makes the necessary changes (this is the doing of what he hears). He has not forgotten what kind of man he is. He knows who he is . . . a sinner in need of salvation (Rom. 3:23). This look is not just a quick glimpse, never to look again. Such a one who looks in this way “continues in it” (v. 25). There is no vanity here. Just the recognized need to continually pattern his life after what he sees. In short, he obeys what he hears.

So, have you checked your mirror? Do you remember what you saw? What reflection was there? God help us all to not be content with what we see in ourselves that is not good and make the necessary changes to please Him.

A Squeak In The Pulpit

By Steve Higginbotham

Recently I read of an entry found in an old church record of a business meeting. It stated: A committee was appointed to investigate the squeak in the pulpit. Upon reading this, I couldn't help but think that today's world, even today's church, desperately needs more than a "squeak" coming from the pulpit. Now, as much as ever, we need the clear tones of the gospel resounding from our pulpits.

We are hearing far too much about churches who are selling out to the culture. The distinctive preaching of New Testament Christianity is seldom if ever heard in some pulpits. Sermons that challenge our morals, expound our doctrine, question our ethics, and rebuke our mediocrity are exchanged for sermons that have an air of religiosity, but are lacking in substance.

In 1 Chronicles 12:32, it was said of some of God's children that they "understood the times." There remains a multitude of God's children who understand the times. They understand that now is not the time for a squeak in the pulpit. There are many godly elders, and godly Christians who are demanding to hear more than a squeak from the pulpit. They have not bought into the idea that distinctive preaching has harmed the church. They want substance over style and flair. They want truth over entertainment. They want biblical authority over pragmatism. And they

would rather have the sometimes bitter truth over a watered-down gospel. To put it in the words of John MacArthur, they realize that "the weakness of the pulpit today does not stem from frantic cranks who harangue about hell; it is the result of men who compromise and who fear to speak God's Word powerfully, with conviction."

There are many challenges that face the church today. If we are to rise up to the occasion and defeat our adversary, we must have a strong pulpit; Pulpits that will speak the truth in season and out of season, with all the love it can muster; Pulpits that will not compromise the truth; Pulpits that do more than just squeak!

Q & A About Church Socials

By Leslie Diestelkamp

Two questions have been asked: (1) Why doesn't the church have more socials? and (2) Why can't we have parties in the basement of the church building?

The New Testament authorizes every act and activity of the church. It provides us with all that pertains to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). It completely authorizes us in "every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). In worship and work, all that God wants is made known by the "oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11). We must not add to, or take from the word of God

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(Rev. 22:18-19), and we must not “go beyond what is written” (1 Cor. 4:6).

Social activities are not included in the authorized acts of the church. It is very good to have social functions, but they are “home activities.” If there are not enough of such, then the homes are failing. Let us not push upon the church that responsibility which belongs to the home. If it is advisable that Christians associate more, then let us not fail to provide such association, but let us keep it independent of church functions.

But some ask, “Since the church building is not sacred, and since our homes are not large enough to accommodate large groups, why can’t we use the basement?”

True, the church building is not sacred. But, on the other hand, it is not a carnal, worldly place either. Money for the building was given to be used in spiritual work. Remember, we do not object to eating in the church building (babies often do it, workers sometimes do it, the preacher frequently does so in his office, etc.), but we do object to making the church building an “eating place.” It is not wrong to laugh in the church building, but it is certainly wrong to make it a “house of laughter.” The church house is not “the house of God” (1 Tim. 3:15), but it IS God’s house (Jn. 2:16).

The house in which I live is not sacred, but some things are not appropriate there. A doctor’s office is not sacred, but who would say it

would be a good place to repair automobiles? A hospital and sheet metal shop don’t belong in the same building. So the church and the world should not be housed from the same treasury.

A drinking fountain, a rest room, or a nursery are made to expedite a spiritual service. But a social hall is to give vent to a social urge. Pews, classrooms, lights and fans are purposefully paid for by the church because of their usefulness in aiding us to do what God said for us to do, but for the congregation to provide recreational facilities does not contribute to the doing of that which God directed. Paul wrote: “What? Have ye not houses to eat and drink in?” (1 Cor. 11:22). He was condemning the practice of making a feast with the Lord’s Supper, but at the same time he gave us the necessary inference that there is a difference between homes and meeting places provided by the church.

Let us keep the church in the “church business.” It is always safe to do that which we know is right, without addition or subtraction. Let us use every facility we have to expedite the Lord’s work, and let us avoid anything that would minimize its nature, which is altogether spiritual.

Visitors — We pray that you benefit spiritually from our worship together and hope to see you again.

Gratitude Makes Happiness

By Jere E. Frost

Most of our unhappiness is produced by the gross sin of ingratitude — self pity is what it is often called. Anything we do not like, anything that is against our wishes, makes us miserable if we are consumed by selfishness. It is quite striking that many of those who were so miserable as to commit suicide were blessed with looks, talent, wealth and even fame. They “quit” on themselves and on life, not because no one needed them, but because they magnified their miseries and ignored their blessings.

The antidote to this kind of misery is to reverse the process. Forget yourself. Jesus said “deny” yourself (Matthew 16:24). Help someone who needs some help. Magnify your blessings and remember that all your problems — all of them — are temporary. We were made for eternity! What a blessing. Thank God for the great hope we have in Jesus, and for the blessings of the common day!

Study Your Bible

March Birthdays:

The 18th Amy Hisaw

The 25th Megan Morgan

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Sunday

Bible Study . . . 9:30 A.M.

Worship 10:30 A.M.

Worship 5:00 P.M.

Wednesday

Bible Study . . . 7:00 P.M.

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