

THE

HARVESTER

"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." [Luke 10:2]

MARCH 1993

No. 087

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

In the beginning when God created man he was alone. *"And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him!"* (Gen. 2:18) God saw that man needed to be able to interact with others of his kind in order to be happy. Adam is now long gone, but man's need for fellowship is still just as strong as it ever was. It is this need or desire which lies at the root of peer pressure. Man feels a need to be accepted by a group. So to gain acceptance men will often do what the group does. This is often the cause of many good people going bad.

It is necessary for people to have friends to some extent. If a person isolates himself from

THE HARVESTER
1120 Sun Hill Road
Birmingham, AL 35215-4106

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Birmingham, AL
PERMIT No. 4624

everyone else this will only lead to misery and unhappiness. The key is to find the right kind of people to interact with. Many people have fooled themselves into believing that they can associate with people of lower moral character without it having any adverse effect on them. This simply is not true. There is no man who is so strong that he cannot be affected by continued exposure to evil. To deny this is to deny the words of the Bible. *"Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."* (1 Cor. 15:33) Paul even warns us not to be deceived about this fact. He knows that many men will believe themselves too strong to be affected by an evil influence. But look at what happened to righteous Lot after he had lived in Sodom for a while. Look at how Solomon, with all his wisdom, was corrupted by his evil wives. No man is too strong to be brought down by sin.

Solomon said, *"Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend;"* (Prov. 27:17) He uses the illustration of iron which is extremely strong and hard to be changed or altered in any way. But by using another piece of iron the first can be shaped any way you want it. Likewise a person who may think he is as strong as iron, can be affected by another strong person. Friends, don't make the mistake of thinking you can get away with continued social contact with sinful people.

Now I realize that it is often necessary for us to interact with this type of people in our everyday life. We work with them, buy from them, sell to them, and have many other dealings with them. This is almost unavoidable. But it is strictly up to us who we spend our free time with. And for some reason most people would rather spend their leisure time with a group that has a little "life" in them, not with a bunch of dull Christians. Why,

those ol' Christians are downright boring, aren't they? They don't drink, or tell dirty jokes, or anything that's really fun. Do you know people who think like this? People who don't find any enjoyment spending time with Christians. I know a lot of people who say they are Christians who are like this. The only time they want to see another Christian is on Sunday morning. This attitude shows that the person is carnal and not spiritual. A Christian should rather spend time with those of like mind and hope than with anyone else. Wouldn't you?

We often have to develop casual relationships with people of the world, but again it is strictly our decision whom we form closer relations with. Paul said, *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?"* (II Cor. 6:14) This would cover anything which would cause us to spend a good deal of time with a nonbeliever. This could be a close friendship, a business partnership, and especially a marriage.

The need for fellowship is universal. Even our Lord had His friends while here on earth. He even wept when He heard of the death of His friend Lazarus. The Christian today also needs to have friends. But the key is to be very careful about the friends you choose. Ask yourself if you would be ashamed for Jesus to walk up on you while you were with your friends. Would you be able to carry on business as usual, or would you try to start making excuses? If you wouldn't feel comfortable having Jesus there, then YOU don't need to be there.

In Acts chapter 2 we read of the establishment of the Lord's church. We are also given some insight into some of the activities of the early

THE HARVESTER is a monthly publication mailed free of charge to anyone who wishes to receive it. Please submit name, address, and all correspondence to:

Ray McManus
3265 Fowlers Ferry Rd.
Gadsden, AL 35901-0306
Phone: (205) 442-4181

Christians. *"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."* (Acts 2:42) I have heard many preachers quote this verse and then elaborate on the three very important things the early disciples were doing in this passage. They were continuing in the apostles' doctrine, the breaking of bread, and prayers. Certainly no one would argue with the importance of these items. But what about the fourth, fellowship? Is fellowship really all that important? Apparently the inspired writer thought it was important enough to include it with the other three. But do we give it that much importance today? Fellowship is not just a mere by-product of Christianity, but is part of the very heart and soul of it.

How often do most Christians see one another these days? Maybe two or three times a week at services. Or perhaps a little more often if that person happens to be a relative or a neighbor. But how often do we make it a point to get together with those we are supposed to love so much? But then we never have time do we? There's always television programs to be watched, books to be read, and countless other things which Satan will use to convince us we have no time to do things which will promote spiritual growth. The scriptures tell us to *"Exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin"* (Heb. 3:13)

How can we do this if we seldom even see one another? This is exactly what Satan wants. A predatory animal will always try to separate its intended victim from the herd before moving in for the kill. And our "Adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8) He wants to isolate us so he can destroy us one by one. There is indeed strength in numbers. A Christian who has little fellowship with other Christians is like a lamb lost from the flock. It's only a matter of time before the wolf gets hungry.

Why is there so little fellowship among Christians today? One thing which was already mentioned is that our lifestyles have sped up so dramatically in the last few decades, that we feel we just don't have enough time for things like that any more. But friends, our world is not going to collapse if we can't make it to the golf course next weekend. Or if we miss the big hunting trip. Or if we miss the big ball game on TV. There is time for Christian families to do things together. But only if we are willing to take the time.

If someone were to ask you if you think it's necessary to attend the services of the church what would you say? Most people would probably say yes and cite Hebrews 10:25 to prove it. But then what if that person asked you what you thought was so important about going, what would you say? To sing, to pray, to partake of the communion, to hear the preaching, to lay by in store? I'm sure these would be the common answers. But did you ever notice Hebrews 10:25 doesn't mention a single one of these items? What does it say? *"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as you see*

the Day approaching" (Heb. 10:24-25 NKJ) Doesn't it seem that the aspects of fellowship are greatly emphasized here? Now I do not for a moment intend to try to diminish the importance of these other items. But what I would like to do is get everyone to realize the significance placed on fellowship in this passage, and indeed in the entire Bible.

Let us have fellowship with one another. And let us be friends with Christ. *"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you"* (John 15:14) If we are carnally minded we will have carnal friends. If we are spiritually minded we will have spiritual friends. Which do you have? *"For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."* (Rom. 8:6)

TONY WHIDDON

7350-F Howells Ferry Rd.

Mobile, AL 36618

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Whom did God sell into the hands of Chushanrishathaim?
2. What was one agricultural difference between Egypt and Canaan?
3. Who was the first disciple to go into the empty tomb of Jesus?
4. Which book of the Bible uses over one half of its pages to record the events in Christ's life and His sayings during His last days?
5. On the way to his wedding, what did Samson turn away to see?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. Who laid the foundation of the rebuilt

temple and, according to Zechariah, would also complete it? ZERUBBABEL (Zech. 4:9)

2. To what city was Paul going when he wrote Romans? JERUSALEM (Rom. 15:25)

3. The man who marries a divorced woman does what? COMMITS ADULTERY (Lk. 16:18)

4. When Babylon has fallen, what does Isaiah report will be shattered on the ground? THE IMAGES OF ITS GODS (Isa. 21:9)

5. Was Moses the only person who could see the Lord in the form of a cloud? NO (Exo. 33:10)

WILL HE FIND TEN RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE?

Amid all the controversy surrounding our President's recent decision to lift the ban on homosexuals in the military, I was reminded about Sodom and Gomorrah. This is the story where two angels of God visited these cities because their sin was "*very grievous*" (Gen. 18:20). The men of Sodom were guilty of homosexuality (Gen. 19:4-7). Thus, they were destroyed with fire and brimstone (vs. 24-25).

The part of the story that really stuck in my mind was the conversation Abraham had with the Lord right before the angels went to Sodom. He asked if the righteous would be destroyed along with the wicked (Gen. 18:23). After several similar questions, the Lord finally answered that He would NOT destroy the cities if He found ten righteous souls (Gen. 18:32). Sadly enough, not even five were found in the city. This made me wonder: Could the Lord find ten righteous people in our nation today?

This is not intended to be an extensive article on the subject of homosexuality. Where God stands on this issue is clearly documented in

(Continued next page)

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place & Time</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
March 7 - 13	Jigger, LA	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
March 12 - 14 (F - Su)	Pleasant Grove Church near Alexander City, AL 7:00pm / 10:30 & 6:00 Sun	Ricky Murphy (Woodland, AL)
March 19 - 21	Fayetteville Road Atlanta, GA	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
March 26 - 30	Freefield Church State Line, MS	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
Mar. 28 - Apr. 2	West Broad Street Wedowee, AL	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
Mar. 31 - Apr. 2	Brushy Creek Church Lucedale, MS	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

o o

(Continued from the previous page)

the Bible. We have already noted the account of Sodom and Gomorrah. (God did NOT destroy these cities because of their 'inhospitality', as most homosexuals will claim.) In Romans 1:24-32 the person who engages in homosexual activities is worthy of spiritual death! The principle of Lev. 20:13 and Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 6:9-12 are other evidences of God's position.

In today's world, we must focus more on the general question: When Christ comes again, how many righteous people will He find here on earth? 50? 10? Will I be one of the saved? Answer this honestly, because one day the truth on this matter will be made known! Friends, as our country continues its steady decline in spiritual values, can we not see how much more important it is that we live a righteous life? Please strive to be one of the few who will find the strait gate and narrow way (Matt. 7:14).

RAY

Editor's Note: Special thanks go to Ben & Jackie Lett who have donated an excellent copier machine for use on this paper. This will save about \$70/month in printing costs!