

Going to a Funeral?

"IT IS BETTER TO GO TO THE HOUSE OF MOURNING THAN TO GO TO THE HOUSE OF FEASTING: for this is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of countenance the heart is made glad. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth." (Eccles. 7:2-4)

How many trips have we had to make to a cemetery or funeral chapel? Are they more than we would like to count? As we get older, it seems we go more often. Admittedly, birthday parties are more fun. Invitations to occasions of laughter and joy are more readily accepted than to a period of somber reflection at a funeral service. But Solomon's wisdom says that it is better for us to go to the house of mourning than to the house of mirth. Why is this? Was Solomon preoccupied with morbidity, or did he learn something in his quest for wisdom we need to know also? With every funeral we attend, we learn something. Take a moment and consider the lessons learned in the "school" of mourning.

We are moving closer and closer to eternity. Time is rapidly fleeting by us all. Each day brings us closer to our own eternal destinies. This world is not all there is. As the old song says, "We are going down the valley, one by one." We are forced to face the real issues of life. No one can really avoid this lesson in the house of mourning. At death, do possessions really matter? Is wealth, fame, power, or control important when they have all been laid down in the end? A party can help us escape reality; funerals make us face it.

We learn to make good use of our time. Minutes, hours, days, months, years — these are the ways we measure life on earth. Time is precious. We are never ready to lose those whom we love no matter how long they have been with us. Life is a loan from God, and it must be repaid. When life is gone, it is gone. To paraphrase Paul, "Make the most of your time." (Ephesians 5:16)

We realize that others hurt, too. We often become so absorbed in our own problems, sufferings, and hurts that we forget there are other hurting people in this world. A party atmosphere deceives us into thinking everyone is having fun! In the house of mourning, we see others who hurt. It makes us serious about helping where we can, when we can.

We teach our children about death at funerals. It is surprising how many teenagers have never attended a funeral. Their parents shield them from it and then when death comes to someone close to them, they are totally unfamiliar with it. We prepare our children to live, but we should also prepare them to die. It may not be a walk in the park, but a funeral is good for young people, too.

Funerals are cultural events where some great life and death lessons can be observed. A funeral itself is not an essential event, but dealing with a death is most certainly necessary. Let's not shy away from the house of mourning. It's good for us.

- by Mark White

Why God Matters

Does God matter? Some behave as though He does not; living their own way. They curse, drink, gossip, lie, cheat, steal, or commit fornication. To them, God does not matter. However, logic and the Bible teach that God does matter.

God matters because He is the Creator. He made all things through His Son (Gen. 1:1; Jn. 1:1-3; Col. 1:16, 17). Being the Creator, He is superior to the creature, man (Gen. 1:26, 27). He gave man life, breath, and all things (Acts 17:25). He is not only the giver of life, but the sustainer as well (Heb. 1:2; Acts 14:17). He matters.

God matters because He is the Judge. God is the giver of the law of Christ (Jn. 16:7-15). All men will stand before God and be judged by Jesus Christ according to His law (2 Cor. 5:10; Jn. 5:22; 12:48). Hence, God matters.

God matters because He is God. The very nature of God demands the conclusion that He is

relevant. God is the Almighty (Gen. 17:1). He knows all things and with Him all things are possible (Psa. 139:7-12; Heb. 4:13; Mk. 14:36). He is self-existent and eternal (Ex. 3:14; Psa. 90:2). The President of the United States matters because he is the president. The CEO of a company matters to people in the company because he is the CEO. The God of the universe matters because He is God.

- by Steven F. Deaton

If It Was Up To You, Would The Church Close Its Doors?

Every year hundreds of new businesses are started here in our community. The Chamber of Commerce gladly reports on these new ventures in an effort to demonstrate that our local economy is healthy and growing. What they don't report quite so openly is that nearly an equal number of businesses close their doors each year. Why do these businesses fail? It's really very simple. They just do not offer services or sell products that appeal to a sufficient number of customers. In short, they go out of business because the buying public is generally apathetic about their continued existence.

Whether we realize it or not, we're giving our vote as to whether these businesses succeed or fail. We do it when we make the choice to patronize a particular business or to trade elsewhere.

We wonder if certain church members realize that a similar situation exists in local congregations. Some folks show an apparent apathy towards the continued existence of the church. They may attend occasionally - perhaps even most Sunday mornings. However, it is just 'too hard' for them to make the Bible study hour and they never return on Sunday evening. Wednesday night assemblies are absolutely out of the question - they're entirely too busy, too tired, etc.

What these folks are doing, whether they know it or not, is giving their vote to "close the doors". If it was left up to them, no one would assemble and no work would be done. Are you one of these people who are trying to put the church out of business? Think about it!

- by Greg Gwin