

Relationships with our Brethren

Romans 12:9-13

Introduction:

- A. **Christians often mistake a growing congregation with “church growth.”**
 - 1. This supposed growth is nothing more than Christians moving into the area OR moving their “membership” from one congregation in the area to another.
 - 2. This is not “church growth” but a “Christian shift” in the Lord’s church: in reality, there is no growth at all.
 - 3. But, this church feels good about itself as the church building becomes filled.
- B. What if the church were evangelistic and God gave the increase?
- C. **The result:** the church building becomes filled with a ton of worldly people!
- D. **The ramification:** a ton of baggage in the Lord’s church.

Discussion:

I. Getting At the Heart of Things

- A. **The reality is that when a person is added to the Lord’s church, he/she brings “baggage” into the kingdom.**
 - 1. There is the behavioral baggage. cp. **1 Cor. 6:11**
 - 2. There is the belief baggage. cp. **Acts 15:1ff**
 - 3. Some brethren will believe and do things *you do not think* “wise” or possibly “scriptural.”
- B. **Baggage coupled with beliefs/practices by some brethren:**
 - 1. Some want to literally lift up “holy hands” (**1 Tim. 2:8**) when praying or singing to God?
 - 2. Some want to greet you with a “holy kiss?” **Rom. 16:16**
 - 3. Some decide to fall prostrate in prayer. **1 Cor. 14:25**
 - 4. The elders decide to “lay hands” upon brethren when set apart for certain service among the saints. **Acts 13:3**
 - 5. Some decide to religiously celebrate the birth of Christ during Christmas (even if they don’t think His birthday is on Dec. 25).
 - 6. *Other Christians believe such behavior or beliefs are odd at best and unscriptural at worst.*
- C. **Consider some other divisive “issues” among brethren:**
 - 1. Head-covering (**1 Cor. 11**) ... order of the Lord’s Supper (**Lk. 22:19; Matt. 26:26; 1 Cor. 11:26**) ... One cup or many ... Number of faithful children needed to be an elder (**Tit. 1:5-6**) ... demanding name of church be “... church of Christ” ... Bible classes or not?
 - 2. In other words – even within our own cherished hermeneutical system of “Bible Authority” (via “CENI”) we struggle to find complete consistency.
- D. **NOTE:** Did our Old Testament forefathers use CENI consistently?
 - 1. When they decided to create their “altar of witness?” **Josh. 22:28-30**
 - 2. When they established the “Feast of Purim” after being delivered from Haman’s plot to have them destroyed? **Esther 9:18-23ff**
 - 3. When establishing synagogues?

II. How do Christians Get Along with One Another?

- A. **Put on Christ. Col. 3:12-17; Rom. 12:9-16; 1 Cor. 10:23ff; Eph. 4:1ff**
 - 1. More than anything else: they learn to “put on Christ.”
 - 2. Let’s rephrase: YOU learn to put on Christ.
- B. **Ultimately, what you practice is nothing less than love. 1 Cor. 13**
- C. **Remember:** a changed mind will create changed behavior. **Rom. 12:2**

Conclusion:

- A. Remember: the Lord’s church is made up of “saved sinners.”
- B. We bring baggage (immorality, pride, arrogance, etc., etc.) into the Lord’s church.
- C. How we relate to one another as we strive to grow in Christ is directly correlated to how we relate to our God.