



ISSUE

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Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN
OF THE
OLSEN PARK
CHURCH OF
CHRIST

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

9:30 AM

10:30 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Patrick Ledbetter

Brady McAlister

Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Ben Hight

Blake McAlister

Walker McAnear

Sam Nunn

Lance Purcell

Justin Smiley

Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

Step Outside of Yourself

By Kyle Pope

There is an expression we hear from time to time when someone becomes a little too absorbed and overcome with his or her own problems. A friend, in love, might tell the person, “You just need to step outside of yourself, and think about other things for awhile.” As with many expressions we use, if taken literally this advice is not only impossible, but laughable to conceive. How could someone *literally* step outside of himself? Regardless of what eastern religion and New Age thought would have us to believe, a person can’t just leave his or her own body for awhile and then come back after some task is done. Scripture defines death as the departure of the soul (or spirit) from the body (cf. Jas. 2:26).

When this expression is used it generally is not talking about some (so-called) “out of body experience.” What it means is that the person needs to shift his focus away from himself in order to gain a better perspective on things he must confront. While this wording is not found in Scripture, the idea it expresses certainly is. Consider with me a few areas in which as Christians, it would do us great good “step outside of ourselves.”

I. Take an Interest in the Lives of Christians within our Own Congregation.

Paul taught the saints in Philippi, **“Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others”** (Phil. 2:4, NKJV). These words come in the context of talking about Jesus’ own selflessness to leave heaven and humble Himself **“to the point of death”** (Phil. 2:5-8). We act like Jesus when we care about others. Let’s consider, however, some benefits that come from showing our care for others

1. It helps us see we are not alone. Peter taught

that as we resist the temptation of Satan we should, **“Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world”** (1 Pet. 5:9). Have you ever felt like no one else has the same struggles you face? The Holy Spirit teaches that **“the same sufferings”** we experience are common to saints the world over. Recognizing that we are not alone can be a great source of encouragement.

2. It helps put our problems in perspective. There is a commercial for a local cable company that tries to convince the customer that using their service will make things so much easier that even modern conveniences will seem burdensome. One man complains to his wife that the remote control for the television should be easier. He asks “why can’t it change itself?” Another girl, complains that pushing the handle down on the toaster is just too hard. While this is funny it truly illustrates the way we often are. Convenience makes us forget when things less convenient were the only things we had. Suffering, hardship, and emotions are the same way. In the middle of some trial we forget that often others have it far worse. Reaching out to others can not only change the way we view things, but may actually be a way we gain comfort from those suffering more than we are. Paul taught that this is not only a way we help each



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other, but a means through which God helps His people. He wrote:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

II. Take an Interest in Brethren in Other Places. Throughout the history of the Lord's church in America religious publications have played a significant role in keeping brethren connected. When the divisions took place in the mid-twentieth century over church support of human institutions and social gospel issues a publication known as the *Gospel Guardian* became a lone voice for Christians who had been isolated and "quarantined" from brethren no longer willing to discuss such issues. It became a rallying point by which brethren fighting for the same cause could connect and consider various issues. Though no longer in print, that publication is now online, and I was surprised recently to discover the street addresses of several places I lived as a child posted in its issues from the days when my father preached and submitted reports when he moved to a new work.

Much has changed since those years. There are many more publications printed by brethren, and no single paper represents (or should represent) a voice for Christians as a whole. At the same time, I am saddened by the fact that now I see much more of an attitude of isolation among us. We don't go to gospel meetings held by sound churches within our own

city. We don't read about our brethren, or study the things about which they are writing. Often, we restrict our religious diet to only what our own local congregation can offer.

Is that bad? Well, what if it leaves us unaware of some issue brethren have faced elsewhere? What if it prevents us from being of help to resolve some problem facing the church in another area? What if our focus is so isolated to our own congregation and its particular set of problems that we grow discouraged and lose faith, being ignorant of the victories others have had over these same problems?

Christians in the New Testament were not isolated from one another. Although New Testament churches were independent and autonomous, the saints in one area cared for and helped Christians in other places (Rom. 15:25-26). Elders did not oversee



self, **“the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost”** (Luke 19:10). Jesus’ purpose in coming to earth was to save those in the world who are lost in sin. While God must condemn those who stay in sin, Peter wrote that He is, **“not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”** (2 Pet. 3:9). Do we care for things

multiple congregations, but Christians stayed aware of issues their brethren faced (Acts 15:1-5). The record of Scripture and history shows it is a dangerous thing if we are unwilling to “step outside of ourselves” in concern for Christians throughout the world.

III. Take an Interest in the Lost Around Us. Jesus said of Him-

about which God cares? All around us there are souls who through ignorance or rebellion are lost in sin. Do we even stop and think about them? All around us there are those who have **“loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”** (John 3:19), but are we too busy with our own affairs? If so, it is time for us to “step outside of ourselves” and see the souls around us in need of the gospel.



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