

MAINTAINING A STRONG CHURCH

1 CORINTHIANS 16:13

INTRODUCTION:

1. Building up a church is of the uttermost importance, but if we do not maintain it, it will regress into spiritual complacency.
2. The source of strength in any congregation is the people and their willingness to involve themselves in the work of the church.
3. In four different metaphors, the church is described helping us to understand better how to maintain a strong congregation.

I. WHAT KEEPS A HOUSE STRONG?

- A. Every house requires regular and constant maintenance to stay strong and prevent disrepair. (Prov. 24.30-34; Titus 3.8)
- B. Regular pest control is necessary to maintain the house.
 1. Bug problems can often permeate a home without the owner being aware until it is too late. (Gal. 2.4,5; Jude 4)
 2. Sometimes a church needs to clean house. (Neh. 13.4-9)

II. WHAT KEEPS A BODY STRONG?

- A. A strong body is maintained by a healthy and balanced diet. (1 Tim. 6.3; Acts 20.27,28; 2 Tim. 4.2)
- B. A strong body is maintained by a regular exercise regiment. (2 Tim. 4.1-8; James 1.27)
- C. A strong body is maintained by getting plenty of rest. (Acts 27.4; Matt. 11.28-30; Gal. 6.2; 1 Pet. 5.7)

III. WHAT KEEPS A MARRIAGE STRONG?

- A. Maintaining a strong marriage takes time. (Deut. 24.5)
 1. Christians must take time to worship. (Heb. 10.25)
 2. Making that connection is a daily task. (Heb. 3.13)
- B. Communication is one of the key elements in maintaining unity in a marriage. (1 Cor. 1.10,11; Phil. 4.2)

IV. WHAT KEEPS A MILITARY STRONG?

- A. Discipline is necessary to maintain good conduct and morale within the military. (1 Cor. 9.27; 2 Thes. 3.6-15)
- B. A strong military requires proper equipment and training.
 1. Can a soldier fight without equipment? (Eph. 4.12; 6.11)
 2. What happens when a soldier lacks training? (Heb. 5.12)

CONCLUSION: May we not neglect the great potential of this congregation, and work to maintain our strength.

NORTHSIDE CHURCH OF CHRIST

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MEETING TIMES:

SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE CLASS :	9:00AM
SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP:	9:50AM
SUNDAY EVENING WORSHIP:	6:00PM
WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE CLASS	7:30PM

*Worshipping
God "in Spirit
and truth"
(John 4.23)*

DECEMBER 6TH, 2009

JUDGED BY YOUR WORDS

On that inevitable day of judgment, the things that we have done in the body, including every secret thing will be judged. Included in the our judgment are the words that we speak. Jesus stated that *"by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned"* (Matt. 12.37).

Some may object and say that we are not judged by anything but the word of God (John 12.48). So how can one be judged by his words? Judgment does indeed come by the word of God. Everything that we do and say will be measured against the standard of righteousness which is the law of Christ. Therefore if our speech is not consistent with wholesome words of godliness, but instead is littered with cursing, lying, gossip, and the like, then by our words we will be condemned. In other words, we will be condemned because of our speech (Eph. 4.25-32; Col. 3.8).

Our words can condemn us because the tongue is often a reflection of what is in the heart. It is a verbal outlet of the character. Therefore if the tongue is evil, then it can be certain that the character is also evil. Jesus teaches that *"those things which proceed from the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man."* (Matt. 15.18). Earlier Jesus explained that in the same way you can know a tree by its fruit, so also you can know one's character by what he says, for *"out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks"* (Luke 6.45).

Christians must always watch their tongues. For what we say can be the difference between heaven and hell. CLP

LISTENING TO GOD

HEBREWS 12:25

INTRODUCTION:

1. Man is so anxious to be heard that sometimes he forgets to listen. Many are looking for an attentive ear. (James 1.19)
2. With thundering and lightening, God made sure to have the full attention of His people. (Ex. 19.9; 20.18,19; 24.7)
3. God speaks to Christians today. Therefore we must be cautious not to refuse Him who speaks. (Heb. 12.25)

I. A REVERENCE OF GOD

- A. We tend to be more receptive of those whom we respect.
 1. Not knowing and respecting God, Pharaoh was unwilling to listen to Moses and hear the words of God. (Ex. 5.1,2)
 2. Who can know the mind of God? Yet His will is revealed through His Spirit. (1 Cor. 2.9-12; Eph. 3.3-5)
 3. God speaks to us through His Son. (Heb. 1.1,2; Acts 3.22)
- B. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.(Prov. 9.10)
 1. Too often our respect is directed toward the messenger and not the message. (2 Cor. 10.10; 1 Cor. 4.1)
 2. Why was Cornelius receptive to the gospel? (Acts 10.2)

II. A READINESS TO HEAR

- A. Have we prepared our hearts to “*receive with meekness the implanted word...*” (James 1.22; cf. 1 Thes. 2.13)?
 1. Cornelius was ready to hear. (Acts 10.24-27,33)
 2. Some, unwilling to be open minded, have already made up their minds. (Acts 7.57; John 8.42-44; 2 Tim. 4.1-4)
 3. How do we prepare our hearts? (James 1.22)
- B. Not a blind willingness to accept, but a readiness to listen and consider. (Acts 17.11; Isa. 1.18)

III. A RESOLVE TO OBEY

- A. Examples of those who had the resolve to obey.
 1. After seeing the glory of God and hearing His voice, Isaiah exclaimed, “*Here am I, send me*” (Isa. 6.1-8)
 2. After meeting the Lord on the road to Damascus, Paul did not confer with flesh and blood. (Gal. 1.15-19)
- B. Spiritual stability comes from obedience. (Matt. 7.24-27)

CONCLUSION: God speaks to all. Are you listening?

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

God only dwells with those who walk in the light as He is in the light. That is not to say that one who is in sin is not in the presence of God. God is omnipresent. He is everywhere at all times. Therefore it is impossible for one to hide from God and escape His presence. The psalmist asked, “*Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence*” (Ps. 139.7)?

So what does it mean to say that God is only among those who walk in His light? Only those who walk in the light have fellowship with God. John wrote of the conditional nature of fellowship when he explained, “*If we say we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth, but if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another...*” (1 John 1.6,7). Paul also described our fellowship when he quoted God as saying, “*I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*” (2 Cor. 6.16). He furthermore brought forth the condition of fellowship. “*Therefore “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.”* (2 Cor. 6.17)

For one to truly be in fellowship with God he must first become obedient to the gospel. After hearing the message of the cross (Rom. 10.17), one believes in Jesus as the Son of God (John 8.24), repents of his past sins resolving to live in compliance to the will of God (Acts 3.19), confesses that Jesus is the Son of God in a verbal acknowledgement of his faith (Rom. 10.10), and is then baptized for the remission of his sins (Rom. 6.1-5). Through obedience to the gospel one’s sins are removed, and when there is no sin which separates man from God (Isa. 59.2), he is now in fellowship with God having the blessings and responsibilities of being a Christian.

A relationship with God is the most important relationship that one can develop. However, we can sever our relationship with God by allowing sin to enter back into our lives (Rom. 11.22). John wrote his first epistle with the intention of showing that one can have fellowship with God (1 John 1.3). Therefore he stated that “*these things I write to you that you may not sin*” (1 John 2.1). However, if we do sin, God put in place the means to resolve it. “*And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*”

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