

April 2020

Editor, Keith Sharp

Designer, William Stewart



- unless otherwise noted, answers to questions by Keith Sharp -

In This Issue...

- **Biography of Ezekiel Afolabi Akinyemi**
| *Afolabi A. Akinyemi*
- **Question from New York about Divorce**
- **Question from Nigeria about Refreshment at Church Business Meeting**
- **The Tongue Is A Fire!** | *Sunday Ayandare*
- **The History of the Institutional Controversy (Pt. 1)** | *Jefferson David Tant*
- **We Still Have The Same Need** | *Jim Mickells*
- **Dancing in Worship** | *Mike Thomas*
- **Are Things In This World Inherently Sinful?** | *William Stewart*
- **The Corona Virus and the Lord's Supper**
| *Trevor Campbell*
- **How Does See Grow?** | *Keith Sharp*
- **Little Foxes** | *Keith Sharp*

Finally, brethren

**WHATEVER
THINGS**

are true

are noble

are just

are pure

are lovely

are of good report

IF THERE IS ANY VIRTUE AND IF THERE IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –
meditate on these things.

PHILIPPIANS
4:8

You can download this month's Meditate On These Things as a PDF file by clicking [here](#). Also, an archive of past MOTT issues is available at christstheway.com.

Biography of Ezekiel Afolabi Akinyemi

Afolabi A. Akinyemi | Lagos, Nigeria

Ezekiel Afolabi Akinyemi was born on 4th February, 1932 to Pa James Ojo Akinyemi and Madam Abigail Omojuyagbe Akinyemi at Itapa-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. The first in a family of 4 boys and 3 girls, he attended Methodist School, Itapa- Ekiti for his standard six certificate and completed it in 1951 after which he took a teacher training course and started teaching at Ajase-Ipo in the Ilorin Circuit of the Methodist Church in 1952 (Ajase- Ipo is in present-day Kwara State, Nigeria). He was transferred to Offa Methodist School and then to Oteoja a village in Ilorin Circuit of the Methodist Church where he was promoted to headmaster and Catechist where he worked until 1955.

He became disenchanted with the teachings of the Methodist Church and denominationalism in general and left the Methodist Church and moved to Ibadan to join his younger brother Ayoola in his medical drugs business. That was the beginning of his search for undenominational Christianity, as he resolved not to settle down with any church but rather devoted himself to reading the Bible and trying to understand it.

He started teaching at Payne Modern School, Oke Ado, Ibadan from 1961-1964. His first contact with New Testament Christianity was in 1959. The Church of Christ first started to worship on the first floor of a building at Oniyanrin in Ibadan in 1959. Ezekiel, his mother Abigail, and his younger brother Ayoola

occupied a section of the ground floor of the building. The singing of songs and manner of worship attracted his mother who encouraged Ezekiel and Ayoola to attend. Ayoola did and was later baptized, but Ezekiel paid no attention.

He heard the gospel at an open-air preaching by George Pennock and was baptized into Christ on 14th April, 1963 with Gabriel Babarimisa and immediately devoted himself to studying the Bible with the American evangelists like George Pennock, Wayne Payne, Robert Speer, James Gay, and Jim Sasser to name a few. He sat for GCE London, passed brilliantly and gained admission into the University of Ibadan in 1965 to study Economics. Because of his love and zeal for preaching the gospel, he declined the admission and devoted himself to preaching. He was involved in preaching through Bible correspondence courses alongside Ezekiel Akinbowale and Ezekiel Ajayi. He debated the Christ Witness Church in April, 1968 on the subject of Polygamy and was involved in the relief efforts for brethren in the eastern part of Nigeria after the Nigerian Civil War in 1970. From 1970, Ezekiel started training men in the preaching of the gospel. Among the first set of trainees were Beckley Matanmi, Iromidayo I. Olomosedara, Moses Agita, Micheal Ayikhomu and Emmanuel Odusan. He and Henry Keremu organized Preacher training classes at Enugu (where he met Benjamin Chimezi) and Aba. Among those he trained were Rufus Akataobi, Friday Odoemlam, Apollos Orji and Chikezie Amos. He debated Jim Massey while in the East on Institutionalism and was nicknamed "Roy Cogdill of Nigeria" because of his soft-spoken but forceful presentation in defence of the truth.

He continued to train men in the preaching of the gospel until he passed away. Among those he trained were James Majekodunmi, Sunday Ayandare, Christian Obiallo, David Adedeji, Richard Okesola, Isaac Morotoluwa, Godwin Onala, Daniel A. Daniel, Peters Obentey, Kayode Adekunle, Emmanuel Akpe, Iniobong Josiah, Opemipo Olusola, Gbenga Fabunmi, Kola Ajibola, Iyanu Bajode, Richard Popoola, Pegba Oderanti, Gideon Olaniyan, Edet Idung, Abraham Adeleke, Bayo Jemilehin, Julius Nwankwo, Benson Omole, Afolabi Akinyemi etc.

He started publishing the magazine "Gospel Defender," later changed to "Defender of Truth," in 1967 and served as the editor until the magazine was rested. The motto of the magazine was ".....Set for the defence of the gospel" (Philippians 1:17). Indeed this was his motto in life. He also wrote the book **You Should Know The One True Church**. He preached the gospel in various parts of Nigeria, planting congregations especially in Southwest Nigeria. He was the preacher of the Church of Christ, Challenge from 1976 when he established the congregation until his death. He preached the gospel on Television at various times and was still involved in preaching the gospel on Radio (Fresh FM, Ibadan) until he died.

Ezekiel was also at various times a commercial printer and farmer during his lifetime.

He married Eunice Lola Aduke Akinyemi Nee Omisakin on 24th December, 1972, and the marriage was blessed with 3 sons. His love for his family cannot be overemphasized. He converted his parents and every one of his siblings except Ayoola. He slept in the Lord at 10.15am on 25th February, 2020 and he is survived by his wife, 3 sons, 10 grandchildren, 2 great-grandchildren, 2 brothers and a sister. His life was devoted to preaching the gospel. Till we meet to part no more.

(Not only was Ezekiel Akinyemi my longtime friend, so were several of his students and his son Afolabi, himself a faithful preacher of the gospel and civil engineer, whom I have known since he was a teenager. Afolabi's father-in-law was the late M.K. Okusanya, a printer and Christian in Lagos, who was my first host in Nigeria in January, 1992. - KS)

Question from New York about Divorce

Question

Is the exception for divorce in Matthew 5:32 granted to the woman/wife also, or limited only to the man/husband? I was curious about your understanding of this verse.

Answer

Thanks for asking. Jesus' teaching against divorce is directed to men (Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-12; Luke 16:18) because His audience was Jews (Matthew 15:24) who were under the Law (Matthew 5:17-19), and under the Law only the husband had the right to divorce (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). However, in Mark's record, which seems to have been written to Romans, the Lord applies His teaching on divorce equally to men and women (Mark 10:11-12). The apostle Paul, writing after the Law abrogated, also applies his teaching equally to men and women (1 Corinthians 7:10-16). I conclude that the New Testament law of divorce/remarriage applies equally to men and women.

Questions from Nigeria about Refreshments at Church Business Meeting

Question

For a congregation that is not scripturally organized, via-z-viz having Elders and Deacons in place, rely on brethren business meeting to deliberation on the affair of the congregation. In such a business meeting, is it unscriptural for the Church to provide refreshments for brethren that will be in such meetings?

Answer

First, let me make some observations about decision-making in the local church. The divine arrangement for congregational decision-making is elders in every church. There are to be elders in every church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). Elders are to rule the local church (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4; 1 Timothy 5:17). To rule is to make decisions that those who are ruled are obligated to follow (Exodus 18:21-26; cf. 1 Kings 20:40). A congregation with no elders should be diligently striving to develop, select, and appoint men to this office.

A church may not have men qualified to be elders (1 Timothy 3:2, 11; Titus 1:7). In such a situation: (1) Men still make decisions for the church (Acts 13:1-3). Women may not rule over (help make decisions for) men (1 Timothy 2:12). The younger should submit to the elder (1 Peter 5:5). No one should seek or be allowed to have preeminence (3 John 9-10). All members of the church (including women) have the rights to: have their opinions and needs considered (Acts 6:1), be kept informed (Acts 6:2-4), and have their approval sought (Acts 6:2-5). All should strive for unity and peace (Ephesians 4:1-3), seek to please others, and not to cause anyone to stumble (1 Corinthians 10:31-33).

The church should never come together for the purpose of eating a common meal. Common meals are the function of the home (1 Corinthians 11:22, 34). The only meal the church comes together to eat is the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:17-34).

However, if the church is authorized to perform a function, whatever is necessary or helpful to fulfill that function is also authorized. Paul and Barnabas were authorized to "go ... preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15; Acts 13:1-4). They did so in a sail ship (Acts 13:4), which, although not mentioned in their commission, was either necessary or helpful to fulfill the command.

A business meeting of the church, even one that has elders, is an authorized function (cf. Acts 6:1-6). Whatever is necessary or helpful to carry out this meeting is incidentally authorized. In America we would have a drinking fountain for necessary refreshment. Paul ate a common meal in the same place the church came together to eat the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7-11). I would not be opposed to refreshments being served if necessary, but be sure not to violate 1 Corinthians 11:22, 34.

The Tongue Is a Fire!

Sunday Ayandare | Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

When we were young, one of the popular evening plays we used to enjoy was: "There is a fire on the

mountain, run!" Little did we realize then, as many still do not realize now, that fire is not only on the mountain, but indeed, within the members of our body! Yes, it is a sobering fact that living among the members of our body is the tongue which the Bible describes as a fire. The word of God truly has a lot to say about the proper use of the tongue. The Master Teacher says, "How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say unto you that every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matthew 12:34-37). Truly, the tongue is a fire!

That the tongue is a fire is the main thrust of James 3:2–12. In view of these sobering but astounding facts about the capabilities of the tongue, could we over-emphasize that extreme care should be taken in our use of the tongue? Specifically, before we say something about another brother, should we not examine and re-examine our motives to make sure we are being fueled by noblest motives and persuasions? Let us suggest three points along this line:

1. Before we say something about someone, be sure it is true. Many times, people echo what they have **heard** and not what they **know** to be true. Few years ago, the death of an influential brother was reported and another brother had to travel 150 kilometers to **verify** whether what was reported was true. That might be an extreme case! Anyway, it took someone else to remind this brother that people might spread ugly rumors about others but not in the case of death! The point is: gossip is gossip, and hearsay is hearsay, and rumor is rumor, no matter who is involved - be it a preacher or an elder or an influential person in the church. What if the information you are spreading is an exaggerated account of what actually happened? What if it turns out to be an outright falsehood? Brethren, it is high time we recognize the danger of repeating and spreading unverified information. It has the tendency of making you a participant in an untruth.

God's word says, "An evildoer gives heed to false lips; a liar listens eagerly to a spiteful (or destructive) tongue" (Proverbs 17:4). It is serious to provide an ear for false information. Remember, "...all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8). It is amazing how much ugly information is repeated without verification. Is it not better, beloved brethren, to verify a piece of information as being true by making a personal call rather than broadcasting the information to the hurt of your brother, especially now that virtually everybody has easy access to mobile phones? If Christ died for us "while we were yet sinners" (Romans 5:8), ought we not to love one another in the same way? "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11). This way, we would be like our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:44-46).

2. Before we say something about someone, first ask yourself what is the reason or motive for saying it? Many times, if we would take the time to check our real motives for telling things, we might do better by applying super glue to our mouths rather than leaving the impression that we are suffering from verbal diarrhea! Questions you should ask: Am I telling this to help build up the reputation of this brother or tear it down? Am I telling this to edify my brother and the church? Am I telling this so as to get even with a brother that had offended me in the past? Will it portray me as being "holier" than him? In many places, we hear a lot of criticisms about other people's actions and methods. Let us ask ourselves: are these motivated by brotherly love? Abraham Lincoln, one of the great American presidents was reported to have said: "Don't criticize until you know how you can help." In any case, the wise man says, "Dead flies make the perfumer's ointment give off a stench..." (Ecclesiastes 10:1, **ESV**). Sometimes it takes a little stinky story to ruin the reputation that has taken a long time to build. Consider this with all sobriety: would you like for someone else to so ruin your own reputation (if you have any, to start with)? This leads to another point:

3. Before you say something about another person, consider the golden rule: "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12). Here is it: if

you do not want to be slandered, don't be guilty of slandering others. If you would not want half-truths told as if they were the whole truth, then, don't be guilty of telling just part of the story. There was this story of someone who gave a crate of eggs to another. This crate consisted of small, large, and extra-large eggs. But then in an attempt to portray the giver of the eggs as very mean, the receiver of the eggs selected the small eggs in the crate and presented these as what the giver gave! That illustrates how easy it is to leave a wrong impression about someone. God's word says, "He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends" (Proverbs 17:9).

This should not be understood in terms of tolerating sin or providing a cover-up for sin in the name of love. Rather, the passage is encouraging us to do all we can for the sinner before we tell others about his sin. In this respect, sometimes it is better to hold back true, but ugly, information about others until every effort has been made to save the sinner (James 5:19-20). When our rebukes are couched in the form of scathing criticisms and our efforts in correcting and restoring the sinner are filled with acrimonious denunciations, then we are failing in "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1).

Yes, rebuke must be meted out to the one who is out of the way, but this must be done with love and in the spirit of gentleness. In this way, the sinner would be saved and God would be glorified. At any rate, is this not the way we would want others to treat us when we also stumble? Therefore, do unto others as you would want them to do unto you! That is the golden rule!

Conclusion

The tongue is very hard to control, even for preachers and elders and teachers of God's word. It takes the most intense concentration to hold it back from its tendency towards wildness. Do your best to tame it. If not, it will kindle all kinds of fires. It can defile the whole body and set on fire the course of nature and it is set on fire by hell (James 3:6). It can destroy the serenity of homes. It can destroy the peace, unity and harmony of local congregations. A tongue that is not controlled may turn into a huge conflagration that could cause many to be lost. Truly, "the tongue is a fire."

The History of the Institutional Controversy (Pt 2)

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

The Spread of the "Christian Only" Plea - 1830-1849

A new publication appeared - "The Millennial Harbinger." Campbell wanted to expand the scope of his paper, and felt the name "Christian Baptist" could be misconstrued. Though somewhat milder in tone, the new publication did not hesitate to wage war against the denominational departures of his day. It would be hard to overestimate the influence of Alexander Campbell's writing, preaching, and debating through these crucial years.

The spread of the plea was rapid and widespread. The work of the Campbells, Barton W. Stone, Walter Scott, John Smith and others resulted in possibly 200,000 who were followers of the ancient gospel by 1839. The causes of this growth were rooted in the zeal of the believers.

"How is such a rapid growth, with no societies, no machinery, no central head or headquarters, to be accounted for? The answer is: They had a message, they believe their message to be the greatest discovery of the age and need of the world; hence, fired with the zeal of discoverers, they became propagandists of the first rank"

(Homer Hailey, **Attitudes and Consequences**. 93).

Dark clouds were appearing on the horizon. As brethren rejoiced in their newfound faith and love, they began to meet together to edify one another. In 1831 Alexander Campbell published four articles on "Cooperation." He pointed to the obligation resting upon the church to evangelize the world. Whereas their plea was that any work done by the church should be done through the local congregations, they were

discussing how the work should be done. As the movement continued to grow, there was a growing sentiment for a stronger organized force than the cooperation meetings.

Some voices were raised in opposition, not to the meetings per se, but to the consequences of the more organized state meetings that were developing. Aylett Raines, writing in the "Christian Teacher," strongly opposed these meetings. "He believed there were tendencies, which, unless checked, would lead to state organizations and to a 'United States organization of the congregations' which would be a dangerous consolidation of power" (Alonzo Willard Fortune, **The Disciples in Kentucky**. 166). The subsequent years have proven his fears well-founded.

1849-the Beginning of the End

In 1849, Campbell published five articles entitled "Church Cooperation." A general meeting was held in Cincinnati October 24-28, which culminated in the forming of The American Christian Missionary Society, with Campbell elected as its first president, although he was hampered by age and feebleness. Accounts of the meeting give the number of those present as 155 delegates representing 110 churches and ten states. This was determined to be a voluntary cooperation of churches that would send funds to the organization, which would in turn select and send out preachers, but in time it came to exercise quite a bit of persuasive power.

From the very first, there were strenuous objections to the society. Among the objections was this:

"It was said that the Book of God knows nothing of a confederation of churches in an ecclesiastical system, culminating in an earthly head, for government or for any other purpose...It was a dangerous precedent, a departure from the principles for which we have always contended..." (Archibald McLean, **The Foreign Missionary Society**. 20).

Indeed, more than once Alexander Campbell's earlier statements were used against him. His objections to such a structure were very clear. Although there was much discussion and disagreement concerning the Society, it did not result in a break of fellowship at that time.

As 1860 came into view, there was another troubling issue that arose—the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship. As the number of disciples grew, there were more and more who came from the denominations that held not the same convictions as the early reformers did. Thus there were two attitudes that were prevalent:

"There were those who believed the church should move on with the rest of the world and adapt the spirit of the New Testament to conditions that were ever changing. They held that, when not forbidden by the New Testament, they were free to adapt their program to changing needs. On the other hand, there were those who believed the matter of the church was fixed for all time, and the fact that certain things were not sanctioned was sufficient ground for rejecting them. The men on both sides were equally honest, but they had a different approach to these issues that were raised." (Fortune. 364-5).

As early as 1827, resolutions forbidding instrumental music and the title "Reverend" had been stated, and the instruments had no significant backing. But in 1858 or 1859, L. L. Pinkerton introduced a melodeon in the worship at Midway, Kentucky.

The storm over this innovation reached full fury by 1864, and the aged Alexander Campbell weighed in against the instruments with strong words in an article he penned in 1851. He charged that the use of instruments was an appeal to the carnal nature of men as practiced in the denominations.

"I wonder not, then, that an organ, a fiddle, or a Jews-harp, should be requisite to stir up their carnal hearts, and work into ecstasy their animal souls ...and that all persons who have no spiritual discernment, sympathies of renewed hearts, should call for such aids, but is natural."

He further stated, "to all spiritually-minded Christians, such aids would be as a cowbell in a concert" ("Millennial Harbinger," 1851. 581-2).

One of the major arguments in favor of the instrument is that the Scriptures do not forbid it. But this

argument flies in the face of the very principles upon which Campbell, Stone and others sought to restore the ancient gospel.

In time, the use of the instrument became more and more widespread, and bitter divisions took place, as those in favor of the instrument and societies forced others out of their buildings and out of fellowship. There were occasions when those opposed to the instruments actually took an ax and chopped up the organ, but this did not stem the tide. By the turn of the century, 1900, the lines were pretty well drawn, and the division was all but complete. In the 1906 U. S. Census, churches of Christ and the Christian Church were recognized as separate entities—no longer one band of disciples.

Before continuing, it is worth noting that there are those who claim that Alexander Campbell was the founder of the “Church of Christ.” Actually, it was Jesus Christ. But long before Campbell was born, William Tyndale (1494-1536) was a Reformation leader in England. He was born near Gloucester, and has the distinction of being the first man to print the New Testament in English from the original Greek. He was ordained as a Catholic priest in 1521, but some questions about some of the teachings led him to a deeper study and eventually his baptism into Christ.

Printing the Bible in English was illegal, and the archbishop had his men go out and buy up all the copies on the market. Tyndale realized there some mistakes that needed to be corrected, but he had no more money, that is, until the Bibles had been bought. When the archbishop realized the revised copies had been printed, he called his men in, and asked what they could do now. “If we buy up all the printing presses, maybe we can stop it.” Tyndall was burned at the stake for his crime in 1536. Keith Sisman’s book, **Traces of the Kingdom**, details the history of the Lord’s Church during this period of time. William Tyndale was a member of the Bow Lane church of Christ in London long before the Campbells were born. Due to the persecutions the Christians faced, they met in secret, but there were many. James Bainham preached for the Bow Lane church until he was tortured and burned at the stake for preaching the gospel in 1532.

We Still Have The Same Need

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

The things we are experiencing now with the coronavirus are like nothing we have had to deal with before. By now, I am sure most all of you are like me, have become a little stir crazy. It never entered my mind, the last time we were at church services, it would be a good number of weeks before we would be able to assemble again. We have been able to have virtual worship services at home because of technologies available to us. Most are certainly thankful for YouTube, Facebook and other sources of communication. Yet, none of these replace our assembling together to sing, pray, study, partake of the Lord’s Supper and to give of our means. The Lord knew we needed to be together as His people to worship. “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” (Hebrews 10:24-25). We need that personal contact with other Christians. There are several other things all need as well. Let me suggest just a few to you.

Man still has a need for the forgiveness of sin. Though people may have been confined to their homes, this has not stopped the spread of sin. The virus has infected some, but sin has defiled everyone accountable to God. Sadly, we know that COVID-19 has caused a great number of people to lose their life, but iniquity will cause one to lose his soul. Jesus came to seek and save those who were lost, those separated from God because of their transgressions (Luke 19:10; Isaiah 59:1-2). People may lose their lives because of this disease, but they do not have to suffer the loss of the soul because of their sins. Paul said, “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Christ paid the penalty for sin, for everyone not just for a select few (1 Timothy 2:4). Yet He will only save those who will obey Him (Heb. 5:8-9).

All need hope because of the despair they face in life. How many times recently have you heard someone say, “this is not going to last, soon we will be back to normal,” or some similar expression. One is firmly persuaded things will be better. The suicide rate has risen in our country, and one of the main reasons is that people feel a sense of hopelessness. As Christians, we need not to be despondent because of the hope we have through Christ Jesus our Lord. In the book of Hebrews, the writer tells us that hope is the anchor of the soul, which is based upon the immutability of God’s counsel (Hebrews 6:17-20). Regardless of the trials which saints may be facing, they have the hope of something better awaiting them when this life is over. This gives them courage, determination, and steadfastness to press on to the goal which is set before them.

What we need most is God! It is my hope and prayer that these troubling and difficult days will make all see the need they have for their Heavenly Father. If people follow the instructions given to them by the experts of infectious diseases, they may avoid contracting this pandemic virus. They may confine themselves to their home, if in public stay six feet away from others, avoid contact, etc. This may give them a few more years of life, if the Lord allows the world to stand, but they will still face death. It is only God who gives us the victory over death through Jesus our Lord (1 Corinthians 15:57). After death then comes the judgment (Hebrews 9:27). Judgment will be based upon their deeds, things they may have done or else things they have failed to do (Matthew 25:31-46; Romans 2:16; Revelation 22:12). Have you loved God and served Him? It is not enough to just express such with your mouth, it must be shown by one’s deeds (1 John 3:8; James 2:19-26). All will spend eternity somewhere after they have been judged by our Holy God. He will be the One who determines our eternal destiny through His Son (Matthew 25:41,46). The only way you can have God is through Jesus Christ (John 14:6).

There are lots of things we have need of to sustain life on earth, but the greatest needs we have are not temporal but are eternal. They will be supplied to us by God through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is the great physician who can and will heal all who come to Him in humble obedience (Luke 5:31-32). Will you come and listen to the physician so you can be healed of your spiritual disease?

Dancing in Worship

Mike Thomas | Bowling Green, Kentucky, USA

One of the trends that has been developing for a while now in denominations is dancing in worship. Some believe it is a legitimate means of God communicating through them. A proponent of the activity said, “Do we not speak with our bodies through the dancer’s language of movement? We can tell a story with our bodies even if there is no music at all. As Spirit-filled believers, our bodies can speak divinely inspired utterances” (Lynn Hayden, Dancing for Him Ministries).

The reason dancing is considered a new development in worship is because it was not a trend set forth by the Lord and His apostles. The Bible clearly teaches that the first Christians “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). They had to learn how to conduct themselves in church (see 1 Timothy 3:15). While God wants all men to find the value of worshiping Him, He expects us to do so in “spirit and truth” (John 4:24), with things being done “decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40). Even in the days of spiritual gifts, the Christian was to use his gift in a way that edified the congregation by giving people a clear understanding of God’s will. Hence, “you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged...For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints” (verses 31, 33).

These principles show how God designed worship to produce fellowship with Him and His people, as they simultaneously encourage one another with understandable thoughts. In other words, the atmosphere of the New Testament church is not chaotic, disruptive, or centered on stimulating the senses. Christ taught His people to have worship that is decent, in order, under control, instructional, uplifting, and most of all scriptural. Perhaps these are the reasons why He did not institute dancing as a part of New Testament worship. Instead, He wants men to lead in worship (1 Corinthians 14:34-35), with prayer (1 Timothy 2:8),

singing (Colossians 3:16), remembering the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:22-26), giving (16:1-2), and teaching (1 Timothy 2:11-12). Yet He never uttered one syllable or even hinted at telling saints to dance to Him in worship. Look it up for yourself. "Dance, danced, dancing" are not mentioned in the New Testament, except for when Jesus referenced a prophecy pertaining to His critics (Matthew 11:17) and when Herodias' daughter seduced Herod (14:6) – hardly prooftexts for worship. If anything, Herodias' behavior shows why we should not be associated with this activity, especially when it has sensual movements (as most dances do).

It is evident that dancing in worship is a byproduct of viewing church as an entertainment service. Whenever people measure worship by how it stimulates their senses, they will always thirst for more exhilarating things. Concerts, light shows, dancing, fireworks, and things like them will be the result of that quest. This is as the Spirit warned— men "will be lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:4).

Despite having no authority from God for dancing in worship, some will still try to use the Bible to justify its practice. As with instrumental music, modern worshipers turn to the Old Testament to justify this innovation. "David danced before the Lord with all his might" and so should we (2 Samuel 6:14). It is getting to the point that the only things left to borrow from David are polygamy and offering animal sacrifices, which are just down the road, I am sure. But the truth remains the same: Christians are to worship God according to the new covenant found in Christ and not by things which were a "shadow of things to come" (Colossians 2:17). David was under the Law of Moses and could do things we may not as Christians, like have multiple wives and offer animals in worship. But we are under a different law and may only do what Christ's testament permits (Hebrews 10:1-10), which David would abide by had he lived in our generation. The fact is if Christ wanted dancing in worship, He would have stated it. Since He has not, and it never occurred to His apostles to guide Christians in that type of worship, we must rely on sources other than the Bible to get its approval. And lest we forget, worship is supposed to be about honoring God and giving Him what He wants. In doing so, it leads to "godly edification which is in faith" (1 Timothy 1:4). Ironically, when Paul penned those words, he did so without ever instructing Christians to dance in worship. So, it is possible for saints to find godly edification without telling "a story with our bodies" or moving around wildly in church. Apparently, we can be built up spiritually just by worshiping God the way He wants. Amazing.

Are Things In This World Inherently Sinful?

William J. Stewart | Odessa, Ontario, Canada

It is important for us to walk in God's way, to be in the world and not of the world. We do not want to practice or accept what is contrary to God's will. Some, in their zeal for such, have subscribed to asceticism, defined by m-w.com as "practicing strict self-denial as a measure of personal and especially spiritual discipline." The extreme forms of asceticism often involve flagellation and other forms of harm to the body. Less severe, but still strict, are those who refuse the use of modern technology (cars, electricity, telephones, etc.). Still, on the asceticism spectrum, some oppose reading, watching, or listening to any entertainment of this world and consider it a sin for a Christian to do so.

If someone doesn't want anything to do with the music, movies, or literature of this world, they're free to abstain from such. I have no interest in convincing anyone to do any secular activity they do not want to do. What I am concerned about is people blanketly opposing things that are not sinful, and then condemning those who participate in such things.

Let me also state, it's erroneous to object to just music, movies, and literature. On what basis, aside from personal bias, should we condemn these but no other things in this world? So, this list should include (but certainly not be limited to): board games, card games, computer games, sporting activities, playgrounds, parks, theme parks, theatrical productions, going to the gym, riding a bike, and other forms of exercise, public or private school, government-run welfare, unemployment or disability programs, etc, etc, etc.. Did I step on anyone's toes? If so, know that it was intentional. We need to be consistent - so if we are going to

indiscriminately condemn participation in things of this world (regardless of whether they really are sinful or not), then we need to condemn the whole kit and caboodle.

If the criteria for objecting to something is determined by whether it is of this world VS being of God, or whether it is secular in nature VS spiritual in nature, then the list would be virtually endless. But it is absolutely erroneous to infer that everything we do must be spiritual in nature and that if it is not, then we are displeasing God. There are many things we do that are neither pleasing nor displeasing to Him. Should I eat a turkey sandwich or poutine? God doesn't care. Neither is pleasing to Him; neither is displeasing to Him. Should I have a job as a grocery store clerk or a chimney sweep? Again, it makes no difference to the Lord. Neither is sinful.

Let's consider literature for a moment. In Acts 17:28, Paul quotes an Athenian poet, who had written, "*For we are also His offspring.*" We don't have access to the entire poem quoted by Paul, but we do know it was not Scripture. It was the work of a pagan poet, which would obviously make it a work of this world, not a work of God. And yet Paul read (and quoted) what this pagan Athenian poet wrote! Why?

Paul states in both 1 Corinthians 6:12 and 10:23, "*All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful.*" He is not speaking about things that are sinful (ie. idolatry, lust, theft, etc.). Such things would not be lawful. He is speaking about spiritually neutral things, that is, things which are matters of choice, of preference, of interest; things which are part of life, but not part of our service to God. Again, do I eat the turkey sandwich or the poutine? They are both lawful. One is more helpful than the other, but neither one is wrong in and of itself. Paul wrote, "*...food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse*" (1 Corinthians 8:8).

1 Corinthians 6:12 continues, "*...all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.*" Some things, even lawful things, can be addictive. Again, they're not inherently wrong, but if we come under their power (ie. we absolutely need it), then there is a problem. Lawful things (spiritually neutral, not inherently right or wrong) can become sinful if we are obsessed with them.

1 Corinthians 10:23 ends, "*...all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.*" Though a thing may be lawful for us, it may discourage others. In the context, Paul uses the eating of meats as an illustration. "*Eat whatever is set before you, asking no questions for conscience' sake*" (v 27). All meat is OK to eat, it is lawful. The only caveat Paul gives is this; if you are told, "*This was offered to idols,*" don't eat. Why? Not because the idol is anything (1 Corinthians 8:4), but to not violate the conscience of the one who noted it had been offered to idols. The meat is still "lawful," but because one was present whose conscience is weak, who may be offended by the consumption of the meat, Paul says don't eat out of concern for the one who is weak in faith (Romans 14:1-2). At the same time, the weak brother's faith does not then become the standard for others, for Paul says, "*let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him*" (Romans 14:3). The brother who sees no problem with the meat offered to an idol is free to eat, except when the weak brother is present, lest he violates his conscience.

Now, how does this apply to listening to music, watching movies, reading books, playing board games, etc.? First off, all these things are "lawful," they are spiritually neutral; things that are a matter of choice, of preference, of interest, unless there is something inherently sinful in them (ie. lyrics, scenes, or activities). As with the meat scenario presented by Paul, if brother A believes it is OK to listen to rock music (again, that which does not have sinful lyrics), and brother B's conscience is violated by such, brother A should not listen to rock music in the presence of brother B, lest he violates his brother's conscience. However, as noted from Romans 14:3, brother B has no right to judge brother A and impose his conscience as a standard upon him.

The same is true for whatever secular thing we might discuss. Unless there is something inherently wrong with it; something in it that violates God's law; then it is lawful, and a matter of personal faith and

conscience. God's word does not outlaw things simply because they are unrelated to spiritual activity. Hear Paul's message to the Colossians:

If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, 'Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!' (which all refer to things destined to perish with use) - in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body but are of no value against fleshly indulgence. (Colossians 2:20-23, NASB).

Creating rules and making restrictions that God has not doesn't make us more holy. Outlawing things that are "lawful" (again, things that are spiritually neutral) is a self-imposed religion bolstered by false humility. Each one is free to have their own personal faith concerning what secular activities they will or will not participate in, so long as they are "lawful" things. No one has the right to enforce their opinion upon another.

The Coronavirus and the Lord's Supper

Trevor Campbell | Pyatt, Arkansas, USA

With the Coronavirus spreading rapidly many congregations have cancelled their worship assemblies, which includes meeting to partake of the Lord's supper on the first day of each week. Some brethren have encouraged us to continue to partake of the Lord's supper in our private homes outside of the assembly, but is this what the Lord would have us to do? Let's take a look at what God says.

One passage that I've heard quoted in support of having a private in-home Lord's supper is Matthew 18:20 where Jesus says, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." We notice that Jesus uses the phrase "in My name," which refers to something done under His authority. Therefore what Jesus speaks of in this passage deals with something that He has authorized. So what is Jesus authorizing in this passage?

Let's take a look at the context. Chapter 18 begins with Jesus teaching his disciples about humility and having concern for their brethren, which are God's people, which Jesus calls, "little ones." He also speaks of going after that lost sheep in verses 11-14 that's gone astray. He continues the idea of having concern for brethren in versus 15-17, telling the disciples that if their brother sins against them to go to him in an effort to gain him back.

"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector" (Matthew 18:15-17).

There is something very important for us to note in this passage; Jesus made a distinction between the church (or the assembly) of verse 17, and the "two or three witnesses" of verse 16. The church is not the same as the two or three meeting apart from that same church. This will be an important component to our discussion of whether or not the Lord's supper can be eaten privately, but for the moment lets continue to look at the text, and the ongoing discussion Jesus has with His apostles.

In verses 18-19 Jesus tells the apostles that they will be binding the new covenant, and loosing the bonds of the old covenant, as well as answering the questions that people would have concerning the law.

"Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven" (Matthew 18:18-19).

When Jesus ascended back to heaven the apostles became the authority for the doctrine of Jesus Christ. The Lord's people looked to them for guidance. Much like Moses in the old testament, the apostles became the lawgivers. Which is why in Acts 2:42 Luke says concerning the church in Jerusalem, "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine...." These things of course were accomplished after the Holy Spirit came upon them, for Jesus said, "However when He, the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth..." (John 16:13). The apostles did not speak on their own authority, but were teaching the things of God. Jesus in this passage is authorizing the apostles to teach those things.

Now we circle back to our initial text of Matthew 18:20, where Jesus said, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." Notice that Jesus begins with the word "For" in verse 20. It is a continuation of the things that He spoke in versus 18-19, and we've already seen that those things were only for the apostles. If we keep that in mind then, verse 20 primarily deals with two or three apostles, gathered together in His name, under His authority, speaking things that He had authorized, things given to them by the Holy Spirit. This passage does not authorize you and me to partake of the Lord's supper privately, outside of the assembly.

Furthermore in the very same context Jesus makes a clear distinction between the church meeting and a private meeting of two or three people. Again, this is an important idea to consider as we look next at when and where the Lord's supper is to be observed.

Luke tells us that on the first day of the week the disciples met to partake of the Lord's supper (Acts 20:7) They had gathered together (Acts 20:8) and partook of this "love feast," as Jude refers to it in Jude verse 12. It is a supper the Lord intends for us to share with our brethren, when we assemble together. In 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 the apostle Paul instructed the Corinthian church concerning the partaking of the Lord's supper in a worthy manner. He begins the text by speaking of the Corinthian disciples coming together. Notice the phrase "come together" in verse 17, and the phrase "come together as a church" in verse 18, as well as the phrase "come together in one place" in verse 20. This text shows us that they came together as a church to partake of the Lord's supper. Later in the text he says "...when you come together to eat, wait for one another" (1 Corinthians 11:33). This was a supper to be shared together.

Remember our discussion earlier of Matthew chapter 18, where Jesus made a distinction between the church meeting and simply two or three people of that church meeting. One, or two, or even several members of a congregation partaking of the Lord's supper privately is not the same as the church coming together to partake.

When brethren attempt to partake of the Lord's supper privately in their own homes, away from the assembly, they violate the pattern God has given us.

In conclusion, let us remember the words of the apostle Paul in Colossians 3:17, "and whatever you do in word or deed do all in the name of the Lord Jesus...."

How Does Seed Grow?

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

"And He said, 'The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come'" (Mark 4:26-29).

My younger grandson planted sunflower seeds when he was six and waited impatiently for them to germinate and grow into plants. As they grew into plants twice his height, he lost interest. But he learned that the **power to produce life is in the seed**. Neither he nor a Ph.D. botanist understands how life got

into that seed. It is the work of God.

The power to change the self-willed sinner to a submissive child of God, that is to produce the kingdom of God within the human heart, does not lie with the eloquence of the preacher (1 Corinthians 2:1-5), clever methods that beguile the sinner into obedience (2 Corinthians 4:2), or carnal attractions that lure impenitent sinners into the fold (John 6:26-27). The power is in the word of God (Romans 1:16; 10:17), which, when faithfully preached and taught, will always accomplish the will of the Lord (Isaiah 55:10-11). **It doesn't matter who plants the seed but Who planted the life in the seed** (1 Corinthians 3:6-7).

If my grandson becomes a gardener, he will learn to garden in faith. He will plant the seed and then go about his business, trusting that the seed will germinate, grow into a plant, and produce a crop. **We sow the seed of the kingdom in human hearts in faith that the word will do its work.** We preach and teach, then we leave the sinner and go about other tasks, trusting the seed to germinate within the heart, grow into faith, and produce the rule of Christ in the heart. The skeptic who claims any method whereby the word is imparted to hearers does no good lacks faith in the Lord and in His word. The word of God is still "living and powerful" (Hebrews 4:12).

The farmer must be patient (James 5:7) as he waits for the sunshine and rain to bring the crop to maturity. We must simply sow the seed and wait patiently for the Lord to yield the increase. There are times of faith-testing frustration when all our labor seems to be accomplishing nothing.

We must not lose heart. "Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy" (Psalm 126:5).

Little Foxes

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

"Catch us the foxes, The little foxes that spoil the vines, For our vines have tender grapes" (Song of Solomon 2:15).

Song of Solomon is unique among the books of the Old Testament. Since the book deals exclusively with marital love, several of its passages are quite sensual. It is the only book in the Bible which consists entirely of poetry and conversation. The book is filled with Hebrew figures of speech.

Keil & Delitzsch comment on Song of Solomon 2:15: "... the foxes, the little foxes, which might destroy these united vineyards, point to all the great and little enemies and adverse circumstances which threaten to gnaw and destroy love in the blossom." The Shulamite maiden, the heroine of the book, was concerned that little problems arising in the relationship with her lover/friend/spouse would ruin the relationship, even as little foxes could damage the grapevines at the time they were ready to bear fruit.

Little problems can arise, sometimes simply through thoughtlessness or carelessness, that can irreparably damage a marriage. God made the husband and wife one flesh (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6). It is the closest of all earthly relationships, a precious tie, and must not be neglected, taken for granted, or foolishly, carelessly ruined.

The husband and wife have an inviolable claim to one another's loyalty that must never be compromised (1 Corinthians 7:2-5). In what I view as her wedding vow, the maiden says to her spouse:

*"Set me as a seal upon your heart,
As a seal upon your arm;
For love is as strong as death,
Jealousy as cruel as the grave;
Its flames are flames of fire,
A most vehement flame"* (Song of Solomon 8:6).

The seal upon her spouse's heart and arm marks him as belonging exclusively to her. He must never give his heart to nor put his arm around another woman. The one human emotion that is as strong as death itself is love. But the jealousy arising therefrom can be as cruel as the heartless grave. It can be as fierce as a raging inferno.

Don't let little foxes hurt the tender vines of marital love. Husbands and wives, your behavior toward those of the opposite sex should be above suspicion. "Have regard for good things in the sight of all men" (Romans 12:17), "... providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (2 Corinthians 8:21).

Don't put yourself or allow yourself to be put in compromising situations that lead to temptation or even suspicion. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). I've heard the terrifying roar of the lion in the bush of Africa. Treat temptation like a ravenous lion. Don't see how close you can get without being harmed; run away!

I knew a young married woman, a Christian, who went without her husband with a singing group including men away from home to perform. I have no reason to think she committed adultery, but she eventually divorced her husband. Another young married woman, also a Christian, went places with a single, young man. People in the community thought they were boy friend and girl friend. She also eventually divorced. I believe sin preceded and led to each divorce. They were not "providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." They hurt their reputation, hurt the church, and ruined their marriages. "Catch us the foxes, The little foxes that spoil the vines, For our vines have tender grapes."



If you no longer wish to receive these emails, please reply to this message with "Unsubscribe" in the subject line or simply click on the following link: [Unsubscribe](#)

[Click here](#) to forward this email to a friend

Meditate On These Things (MOTT)
2950 Hwy 5 S
Mountain Home, Arkansas 72653
US

[Read](#) the VerticalResponse marketing policy.

Vertical DELIVERED BY
response
Try It Free Today!