



# The Country Preacher's Newsletter

"...speaking the truth in love" Ephesians 4:15

## To Live Is Christ

By Randall F. Matheny

Paul's statement, "For me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21) should be the goal of every Christian. There can be no greater goal in life or death than to be the best Christian that I can be so that when I die I can be with Christ forever. What other doctrine or philosophy can measure up to the love, benevolence, comfort, instruction in right living or the unparalleled moral system of the New Testament of Jesus Christ? Anyone who is truly interested in nearing their potential as human beings will find Christianity worthy of most intense attention and pursuit. Likewise, the faithful Christian will always be interested in examining himself, whether he is in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5) and whether or not he is growing spiritually (1 Pet. 2:1-3; Heb. 5:14-6:3).

The Bible is the standard by which we must all examine our spiritual growth (1 Tim. 3:16-17) and as such, contains many indicators of growth or the lack of it. A few of the most obvious ones would include: (1) Diligence to seek God's approval

as a workman who properly handles the word of truth (1 Tim. 2:15). (2) Daily Bible study so that one may handle properly the word of truth and grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:1-3). (3) Thoughtful, edifying speech (Jas. 1:19-20). Do you often find yourself saying things that you are later sorry that you said, or

do not even know that you are a Christian? (6) Prayer (Rom. 12:12; 1 Thes. 5:21). Is prayer a forethought or an afterthought? Does prayer come easily to you in most situations or do you find yourself struggling to "get in the mood?" (7) Brotherly love (Jn. 13:35; 1 Pet. 1:22; Rom. 12:10). Are there brother or sisters in Christ that you just don't like to be around? What

company do you seek out for regular companionship, comfort, recreation, or edification (1 Cor. 15:33; 2 Cor. 6:14-18)? (8) Faithful assembly with the

saints (Heb. 10:24-25). This is the most obvious indicator of spiritual maturity and certainly the one that is most obvious to others. Do you long for the company of your brethren in the Lord (Rom. 1:11-12)? Or do you often find it inconvenient to assemble with the saints when you are faced with a conflict of interest during a time when the saints regularly assemble? Would you rather be in the presence of Jesus (Mat. 18:20) and His faithful, or does it come easily to choose worldly people or endeavors (Mat. 8:18-22; Lk. 10:38-42)? Granted, that these seven indicators of spiritual growth barely scratch the surface, but they are a good place to start.

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feel compelled to explain away or apologize for saying? (4) Answering challenges to your faith (1 Pet. 3:15). Do you welcome opportunities to tell others why you are a Christian or do you find yourself avoiding situations where you may find your knowledge of the faith put to the test? (5) Evangelism (Acts 2:42-47; 8:4; 1 Cor. 9:16; Heb. 5:11-14). Are you so completely committed to Christ that one of your greatest joys is to share the gospel with a hungry soul? Are you able to show someone from the Bible what Christ requires of us to become Christians? Or are there those among your associates and perhaps even among your closest circle of friends who

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## Our Part in the Lord's Harvest

By Randall F. Matheny

The coming summer months are shaping up to be quite busy, and hopefully productive for the Lord's sake. Perhaps the Lord's words to His disciples, "*The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest (Mat. 9:37-38),*" will take on an immediate and personal meaning to each of us as we consider what we have to offer Him in service. Understanding that no more will be required of us than that which we are able to perform (Mat. 25:15), let us each determine to bear our fair share of the burden in our small part of the Lord's harvest.

The most important first steps in Christian service are simple, easy, and require little effort, but nonetheless seem difficult for many. We must begin by being faithful to Christ in the assembly. No stretch of the imagination could conclude that in view of all that Jesus has done for us that He requires us to assemble too often. Out of the 8760 hours in a year, our regular assemblies account for only 156 hours, or 3 hours out of 168 per week. Even if one were never to miss an assembly, it could hardly be said that the time spent was sacrificial. In the light of Hebrews 10:23-27 every Christian should assemble regularly to build and maintain the spiritual strength needed to at least be minimally involved in the good

works that the Master requires of each of us (Mat. 5:13-16; 25:31-46; Eph. 2:10). We can also determine to be faithful and fervent in prayer on behalf of our congregation and our evangelistic efforts (Rom. 12:12; 1 Thes. 5:17), always remembering and believing that, "*The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much (James 5:16b).*" We must never doubt that if we muster the love, courage and resolve to sow the blessed seed, that God will grant the increase (1 Cor. 3:6; Lk. 8:11, 15). The more abundantly we labor (1 Cor. 15:58), the more abundantly the seed is sown, the more likely the increase. Be positive and enthusiastic, not doubtful and negative. If the soil is hard God will judge it, not us. And we must remember that the condition of our own hearts will be counted among our successes or failures. Our attitudes will either fan the flames of zeal, or smother them. Let all that we do be toward the edifying of the church (Eph. 4:11-16) and, "*Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers (Eph. 4:29).*" Our gratefulness to the Lord can only be shown by our willingness to obey *all* of His commandments (Mat. 28:20; Jn. 14:15; 1 Jn. 5:3).

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### Tidbits

"How different our lives are when we really know what is deeply important to us, and keeping that picture in mind, we manage ourselves

each day to be and to do what really matters most."  
-- **Stephen Covey**

"To reach a port, we must sail - sail, not tie at anchor - sail, not drift." -- **Franklin Delano Roosevelt**

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