

# The Servant



Newsletter for Under-Shepherds and other Servants of God /5523 Newberry Drive/Raleigh, NC 27609

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*The purpose of this newsletter is to pass along information and ideas to help the Lord's servants as they minister to others. Feel free to use any of it in your ministry*

## Doctrine

Like the Minor Prophets, minor doctrines are not unimportant. All truth is important and every jot and tittle is holy. However, there is a difference between "Minor" and "Major" doctrines. Those who make everything weigh the same do so because their scales are broken. These same people also say all sin is the same. It is not. I would rather you curse me than kill me. There are major doctrines and minor doctrines.

Denominations have a tendency to gather around some minor thing which sets them apart from those who gather around other minor things. Notice, I did not say unimportant things, I said "minor things." While we should seek to be obedient in "all things," we should not make all things equal.

If there are Major doctrines and Minor doctrines how are they differentiated? Major doctrines are the supporting walls of our Christian faith. They are not unlike the supporting walls of a building. Remove a supporting wall and the thing collapses. I knew of a man who wanted to renovate a building to expand his shop. He foolishly removed a supporting wall and the whole structure began to sag. Engineers had to rush to save him from ruin.

Certain doctrines are the supporting walls of Christianity. For example, remove the doctrine of the Virgin Birth and Christianity collapses. Jesus must be born of a Virgin. Remove the resurrection and Christianity collapses. Remove baptism and Christianity goes on regardless.

I believe baptism is important. I believe the Bible is clear that a person should be baptized by immersion as a public act of obedience and a witness to faith in Christ. I also

believe that it is a shame that the church has divided over the how, when, why, and where of baptism (not that these things are not important- they are, but they are not important enough to break fellowship).

We want to enlarge our dining room. We may remove a wall without endangering our house because the wall is not a supporting wall. Every local assembly is free before God to place the non-supporting walls where they believe God wills as they study the blueprints, the Bible. For some reason some things are not as clear-cut as others. But woe to the assembly that moves or removes walls willy-nilly and at whim. Everything God ordains is important. Everything has its place. Woe to those who kick out walls without guidance from God. They may find the whole thing may come crashing down upon their heads.

***In Major things: Unity, In Minor things: Liberty, In All things: Charity***

### One

Each one different  
Each one unique  
One could pray  
And one could speak

One had a tender heart  
Another had the head  
One would heal the sick  
The other raise the dead

But the Master prayed  
They would all be one  
From this I fear we strayed  
Come, gather 'round the Son

## Faith or Franchise

We went to New York City as Missionaries for Christ to preach the Gospel in 1976. Although I grew up in that city of teeming millions, in the early 1950's, no one ever told me about Salvation and the necessity of the "new birth."

We had no missionary board backing us, we had no money, and no one was there to greet or welcome us. What we did have was God's Word and God's promise that "faithful is he that calleth you, who will also do it." God did it. God was faithful and we were privileged to watch Him work in the lives of people.

Years later we engaged in home missions work in the mid-west and then ministered in Micronesia as well as visiting missionaries in Russia and preaching in the Philippines, and in Brazil. We in no way think we are experts, but we have enough experience to make certain observations. God has called us to a faith not a franchise.

I was amazed to hear missionaries report to supporting churches that they were the only "witness" in a particular city when I knew for a fact that I and other missionaries were preaching and working and ministering right there along side that work. I have been embarrassed to hear directors of mission boards speak of unmanned mission fields that have no one bringing the gospel to the natives yet in darkness. I had visited those mission fields and met many dedicated and faithful workers laboring in the work. I have heard presidents of Christian schools speak of the spiritual

poverty of a particular town or city that was crying out for laborers, because they had none, when I knew the contrary to be true. I thought, "What is going on here?" "What is happening?"

What these schools, boards, and denominational heads meant was "we do not have our own group established in this particular area." They were not talking "faith," they were talking "franchise." Yes, there might be ten Baptist missionaries ministering in a particular place, but none from "their" mission board. There might be twenty missionaries preaching and teaching house to house, but not from "our group, denomination, or Bible College." They were thinking of the church as a franchise rather than a faith.

Many feel they must re-invent the wheel and plant Wesleyan, or Calvinistic, or Lutheran, or Primitive, Free Will, or Four Square, etc. I don't think that is what Jesus meant when he prayed in the garden about us being "one."

Heaven is more important than hamburgers, most will admit. Yet many will go off and start another group for those who do, or do not like pickles. Now here is where I make some angry (if I have not done so already). Some think pickles are very important. They claim that a hamburger is not a hamburger unless it has pickles. Nothing I can say will change their mind.

Jesus had to deal with the same spirit during his ministry. His Father's house had been turned into a place of merchandise (a business) and leaders became obsessed with mint and anise

and cummin, which are spices (pickles?) while having "omitted the weightier matters of the law... judgment, mercy, and faith..." Matt. 23:23.

Paul had to address the tendency to "nit-pick" about pickles (I am wearing out this metaphor, I know) when he wrote to the Romans. He said, "for meat destroy not the work of God" Rom. 14:20. The Gospel is not about hamburgers (meat), with or without pickles, onions, or catsup. It is about Christ. Sometimes He gets lost in the lettuce. Paul said, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

How do we discern a faith ministry from a franchise? When we fellowship around Christ we fellowship with others around Christ. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" 1Jn. 1:3. When we are involved in a franchise, just leaving off the pickle becomes a big problem. (Remember, in a franchise, pickles are important). If we would only love Christ more, we would find He is enough. □

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matt. 18:20



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