

## Messenger and Visitor

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### Watch Care of the Church.

A church exists for two purposes—to bring men to Christ,—and to build up men in Christ. The church must go out after the men, capture them first, for Christ; second, gain them for Christ's church.

When a church receives members into its fellowship, a duty arises. It must not only receive them—it must watch over them. Churches often make a great mistake. An inquirer is tenderly watched over. Every heart is solicitous and tender. When he becomes a Christian and a church-member, solicitude often drops. To be born is simply the beginning of the Christian life. The church must not only say to each member "Grow." It must help each member to grow. If the church be watchful, helpful, tender, strong, it can make almost anything out of its new recruits. The church must be a father, a mother, an elder brother to its membership. Every church is put under bonds to Jesus Christ to care for every member entrusted to its care.

Is any member poor, or in distress? It is a shame for one of God's poor to be in a poor house. How tenderly should the church care for its needy ones! The church should know when want comes, and be a good Samaritan.

Is any member non-resident? The church must care for the absent ones. The mother church must write to her absent children and this not simply for the purpose of getting a contribution. The names must be on the heart of the church as well as on the church records.

Is any member sick? There must be kindly watch care for the sick. A pastor kept a conservatory that flowers might be sent to the sick of the church. The church as such, should care for its sick members. In a Baptist meeting house was posted this notice: "If you need help in caring for the sick, call upon the following persons." The church of Christ ought not to be put to shame by societies in caring for the sick. The church ought to be as helpful in life as it is orthodox in creed.

Is any one erring in conduct? Let not the feet become fixed in the evil way. Let kindly admonition follow at once. Too often a whole church will talk about a man, but no one will talk to him. There is plenty of criticism but no help.

Is any one absent from worship? Many for months and years absent themselves from the place of worship. When they began to remain at home the church gave no counsel. In some churches a record is kept of all who are present at each Lord's Supper. The writer did that in his church for years. It is too much trouble. Is it? It is worth some trouble. Has any good ever been done that did not cost something? That is watch care. The church keeps its eye on every man for his good. The church should know every man's life, both the outside and the inside of it. How shall this large work be done in a kindly, loving way?

The pastor must lead in the work. He makes a mistake who gives all his time to his pulpit and only fag ends to pastoral work. The deacons must help the pastor. It is vastly important that the church have good deacons. The church is richer having a poor pastor and good deacons, than a church having a good pastor and poor deacons. The deacon must have two eyes open, two hands to help, a big heart, not a big head, a wise judgment. Let the membership of a church be divided among the

deacons, and let the church say to them, "Watch over, keep these members for Jesus Christ."

There should be deaconesses in our churches. These are not necessarily the wives of the deacons. The order of Phoebe might be built up with profit in Baptist churches. Power will be developed when this is done. The church meeting should consider these things. How can we lift up the community? When this spirit comes into a church there will be no time for contention.

Every member of the church should have this idea of the church—its helpfulness. Every member should feel "It is part of my business to help the man who most needs help."

The church will do better work outside of itself if it does better work inside. If it build up itself in righteousness it will be fitted for building up the community. Building up the membership, multiplies its power. We need in every church not the spy, but the watchman, not the fault-finder, but the counselor. It is said that in every Chinese Baptist church a New Year question is put to each member. "Have you paid your debts?" There are some business men who would like that question put to some people who trade with them. That would be a practical oversight in the matter of honesty and well-doing. Some one has well said, "Two duties the church has—filling the church full of men, filling the men full of Christ." Brethren, this is a great mission. How are we fulfilling it?

### Half-Baked.

"Ephraim is a cake half turned." A half-cooked loaf is not good bread. The ingredients may have been of the best, the cooking apparatus first-class, but if when the hour is up, and the bread is half done it is of no service, and is practically useless for the purposes for which it was intended. It is unpalatable, and affords no nourishment. There are some people in all our churches like Ephraim's cake—unbaked. They are not what they ought to be anyway, even if they are what they want to be. They have not given themselves fully to the service of God. They do not follow their Lord wholly and fully, as did Caleb. They shrink from the yoke of self-sacrifice and implicit obedience, as if they were afraid it would prove a hindrance to their happiness. They desire to hold out one hand in token of fellowship with Jesus Christ, and reach back with the other, to hold on to the world. Mingling in its pleasures, enticed by its pursuits, they are half-hearted in religious service; they yield to their love of ease and self-indulgence, and know but little of the grand purpose and lofty enthusiasm of those who have enlisted for life as soldiers of the cross, and are ready to follow wherever the Captain may lead. They are like that chief of an Irish clan, who, when he came to be baptized centuries ago, held up out of the water his right hand, and when asked what that act meant, replied that he withheld that member from God's service, that with it he might war against his enemies.

With much the same spirit of reservation, though, perhaps not in quite so outspoken a manner, do some hold back from God their full allegiance. They are not ready for the self-denial required to be faithful followers of Christ. So they seek to compromise, and to deceive themselves into a belief that they can serve God and yet engage in, and enjoy, the pleasure of the world. This same fallacy is a stumbling-block in the way of many, who, convicted of sin, have acknowledged their desire to be Christians, yet hold back from laying all upon the altar of consecration. Almost every pastor has met with such cases. During a revival of religion a young lady said to her pastor that she knew she ought to be a Christian, but did not feel that she could, just yet, deny herself all the pleasures of youth and become sober and plous. Being passionately fond of dancing, she desired to gratify herself in its indulgence. Seeking to hold back from duty on this ground her pastor said, "The first thing for you to do is to give your heart to Christ, and then hold yourself ready for any sacrifice or service He may demand and then dance all you want to." "Ah, but," said she, "if I were to become such a Christian as you talk about I shouldn't want to dance."

A whole-hearted devotion to Jesus Christ is a sure cure for worldliness, and where there is willingness to surrender everything to the service of the

Master, and a sincere purpose to live only for his glory no desire will conflict with the demands of duty. To be useful and happy one needs to be well-baked—well-cooked, through and through.

### The Octopus.

This is said to be one of the most ferocious and dreadful monsters of the sea. It was well known to the ancients as the polypus, and marvellous tales have been told of its ferocity and power in seizing with its terrific tentacles, and dragging into the deep, large boats with their helpless crews. It has eight long arms that reach out in restless motion in all directions, and to each of these are attached one hundred and twenty suckers—like fingers that expand and contract with rapid, unchangeable motion; and by these nine hundred and sixty fingers it fills its capacious maw with whatever comes to hand. With eyes fixed on its adversary, and with parrot-like beak advanced for the encounter, this most unsightly of all living things inspires awe by its loathsomeness, not less than by its actual power to harm. It is the special dread of wreckers and divers, and many a poor fellow has found himself involved in its dreadful tentacles, and had his life blood drawn out by the sucking fingers.

Strange to say, this hideous monster has a counterpart in our midst. Its body, containing a maw as capacious as the deep, is domiciled in city and country, in this Canada of ours; its tentacles reach out to every part, even to the remotest nooks and corners of this fair land. With an appetite insatiable, and that becomes keener by the efforts to satisfy its voracity, it is gulping down the hard earnings of the poor, paralyzing the energies of labor, blasting the hopes of honest toil, lowering the vitality of business life, weakening the integrity of the home; deadening the spirituality of the Christian life and spreading ruin and death wherever it is found. The name by which this hideous monster is to be found is known everywhere as *The Liquor Traffic*. May the Lord save our sons and our homes from its death-dealing grip!

### I Believe.

It is fashionable in some quarters to decry creeds,—to speak lightly of them, and sometimes to condemn them. But all men believe something—and what they believe is their creed. When a Baptist says that he has no creed, he doesn't really mean it.

He has a creed, if he is a believer, the most rigid of creeds. He has a creed that no Council, Association or Convention can change—a creed that exactly expresses his faith whether he can put it in formal language or not. What he really means is, that he subscribes to no formal human interpretation, but only to the New Testament as his rule of faith and practice. And even then, his statement is qualified by the fact that he must think for himself, and ascertain for himself what the Scriptures say to him, and which he must needs put in words that best convey their meaning. An intelligent Baptist, and this all Baptists should be, has a creed, the only authority for which he acknowledges, is the Scriptures themselves. His obligation to his creed does not cease when he knows it; but only when he has translated it into his life.

"As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." Doctrine has much to do with life. We are what we are, because we believe what we believe. The elimination of doctrine from much of to-day's preaching works no good to Christian character. The gospel for an age of doubt is not the gospel of 'no creed.' Paul wisely admonished Timothy—"Take heed to thyself and to the doctrine." Character and doctrine are thus vitally related. They go together, are inseparable. We need to know what, and whom, we believe. It is not only 'take heed how ye hear,' but also 'what ye hear.' Minimize doctrine and you have a minimum Christian. The creed that will not bear translation into character is at once to be thrust aside as a creed that has no just claim upon faith. It is of utmost moment that our creeds be subjected to this test, for if what you believe is not fit to live by, it is not fit to die by. In the white light of the throne of judgment every word and work of life will be tried, whether it be of man or whether it be of God.