

The Brown Street Beacon

"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,

holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)



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What Are You Doing for Your Local Church?

The Michigan Wolverines have a new football coach. His name is John Harbaugh, and he previously coached for the San Francisco 49ers of the NFL. When it looked like he wasn't going to continue as the coach of the 49ers, he immediately became the most sought after coach in football, college or pro. The University of Michigan was very fortunate to land John Harbaugh as their new coach, at least that is the feeling now. In the end wins and losses are all that count in the world of sports. I was listening to an interview that Mr. Harbaugh was giving after he was hired by Michigan. He was asked the question, "What does it mean to be a Michigan man?" This question was asked because, being a former starting quarterback for the Wolverines, John Harbaugh is thought to be a Michigan man. I thought his answer revealed a good attitude to have. He said that in his view a Michigan man was one who wouldn't ask, "What can the University of Michigan do for me," but rather would ask, "What can I do for the University of Michigan."

It occurs to me that this is the same attitude that we should all have with regard to the local church of which we are a part. Too many times we think in terms of "what can this local church do for me?" Every member of the Brown Street church of Christ should be thinking, "what can I do for this local church?" Sure, we all want the local church to serve a purpose in our lives and to help us grow spiritually, but the truth is, the best way for any of us to grow in Christ is to be an active member of the local church. So my personal question should be, "How can I help?" "What can I do?"

There is no doubt that this local church has weaknesses. There is not a local church that doesn't because every local church is made up of people with flaws. However, our mindset should not be, "let's run from the problem," but, "let's help rectify the problem." Flaws can be fixed. Weaknesses can be worked out, but our mentality has to be "what can I do for the church," rather than "what can the church do for me." Now, let me tell you what you can do for this local church, or whatever local church of which you might be a member.

First, be as faithful as you can be to the Lord. That means you live according to the gospel in a pure, upright fashion. Paul put it like this:

Philippians 1:27

27 Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,

Another important part of being faithful to the Lord is attending all the services of the saints because that is what God expects of you (Hebrews 10:25). Being present at every service is a great way to

learn more about God's Word and increase your faith. Remember, Paul said that faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

Second, if you are a man, serve the saints in our public assemblies. There is something for every man to do. Not everyone can stand before an audience and speak, but there are things that need to be done that do not involve saying a word. What can you do for this local church? Serve! "But I don't like being before an audience." So what, do it anyway. Remember, we are talking about what we can do for the church. If you have never served the Lord's Supper to the local church, it might take some time before you get comfortable doing it, but you will get used to it. Let me share a secret with you. Generally speaking, I'm terrified of speaking in public. I always have been. To this day I would have a terrible time trying to address a crowd of strangers on a secular subject. The only reason I can preach to God's people is because years ago I was asked to do it, and I gave it a try. The more I did it, the more comfortable I became, but it is still not a natural thing for me to do. What helps me is that I focus on one thing—serving God. That's what I think of whenever I preach. I am simply serving God. For me, that takes my nervousness away. Maybe that would work for you, but the point of it is this—the local church needs men to serve. I know you can rise to the occasion, but only if you have the mindset that says, "How can I help?" "What can I do for the church?"

Third, you can love the brethren. It is a constant challenge to get to know brethren at a somewhat large congregation. With about 180 members or so, there are still brethren that I don't know very well at Brown Street. It's no one's fault. No one is avoiding anyone else. After services, I stand in the back and shake hands with those who walk by me. I miss a lot of members every week because they walk out a different door than the one by which I'm usually standing. This is something that happens with all of us. Some of you that sit on the left side of the building never speak to those who sit on the right side of the building. There are not any hard feelings between you. No one is trying to ignore anyone else. It just has to do with where everyone sits and the way we exit the building. Before you know it, weeks, months, or even years have passed by, and there are some members who you haven't spoken to for a long time. Now, while there is nothing sinister about this, it is still something that needs fixing. So, what can you do? What can I do? We can demonstrate our love for each other by purposely getting to know each other. First, we need to leave our comfort zone in the building and purposely go talk to people who might be on the other side of the building. Second, and this is even more important, we can purposely make an effort to spend more time with each other away from the building. Do you want to know something you can do for this local church? Here it is—invite someone that you don't know very well from this local church into your home sometime in the next month. That is a tangible way that we can increase our love for brethren, and that is a great thing to do for the church.

Fourth, do what you can evangelistically. Our plan for growth here at Brown Street is to pass out cards to those outside of Christ and invite them to services. Make sure you always carry our evangelistic cards with you. Do you know of someone who might be interested in a home Bible study? Ask them for one. This is what you can do for the church. Be on board with our efforts to win souls to Christ.

I think John Harbaugh was on to something. I don't know much about being a Michigan man, but I do know that being a man (or women) of God is to ask, not what the church can do for me, but rather, "What can I do for the church?"

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