

Spiritual Considerations...

Selected articles designed to assist in our Bible study and Christian walk.



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What do you remember about church...?

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I have heard people discuss their memories of growing up in church. Most of the stories have been from a small church setting and usually from rural areas. We would do well to have some of the older members of the congregation tell stories of how the church years ago came together to worship God. It's interesting to hear all the different scenarios.

Wood burning stoves that needed to be lit well before the congregation arrived.

Hard benches that served as pews.

Opened windows that served as air conditioning. Funeral home fans.

Flies, wasps and dogs that joined the congregation during the service. The wasps always provided a challenge for attention as they swooped down through the congregation.

Tent meetings that served as a great assembly halls for gospel meetings, complete with the long, strands of electric light bulbs – complete with the moths and bugs that constantly encircled them.

I do enjoy the stories of bygone years. But for me, most of those memories are foreign. I can remember only a few tent meetings – particularly the ones where the thunderstorms threatened to bring a damp ending to a fiery sermon.

I can never really remember a time when our family didn't go to church. In fact, it often felt like we were always going to church. There were the regular times - twice on Sunday, once on Wednesday. But then, there were also the special meetings, dinners, weddings and funerals that brought this particular group of people together. Some times formal, many times very relaxed. I remember the church picnics, the softball games,

The earliest memory must have been the ceiling of the auditorium. Sounds like an odd memory – but not really. As a small child lying on the pew looking up at the ceiling, hearing a sermon from the preacher, but not understanding a word. I would try to count all the holes in the acoustic ceiling tiles above. They looked like dots on squares, the exact opposite of dominoes, a game I never played or understood. But that was church.

As I grew I remember the ladies restroom. Isn't that odd? I don't remember much about it, but I remember being led (drug) by the arm to the restroom for some more "behavior modification," the task that fell to my mother during services. Many would probably be offended by the fact that I was spanked. I certainly was. Spanked...and offended. But I received far fewer than I deserved and never the type of punishment that hinted of abuse.

I remember my parents being very involved in church. My father drove the bus to bring neighborhood children to church. My mother taught classes at church. The "bus kids" were always wild. They were glad to have somewhere to go on the weekend. The noisy ride on a "singing bus" was a good way to spend a few hours. Many would come for a week – skip several – and then return on a monthly basis. They knew nothing of church and our assemblies. This always made it more exciting during the services. I never knew what was going to happen next. Since I had knocked on the doors of many of the children who were coming to church, I didn't know for sure if they knew the basket being passed around was a "collection basket" rather than a means of "distribution." Despite my concern, I never remember a problem.

We never had a youth minister. At times, there were young men who spent the summer with us and worked with the youth. These were always exciting times for the youth, because it

meant that we would have a cookout and play volleyball after Sunday evening services. That was a big event! The hot dogs were great!

At the times we didn't have a youth minister, we had plenty of activities. There was the church softball team. It always seemed like there were more fights there than one would care to remember – particularly for a church team. Part of the problem was that we would have an influx of neighborhood guys (athletic friends of church members) at church services during the spring when we were signing up for the team. I never saw them much except at the softball diamond.

Then there was roller-skating. Every child in our congregation could roller-skate. We went once a month. It was two hours of dodging, bumping, crashing and rolling along. There were the races, the limbo, and the skating backwards. We were all skaters! Then came the most dreaded event – “Couples only – ladies choice.” Whoever thought that one up really knew how to punish us. All of us guys would have plenty of time to go get a hot dog and coke.

As I have grown, I have noticed a change in the people with whom I attended services. Some that I thought were so active at church have wandered away. Perhaps they were so busy in the work of the church they never made time to develop a deep relationship with God.

Others that were not quite so visible, I learned were actually very instrumental in carrying on the work of the church behind the scenes. Many provided the necessary finances for the work and received very little public recognition. But they had really never wanted it. They were still active, doing the best they could with their talents.

Some of the children that attended school and church with me, and with whom I played softball and roller-skated, are no longer faithful to the church. They probably will not come back again until there is a marriage or a death. It seems very sad.

What have I learned?

It seems it doesn't matter how many activities we have with our friends at church, there are no guarantees that busyness will produce faithfulness.

I've also learned that the number of people present at church doesn't always reflect the level of spiritual maturity.

I've learned that there will always be people complaining that we never do enough for our children and at the same time there will be about the same number of people saying that we do too much for them.

I've learned that it is the responsibility of parents to bring their children up in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord – and they deserve credit and praise for taking the time and trouble to bring their children with them to worship services.

I've learned that I must work diligently to develop a relationship with Christ that is not dependent on the faith of my friends. It is an individual relationship that must be nurtured with care.

I've learned that more is taking place during the sermon than the words being understood by the congregation. Souls are being taught to have respect for God's word. Children are learning the importance of singing, praying, listening, learning. I know I did.

“For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well. And for this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.” (2 Tim. 1:5-7)

Paul knew of Timothy's childhood. He recognized the power of a mother and grandmother in the life of a young Christian. If Paul had to remind Timothy to “kindle afresh” (“fan into a flame”) his service, I shouldn't be surprised to know that I need to do the very same thing.

Is it the same for you? **By the way, what do you remember about church...?**