

Finding Our Niche

A niche, as used in the title of this article, is defined as “a distinct segment of a market.” In the business world, finding a niche can propel a company to overnight success. Finding it means the company has discovered a unique product or a unique manner in which to market an existing product. It’s the dream of every company’s marketing department to find that niche and to establish their business as distinctive in the marketplace.

I’m always a little hesitant to use business terms when speaking of spiritual matters as I don’t want people to get the idea that I am comparing the Lord’s church to an ordinary, man-made organization. In this case, while again I am not suggesting that any business can begin to compare with the church that Jesus purchased with His blood, I do believe there’s a valid point to be made. The church of Christ has a niche of which we need to take advantage.

Look around at all of the churches in existence today. It seems like a new one pops up weekly. Out of fear that they will be considered just another church, these new organizations come up with all kinds of gadgets and gimmicks to attract potential members. There’s the one that decided meeting at a movie theater would be inviting. Then there’s the one that says they are “church for people who don’t do church.” The names of these groups are entertaining, each one having been created in an effort to come up with that name that sets that body apart from everyone else.

Not to be outdone, the “traditional” churches are following suit. Here’s one that has its “contemporary” worship, an appeal to those who desire snappy, modern methods of worship as opposed to those “old, stale” forms. Here’s one that’s going to tie its worship in with a free meal in an effort to fill the building. Here’s another that even lets you choose another day of the week to worship should getting to the building on Sunday be inconvenient for you.

Perhaps we could call this activity “dueling churches.” The new ones are trying to attract members while the “traditional” ones are doing their best to hang on to the members they have. Each one is diligently vying for the public’s attention and in so doing their innovations become more and more bizarre and more distant from the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ. One has to wonder where it will end.

There is a niche to be filled in the religious world and it’s actually very easy to occupy. All we have to do is go back to the Bible, the New Testament in particular, and appeal to it for all that we say and do. We need to have New Testament authority for the worship of the church (John 4:24), its terms of membership (Romans 10:17; John 8:24; Luke 13:3; I Peter 3:21), its organization (Colossians 3:17) and the conduct of its members (I Peter 1:15-16). We need to go back beyond the recently established religious groups, back beyond the modern day “revelations,” back beyond the establishment of each and every denomination, back beyond the beginning of Catholicism. We need to go all the way back to the New Testament and the church that Jesus died to establish (Acts 20:28). We need to “speak as the oracles of God” (I Peter 4:11) and demand a “thus saith the Lord.”

In our exclusive following of the New Testament pattern, we will be (and are) unique. We will be (and are) distinctive. We will (and do) stand out amongst the blight of religious confusion that is plaguing our world today. God is not the author of confusion (I Corinthians 14:33). He did not create the innovations that exist today. Mankind, in an effort to promote his ways above God’s, has designed the departures from the pure and simple Gospel. To return to that marvelous message of the inspired writers of the first century is to find the niche. To get this message to the world, the message that says that they can still be members of the Lord’s church in this day and age and thus enjoy salvation and the hope of heaven is the mission of this church (Matthew 28:18-20).

To those who are not members of the church of Christ, this is your invitation to investigate. It’s time to stop looking for the latest and greatest. It’s time to stop looking for a “new” church. It’s time to return to the Bible, obey the Gospel of Christ, and be added to the church that is as old as the one established on the day of Pentecost in the year A.D. 33 (Acts 2). To those who are members of the church of Christ, it is incumbent upon us to uphold the New Testament pattern and reject the innovations of the 21st century world. Israel of old wanted to be “like all the nations” (I Samuel 8:20) and they paid dearly for it. The Gospel message is distinctive because it is from God (Galatians 1:6-9). Let us be both thankful for and satisfied with it.

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