

“He Often Refreshed Me”

Paul, in recounting to Timothy his imprisonment in Rome, wrote, “The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains; but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me — the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day — and you well know what services he rendered at Ephesus” (2 Timothy 1:16-18).

What brought Onesiphorus to Rome is unknown. Was he there on business? Was he a tourist? Whatever it was, Onesiphorus was not just focused on himself. While in Rome, he made considerable effort to locate Paul, and he kept trying until he succeeded. (Someone less dedicated might have made a minimal effort and said, “Oh well, I tried!”) He came again and again. These visits refreshed Paul, both the company itself as well as any needed provisions he may have received.

It is easy to get caught up in our own busy lives and fail to remember those who could use some encouragement. Stop. Take a moment to think about someone you could refresh. Then act. It likely won't take you nearly as long or be as hard as it was for Onesiphorus. Be such that others can say of you, “He often refreshed me.”

- by Frank Himmel

Things Expected of All Members

One of the great blessings that God has for His children is the fellowship they can enjoy as members of a local congregation. We believe that this involvement in a local church is an important part of God's plan for our spiritual well being. In this special, spiritual family there are things that are expected of all the members. Here are some of the things that will help us bring glory and praise to God as we work together:

1) Each of us must realize that the example we set in the local community has a great potential for good or evil. As a member of this local church it is expected that you will live a pure moral life -- one that others will be able to observe and imitate (Matthew 5:16). The world accepts and even encourages immoral activities, but as Christians we are not to be “of this world” (1 John 2:15-17).

2) We believe that it is the responsibility of each member to seek opportunities to serve their brothers and sisters. Too many view the church from a selfish perspective and seem interested only in what might be done for them. Instead, we understand that greatness in the Lord's kingdom comes from providing humble service (Matthew 23:11,12). We are to “rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep” (Romans 12:15). There will be many occasions to share in one another's joys, and with tenderness and sympathy to bear one another's burdens. As a member of this local body we need your help in these important ways.

3) Unfortunately, there will be times when a brother or sister may slip back and begin to engage in sinful activities. You are expected to exercise a care and watchfulness for your brethren in these matters (Hebrews 3:13). There are times when we need to faithfully warn, rebuke and admonish a fellow member (2 Timothy 4:2, Galatians 6:1). This may even lead to the unpleasant task of withdrawing from an unruly Christian (2 Thessalonians 3:14). Your full cooperation and support is expected if, and when, such becomes necessary.

4) We have a primary mission to spread the gospel to the lost people of this world (Mark 16:15). There are many right here in our immediate community, and millions worldwide, who need to hear about salvation in Christ Jesus. We need the participation of every member to address this urgent need. You can and must do your part to teach the lost souls within your circle of influence.

5) It should go without saying that every member of this congregation should attend every assembly of the saints (Hebrews 10:25). You should make every effort to attend each of our scheduled meetings. Personal schedules should be rearranged, activities dropped or modified,

and plans made that will allow you to be present at all of the worship assemblies and Bible studies. School functions, recreational or sporting events, family get-togethers, or things of this sort do not serve as legitimate “excuses” for missing any service. Sickness and other unavoidable circumstances may occasionally arise, but the normal practice of every saint should be to attend every assembly.

6) The only means authorized by God for the financing of the work of the local church is by means of the free will offering of the members. Such a contribution is collected each Lord’s day (1 Corinthians 16:1,2). You are expected to give regularly and liberally (2 Corinthians 9:7). If travels or other matters cause you to be away from this congregation on a Lord’s Day, it certainly seems reasonable that provisions would be made to leave your contribution in advance, or “make up” your offering when you return. Our ongoing work depends upon your consistent giving.

7) Every member of a local body of believers has a personal responsibility to maintain peace with and among their fellow members (Ephesians 4:1-3). We acknowledge that situations arise wherein feelings may become hurt or bad judgments may lead to disagreements. It is the duty of each Christian to seek immediate resolution of these matters (Matthew 5:24; 18:15-17). Our rule is this: In matters of faith or doctrine we can make no compromise (Jude 3), however, in matters of judgment or opinion we should be humbly submissive (1 Peter 5,6). Trouble makers, gossips, and those who promote strife cannot be tolerated (Proverbs 6:16-19).

Your conscientious efforts to fulfill your personal responsibilities in the local congregation are critical to our effectiveness in bringing glory to our Lord. Think!

- by Greg Gwin