

A REPORT FROM LEE AND MARCIE TOSTI
GREATER PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND
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“Does your church have a special Easter celebration?” Joe asked. “No, we don’t see the first Christians doing anything special because it was Easter, so we do not. What we do celebrate, what we do see the first Christians celebrating, is the Lord’s Supper each and every Sunday,” I said. Then Joe asked this, “If I visit your church, should I partake of the Lord’s Supper?”

You’ve got to hand it to Joe: That’s an insightful question. It’s not every day I get asked that question. (But it’s funny, because it was the *third time that week* someone had raised this with me.)

“Joe,” I said, turning to 1 Corinthians 1:2, “The Lord’s Supper is for those who have been sanctified, those who are saints, those who are Christians.” (Joe never claims to be a Christian; in fact, he confesses and does not deny “That’s *not* what I did” about *Biblical* baptism.) Then, turning to 1 Corinthians 11:23, I said, “And Paul gave these instructions to Christians, to the baptized, to the forgiven.” (Joe does not know if he’s forgiven; actually, by now he knows he’s not, but he used to state it “I don’t know if I’m forgiven.”) I also referred the possibility of partaking it in an unworthy manner, etc. Finally, I told him that some Christians I know would serve him the Lord’s Supper without any hesitation, while other Christians I know would not serve him at all, but I myself am much more comfortable when a non-Christian has been made aware of all this: “If you came to church and I was serving, I would want you to know...” Joe interrupted me, “I wouldn’t partake of it.”

No matter what you think of this scenario (which happens to many of us often), don’t miss that Joe is a man of principle! I hope it will not be long before Joe and I partake of the Lord’s Supper as brothers in the Lord.

Toward the end of that day’s study, Joe again mentioned how he has not yet overcome anger (rage) from things that happened in his childhood and when a young adult. He does not yet feel peace. This weighs heavily on him. I suggested to him rather directly that this is likely because he has not yet seriously committed to God. Joe knows well that committing to God does not magically and immediately dispel all such feelings; but at the same time, Joe will never have access to the gracious gift of God that is peace which surpasses all comprehension if he does not seriously commit to God. So I told Joe this. Two days later I received this text from him: “I have been studying Romans 7:18-25 for the last 2 hours. At first I couldn't get it! Now I do. I've been stuck in "my own efforts", even though I am aware of, at least, some of my persistent sinfulness! I want to thank you for opening my eyes to my not relying on Christ! Thank you Brother!” Keep praying for Joe!

I have not been out on the streets as much as I would like. But one day, I met Ester. Ester is not her real name. Ester was a Methodist who, “Because Jesus was not buried for three nights like he said he would be (Matthew 12:40), he could not be the Messiah,” became a Hasidic Jew and changed her name and moved to Jerusalem and divorced her husband and married a Jew who turned out to be a pedophile and of her nine children only one still speaks to her, two have died of drug overdoses, and the others have cut off all communication with her. I don’t mean to be harsh, but this is what happens (to families, to children) when people—Christians or not—play at religion. When she was passing by and first saw me, she exclaimed “This is the day the Lord has made! Let us rejoice and be glad in it!” (Psalm 118:24). But then she wouldn’t have a Bible study....

A young brother at the congregation here who is in college invited me to sit in on a Bible study that he had been participating in. It was his third study. The man who led it did an excellent job of pounding

home the sufficiency of the scripture: Beginning with 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and including 2 John 9 and other such passages, it was really good stuff. He even included a great illustration (that I will forever use): If you are a religious person, if you see in the New Testament a religious tradition you already have, then, like a book you want to keep, put that tradition on a shelf; if you have a tradition that you do not see in the New Testament, then discard that tradition; and last, if you see a tradition in the New Testament that you are not keeping, then put that one on your shelf with the others. I was all excited. I even smiled a lot. But then the man did this: In Acts 17:11, where it says that they searched the scripture “daily,” he kept emphasizing that all who are noble-minded will read “in the morning”— specifically and explicitly emphasizing in the morning and not the afternoon or evening. “In the morning.” “What I prioritize, I do first. I prioritize my wife, so I speak to her as soon as I get up in the morning. I should do the same with reading God’s word: Read it in the morning.” He even asked our brother, “I know you like to read in the evening. But have you been reading in the morning?” It was no trivial point for him. In fact, it was very...cult-like. At the end of the study he asked if there were any questions or comments. So I took the opportunity to encourage him about his general point. And I complimented him about his analogy. But I also offered, “Maybe I missed something. But you really emphasized, from this text, reading in the morning. But this text only says “daily.”” That put him between a rock and a hard place: He recognized he had gone too far; but he did not want to give up his tradition. His tradition’s hold on him won. And I have not been allowed back. (Our brother was told that there were not enough chairs at the table!) Last I heard, our brother is feeling that this study with them is not profitable. But good for him for trying! And this is really the point.

There are other studies happening between the saints here and non-Christians: Some with Catholics, some with Sabbatharians, some at work, some in homes, etc. It is in the background. How exciting. How necessary.

The congregation marches. Sometimes while marching we make great advances. Sometimes while marching we fall on our face. But by God’s grace, we march!

While we’ve been surveying the Old and New Testaments in our classes, we’ve also had a continuing side-discussion about membership: Who we are and what we’re about, etc. It’s been healthy!

In two weeks the church is having a weekend “Men’s Leadership Workshop,” led by Marty Broadwell. While it’s *mostly* with the men, it’s not *only* for the men. The whole congregation will stretch and grow!

That’s it for this report. I hope you are encouraged. Thank you for your support. Feel free to write or call or visit or.... Glory to God.

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