

**Crossville Church
of Christ**

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COMPASS

**Using God's Word to Chart The Course
Of A Congregation**

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Elders:

Frank Bohannon

Bill Foland

Al Griffin

Jonathan Loveday

Larry McDuffee

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Deacons:

Jim Bell

Kyle Fairman

Jimmy Harris

David Kerley

Doug Loveday

Greg Maxwell

Brian McLaughlin

Mark Roberts

Roger Smith

Jon Tatum

Jason Wyatt

Jerry Wood

Minister:

Barry Kennedy

Missionaries:

Don Iverson

Jim Waldron

(India)

Service Times

Sunday Bible Study 9 AM

Sunday Worship 10 AM

6 PM

Wednesday 6 PM

OTHER ACTIVITIES:

Ladies Bible Class

Tuesdays 11AM

Prayer Meeting

Tuesdays 10 AM

Joyful Generation

(Youth Devotional & fellowship)

1st Sunday 7:00 PM

January 8, 2012



“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:19-20).

IS THE BEST THING ALWAYS THE NEXT THING?

Barry Kennedy

How many times do we find ourselves looking for what is next? It seems as though some people are never satisfied with what they have. On the other hand, are we as Christians not supposed to be looking toward Heaven? Is it not part of our Christian walk to be ever looking forward? Of course the answer to these two questions is a resounding YES! However, one must consider certain conditions to help understand that there is no contradiction between these two thoughts.

When many people think about “NEXT THINGS,” they are thinking about eternity. Those who find themselves in the “twilight of life” often consider what is next. Others, especially those who are young, only think of what toy, snack, or good time is coming next. This mindset, expects the next thing to be bigger and better. Is that not how most all of us truly feel deep down? What is next as far as our souls are concerned? The fact of the matter is that there are only two choices when it comes to the “next life” (Matthew 7:13, 14). Therefore, consider these two thoughts in answering the question, **“IS THE BEST THING ALWAYS THE NEXT THING?”**

NO, if the next thing is an eternity in HELL. Many people do not want to even consider the thoughts of a Devil’s Hell, but that does not make it go away. Hell is a reality that must be taken seriously. Jesus warned that some were in danger of **“HELL FIRE”** (Matthew 5:22). He continued by emphasizing the importance of severing anything that would “offend,” i.e. cause us to sin (Matthew 5:29, 30). Also, we would do well to remember that Jesus said, *“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”* (Matthew 10:28). Clearly, for one facing eternity (the next thing) lost would not be the best way to “spend” eternity.

YES, if the next thing is an eternity in HEAVEN. The strait way to life is certainly a more difficult way than that of the broad and wide way to destruction (Matthew 7:13, 14). However, that does not mean that it is an impossible way. As a matter of fact, it would not be just for Jesus to request our entrance into an impossible way (Romans 3:26; 1John 1:9). Sadly, far too many fail to appreciate God’s offer of a home in Heaven. In fact, it would not be surprising to find out that many Christians do not want to go to Heaven as much as they do not want to go to Hell. This mindset is not what produces true servitude. *“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life”* (Romans 6:22). Serving God is not to be about what we can get from Him, but what we can give to Him. *“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name”* (Hebrews 13:15). Do we have confidence in our resurrection? Do we truly see eternity as an opportunity and blessing? God’s word gives one every reason to expect the “next thing” for a Christian to be the best thing. *“He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honor”* (John 12:25, 26).

“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content” (1Timothy 6:6-8). Clearly we must learn to be more content in certain areas, but may we never become content with this life as our only life. If the next day is just another day here on time’s side of eternity, or an eternity lost in a Devil’s Hell, then we are of all men most miserable (1Corinthians 15:19; Matthew 25:30). However, thanks be to God for granting us the hope of life everlasting (Matthew 25:26; John 3:16; Romans 6:23). In that we can say, **“THE NEXT THING IS THE BEST THING.”**

A CONGREGATION CLOSED

Phillip Brannon

Recently, I was informed that a congregation of the Lord's church, a congregation with which I had worked and about which I had cared for many years, was closing her doors. The members could no longer afford to keep the doors open. I must admit that I was not totally surprised at this news, for said closing had been coming for some time. Still, the news filled me with sorrow.

The knowledge of a congregation's closing would bother any caring member of the church, especially when one considers that this congregation had been in its area since the late 1800's. Moreover, the congregation, at many points in her history, had more than 300 people within the doors of the building. In addition, membership was, often, well into the hundreds. How, then, did this closing happen? Why did a congregation that is written about in this state's history (the history of the church of Christ, that is), and that thrived for so long, have to close her doors. There are several key reasons for this tragedy:

1. Industry moved - At one point of time, the city where this congregation existed was a thriving one. However, as time went on, industry left the city and all the businesses and schools shifted to another city. Thus, people moved and left this thriving congregation.

If one were to ask the members of this congregation, they would say that this fact played a major role in the congregation's demise. Upon further investigation, however, you would find that it only played a small role.

2. Evangelism ceased - The members of the congregation had gotten to the point that they did not try to teach people anymore. Instead of going out to get people, they had an attitude of "We hope they will come." They blamed their age (the ones who were left in the congregation were older) as their reason for not being active in evangelism.

3. Selfishness (specifically in giving) - The congregation had several members and regular visitors who made a good living. Yet, on most Sundays, they were lucky to collect over \$200. If one considers that during the last few years they averaged between 10-15 people at a service, this would mean that the average giving per person was between \$13-\$20.

4. Splits - There were many people who left the congregation over a bunch of nonsense. Things like, "should the preacher have a personal copy machine," "should the heat be left on when people aren't in the building," and, "should the house for the preacher be sold" caused splits in this congregation. People were too stubborn and prideful to submit to the congregation's leadership; so they left.

Other splits were caused by preachers who came and won souls to themselves rather than to Jesus. Hence, when these preachers were asked to leave (due to ill conduct, false teaching, and bad attitudes), they took many members with them.

5. A defeated attitude - To be honest, the last members had given up. In their minds, there was nothing that could be done to cause them to grow. The time for their growth as a congregation, they felt, had past. They were like a cancer patient who has been told there is nothing else that can be done for him—they were waiting to die. They came to services, worshiped, and went home. Often, they reminisced on the "good-old-days" and languished over the future. They just didn't believe anything could be done to bring them to a point of doing well again.

"Why is he writing about this," someone asks. It is because of the truth that the very same thing that happened to this congregation can happen to us, if we don't watch ourselves. If someone would have asked the members of this congregation in the years 1890, 1950, or even 1980 if they could imagine that this congregation would have to close her doors one day, I'm sure that they would have answered in the negative. Yet, it happened! Do we not think that it can happen to us? It can and it will, if we let it, by not being diligent in the Lord's work. We cannot help if industry moves, for that depends on the economy. Still, we can stay evangelistic like our Lord demanded, and we can stay diligent in trying to bring souls to Christ (Matt. 28:18-20). We can avoid selfishness and give like we need to give, so that we can keep the work here going (Acts 20:35; I Cor. 16:1). We can avoid splits by sticking to the Scriptures and putting our personal wants and desires aside for the good of the congregation (Heb. 13:17; Eph. 4:1-3). And, we can shun defeatism by remembering that there is always something that can be done; that there is always something that we can do to fight for the cause of our Lord in our area (I Cor. 15:58).

