

COMING TOGETHER...BUT FOR THE WORSE

By Keith Greer

“Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.” {1 Corinthians 11:17-19} Paul wrote this first letter to the church of Corinth because they were having some serious trouble. Let’s examine some ways we can **“come together for the worse.”**

Abusing God’s commands for worship. “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” {John 4:24} Can we please God if we fail to worship according to His pattern? Many churches have changed their worship to focus on entertainment. They employ rock bands, puppet shows, drama skits, contemporary worship, and preaching that contains little or no Scripture. Some even profess to make the Lord’s Supper a more meaningful experience by toning down the lights and testifying about what Jesus did for them during the preceding week. God requires worship that pleases Him – not ourselves or other men! This is coming together for the worse!

Engaging in doctrines of men. “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” {Matthew 15:8,9} In many churches across our country, you can hear anything except the truth! Some teach that baptism is no longer necessary for salvation. God said it is. {Mark 16:16} Others tell us that it is acceptable for Christians to drink in moderation. God said it is not acceptable. {1 Peter 4:1-3}. Congregations often demand that preachers give 15-to-20-minute lessons that tickle the ears of the members. God gave a different instruction. {2 Timothy 4:1-5} Some religions debate the issues of homosexuality and abortion. Yet, God’s word could not be clearer regarding these issues. {Romans 1:18-32}. Such people are coming together for the worse!

Lacking in reverence for God. “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” {Hebrews 12:28} Unfortunately, some members of the Lord’s church have this problem. They parade in and out, talk, pass notes, clip their nails, do their school work, tell jokes, and catch up on their sleep during the assemblies. Some even laugh during the communion service as one of the members attempts to lead our minds back to the cross. Only God knows where their minds are. Many are more concerned about the length of the service than listening and being edified by the singing, praying, and preaching. How can this type of service be anything other than coming together for the worse!

Being hypercritical. “Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye;’ and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” {Matthew 7:4,5} Many are super-critical of the elders, the preacher, and the teachers; and are negative about anything the church does. Are these same people willing to lend a hand; and are they active in the church? Constructive

criticism is needed and appreciated, but do we know the difference? This is coming together for the worse!

God's people must remember to offer our worship, not only according to His pattern, but with proper hearts and godly motives. Worshipping God is showing glory, honor and respect unto God. A few weeks ago Victoria Osteen suggested we worship God **"for ourselves and to please us."** Sadly, much of the religious world does just that and God WILL NOT accept any such worship! Let us endeavor to be present each time the church meets and to come together for the better – not the worse! ***