

THE POWER OF LOOKING OUTWARD

“The record is clear. When churches make saving the lost around the world a fundamental focus, they grow. When churches make brick and mortar their focus, they stagnate. When churches lose sight of God’s passion for saving the lost, they feud and eventually splinter.”

Baily McBride, Editorial,

Christian Chronicle

The above caught my attention. It spoke directly to me because I’ve seen the truth in that statement. When congregations go to work on their teaching curriculum, or their community outreach, or their world evangelism, each member settles into the harness and the effort smoothes out. It doesn’t stop the work from being “work,” but the “pull” becomes balanced when lines are taut and everyone’s going in the same direction. That’s when fellowship becomes a joy and brethren become appreciated. It’s not when we’re doing the same thing, but when everything we do is aimed at the same goal.

The quote also caught my attention because of its focus on evangelism around the world. This church has been a participant in taking the gospel into “all the world” for decades. Not just in sending money to preachers, but also in benevolent assistance. And not just in congregational action, but so many of you individually and personally contributed funds to my trips to Russia from your own wallets. You continue to be interested, inquiring about brethren, praying for them and helping where you can. Amy Raab gathered up a collection for vitamins to help Christians in Nizhny Novgorod. The Evangelism Update is a paper to increase interest in the work in Europe. While Brian Fisher donates the paper and organizes the mailing of it, Diane Allen helps edit all the overseas reports, Mark Hudson updates the web page, and a host of you gather every other month to stamp and address it. What a team you are!

The quote caught my attention because of its challenge to NOT make brick and mortar our focus. We are surrounded by a brand new pile of brick and mortar that obviously takes more attention than our last smaller one. But still, it should not be what we are about. We have a larger place to meet in – let’s fill it up! Let not the idea ever take root with us that we will be “comfortably seated” while one sincere soul remains outside of God’s grace. We must get the word out.

Peace has a price, and that price is work! Brethren who are working together don’t have time nor inclination to fight with each other. Stagnation can never set in where there is movement and life and growth. Appreciation and love for one another can only increase as we tackle the tasks that our God sets before us and learn of all the rich diversity of talent that He has placed among us.

Although I’d have reservations with some of the doctrinal stands of brother McBride, I cannot but agree with his words that front this article. I commend them to you as worthy of thought and prayer. And I’d commend this congregation for living them out. *“Be not weary in well doing for you know that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.”*

Carl McMurray