

ACTIVE MEMBERS

I. We need to be active learners of the word.

- A. We noticed Ephesians 6:10, where we are told to be strong in the Lord.
- B. Have you noticed verse 11?
 - 1. We become strong by putting on the armor of God.
 - 2. Have you noticed what makes up the armor of God?
 - a. Your loins are to be wrapped in truth (John 17:17).
 - b. Your breastplate is that of righteousness - one learns what righteousness is in God's word.
 - c. Your feet are to be covered with the preparation of the gospel - again, the word of God.
 - d. Your shield is faith (Romans 10:17).
 - e. Your head is protected by the helmet of salvation - about which you learn in God's word.
 - 3. All of this goes to show that we must be people who learn and grow from a study of God's word.
- C. I can't teach others that which I don't know myself.
- D. I can't go and do things for Christ if I am ignorant of His word.
- E. We are told that Abraham didn't give way to unbelief when God promised him a son in his old age.
 - 1. Rather, he stayed true because he was "strong in faith" (Romans 4:20).
 - 2. Again, faith comes from God's word.
 - 3. Abraham was strong because He had heard God's word and knew that God was always true to that word.
- F. Peter tells us to desire God's word in order to grow (1 Peter 2:2).
- G. The Hebrews writer tells us that strong meat belongs to those who have had their senses "exercised" to discern between what is right and what is wrong (Hebrews 5:14).
 - 1. The word "exercised" was used of Olympiads training in their sport.
 - 2. It literally means "trained."
 - 3. Training builds strength which comes from activity.
- H. Inspiration calls the Bereans "noble" because of their study of and desire to learn God's word.
 - 1. They heard something and actively sought to see if it was true.
 - 2. Most people today, and sadly many Christians, wouldn't qualify as Bereans today.
 - 3. We sit back and take in what we hear hook, line and sinker, never studying to see if it is so.
- I. If we are going to be a strong congregation, each of us must be active learners of God's word.

II. We need to be active lovers of others.

- A. Jesus told a question asker that the second greatest command was to "love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matthew 22:39).
 - 1. James says we fulfill the royal law when we love our neighbor

- (James 2:8).
2. Paul says that the law is comprehended in the statement of loving your neighbor as yourself (Romans 13:9).
- B. Each of the times “love thy neighbor,” which is seven, the word “love” is from agape, which means sacrificial love.
1. If we are going to be what God would have us to be, we must love those around us.
 2. We are to treat people in ways that show our love for them, no matter who they are.
 3. We do this by sacrificing for them.
 - a. We may sacrifice time or money.
 - b. We may sacrifice saying what we want when we get what we deem to be bad service.
 - c. We may do this by going out of our way to help someone on the side of the road.
- C. We are to love our brethren.
1. This is the command Jesus gave, which if followed will allow others to know that we are His disciples (John 13:34-35).
 2. This is a simple three word command given by Peter (1 Peter 2:17).
 3. We have left the world and entered into spiritual life when we love the brethren (1 John 3:14).
 4. Again, this love is the sacrificial type love we are to have for others.
 - a. We do this by following the first three verses of Ephesians 4.
 - b. We are to love enough to sacrifice our lives for our brethren (1 John 3:16).
- D. We are to love our enemies (Luke 6:35).
1. We do this by not giving evil back to them when they been evil towards us.
 2. We do this by following the Golden Rule with them like we would our friends and brethren.
 - a. Stephen Olford tells of a Baptist pastor during the American Revolution, Peter Miller, who lived in Ephrata, Pennsylvania, and enjoyed the friendship of George Washington. In Ephrata also lived Michael Wittman, an evil-minded sort who did all he could to oppose and humiliate the pastor. One day Michael Wittman was arrested for treason and sentenced to die. Peter Miller traveled seventy miles on foot to Philadelphia to plead for the life of the traitor.
 - b. "No, Peter," General Washington said. "I cannot grant you the life of your friend."
 - c. "My friend!" exclaimed the old preacher. "He's the bitterest enemy I have."
 - d. "What?" cried Washington. "You've walked seventy miles to save the life of an enemy? That puts the matter in different light. I'll grant your pardon." And he did.
 - e. Peter Miller took Michael Wittman back home to Ephrata--no

longer an enemy but a friend.

- E. When we fail to love anyone, we weaken the local church because that person will have ammunition to use against the cause of Christ.

III. We need to be active leaders of souls.

- A. Our Lord came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10).
- B. We have been given the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).
- C. We are to convert people to Christ.
 - 1. This is what the book of Acts is about.
 - 2. It is a picture for us of the Great Commission being carried out.
- D. That is our duty.
- E. Every seed is to bear after its kind.
 - 1. We are Christians, therefore, we ought to be bearing other Christians.
 - 2. Evangelism is the lifeblood of a congregation.
 - 3. If Christians aren't bearing after their kind then the local congregation is going to dry up and blow away.
- F. We need to be more evangelistic.
 - 1. We can give out tracts.
 - 2. We can invite people to our services.
 - 3. We can ask people to study the Bible with us.
 - 4. We can ask people to study the Bible with the preacher.
 - 5. We can ask people if they want to sign up for a Bible correspondence course.
 - 6. What are we, and that included me, doing to bear after our kind?
- G. If we fail to evangelize, and I don't mean through GBN or South Alabama or through someone else, we will die as a congregation.
- H. Each of us, in some way, must be active in evangelism.