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PRESENTS

## *Frankly Speaking Notes . . .*

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Ed Smithson, Editor

### **GETTING THROUGH THE CLUTTER**

Many years ago I had an experience with clutter that has stayed with me. I was preaching for the Central church in Moore, Oklahoma and Phil Watson was Vice President of Oklahoma Christian College. At that time it was the practice of the school to work through local churches, acquainting members with the school and soliciting funds to support the school. It was also their practice to get the local preacher to work with them in this effort.

One day as we were making some visits, we visited a house the likes of which I had never seen before. There was so much clutter you could hardly get through the house. I never believed people could live that way. I couldn't believe they could live that way.

But since, I have come to realize there is a lot of clutter in life and it makes it more difficult to get to the goal. A while back I had to use an ambulance to go to the local hospital. Medicare denied the claim submitted by the ambulance company and I went on the Medicare web site to try to find out why. It took me forever to get to the place I needed because of the clutter, things that I did not want and did not help me reach my goal.

The same is true with a lot of companies. Ever call the company and get an elongated menu that mentions things that has nothing to do with you and even presents a commercial or two? You get the idea.

I think most everyone will agree that the mission of the church is the preach the gospel (Mark 16:15-16; Romans 1:16). While some will want to include other things in that mission, they will still agree that it is the primary mission.

But the last several years we have begun to experience a lot of clutter in many churches. Most of the churches I know publish church bulletins and have for years. Where those bulletins used to be a tool for teaching and encouraging, these days most bulletins contain little more than announcements of activities of the church, most of which have little to do with its mission.

I remember when we first began to list those in the congregation who were sick. Then the hypochondriacs began to call and want to be listed as sick because of a headache or an ingrown toenail, etc. Then we began mentioning those who were related to members and asked they be prayed for. Now we are mentioning those related to those who are related to members.

Question? How do you pray for those who are not members of the church? Do you pray that they get well, so they can go on sinning against the Lord or do you pray that they come to a realization of the truth so they can be saved? Just how do you do that? There are situations for which we should not pray. “Jehovah told Jeremiah, with regard to His people, Israel “And Jehovah said unto me, **Pray not for this people for their good.**” (Jeremiah 14:11) in fact, three times Jehovah gave Jeremiah such instructions.

I hope this is not true but it is possible that we have passed the point of no return in this. We have become so involved in “activities” that we have forgotten or neglected our purpose. Our lives have become so filled with our concern for the here and now, it is possible that we have lost sight of tomorrow and the lost souls that need the gospel.

We have seen such in individuals. They get so involved in things that really don't matter they hardly have time or attention to give to those things that do. Now it is possible that the same is happening to the church.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ed Smithson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

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