

# Lion's Club Religion

by Bill Walton

Baytown, Texas is a long 12 hour drive from where we live in Chattanooga, Tennessee, but my wife and I try to get out there to visit her folks at least once or twice a year. When we were out there on one of our visits my father-in-law invited me to go with him to a Lion's Club meeting. It was a choice between doing that and doing nothing, so I chose that. And it was a nice way to spend an hour and half in the middle of the day. We had a buffet-style lunch in one of the banquet rooms of a nearby restaurant. There were probably thirty or thirty-five men, maybe forty, at the meeting. Someone opened the meeting with a prayer and a pledge of allegiance to the flag. Then we ate. After going back for seconds and dessert, I heard a guest speaker talk for about twenty minutes on a new method of dieting. Afterwards we sang two or three songs and that seemed to refresh our spirits and help us to put dieting out of our minds. Then they discussed their charitable project and got a report on how they were doing with their fund raising effort. At the end of the meeting someone "passed the hat."

That was the first and only Lion's Club meeting I have ever attended. And I enjoyed the experience. They seemed to be a nice bunch of guys and the Lion's Club is a worthwhile civic organization. If it weren't, my father-in-law would not be a member of it.

But later that afternoon I got to thinking about the Lion's Club and their weekly luncheon meeting. A prayer, two or three songs, a meal, a twenty minute talk, "pass the hat," charitable projects, "see you next week" - it's almost like "religion," isn't it? Lion's Club religion.

The sad fact is, many members of the Lord's church are practicing Lion's Club religion. Many Christians attend about one meeting a week on the average. They join in a prayer, they sing the songs, they eat the Supper, they listen to a sermon, and they put in some money when the plate is passed. And you can pretty well count on seeing them again next Sunday. They have about the same commitment to the church that the average Lion's Club member has to his club. About the only time they spend with the members, and about the only involvement they have with the members, is at the meetings.

What kind of religion are you practicing? Are you practicing Lion's Club religion, or the true religion of Christ? Is the church more like a club to you, or is it like a family?

Paul said, "So you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but you are fellowcitizens of God's people and members of His family" (Ephesians 2:19, Williams' Translation). If you are truly a Christian, the church is your family: God is your Father, and Christians are your brothers and sisters. You love your brothers and sisters, and you would lay down your life for them (1 John 3:14, 16). You look upon church meetings as family gatherings

where brothers and sisters come together to honor their Father. Christians frequently enjoy the hospitality of your home (Romans 12:13). And when your brother weeps you weep with him, and when he rejoices you rejoice with him (Romans 12:15). When he is led into sin you are deeply concerned (2 Corinthians 11:29), and you do everything you can to encourage and strengthen him (Galatians 6:1). You feel the same way toward your brethren as Jesus felt toward His disciples: "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:49-50).

That's true religion. That's the Christian's religion.

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