



CENTRAL SHELBY CHURCH OF CHRIST

working and worshipping together to serve the Lord



*"Jesus answered and said to her,
'Whoever drinks of this water will thirst
again, but whoever drinks of the water that I
shall give him will become in him a fountain of
of water springing up into everlasting life.'" (John 4:13, 14)*

THE HABITUALLY LATE

Some time ago, one of the men I have regular studies with made a statement that registered with me. I had commended him for his punctuality, for indeed he had never been late for a study appointment. He had always insisted upon studying at my home, and had always been on time or a little early. When I told him how much his promptness had impressed me, he replied, "We believe that being on time is important, and that being late can be a sign of pride."

I had to think on the man's statement for a while; yet, I have considered that he may have spoken the truth on the matter. It may be that when we are habitually late getting to our appointments, that more than mere coincidental "events beyond our control" are behind our tardiness.

We have appointments to be at a variety of places at all times during each day. Our employer schedules a time for us to be at work. Our board of education appoints a time for our children to be at school. The church of which we are a member has planned the Bible class and worship service to begin at certain hours. We tell our friends we'll meet them at places of recreation at a certain time. Perhaps we are invited to a friend's house to eat supper at a set hour. We could cite many more examples. Do we arrive for these at the time agreed upon beforehand, or do we often find ourselves coming in after the predetermined time?

Yes, everyone has at some time been late to an appointment. There certainly can be things "beyond our control" that delay our arrival time. Yet, the habitual late-arriver should consider his attitude. Might his actions not show that he conceitedly considers his time to be more valuable, more precious to him than the time of the person(s) he has agreed to meet with? (I.e., "Yes, you and I have agreed upon a time... But you wait for me 'til the time of my choosing.") Might this not be a symptom of pride in the heart? And didn't the apostle Paul say, "*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others*" (Phil. 2:3-4)?

Let's consider that the time of our employers, friends, and brethren is just as important to them,

as ours is to us. Are we often late to our appointments? Do we find it difficult to get where we're going on time? Have we ever considered using 5, 15, or 30 of our "precious" minutes to ensure that we don't encroach upon the (as well) precious time of our associates?

Can a Christian be a habitual late-arriver and remain pleasing to God? That's a good question -- and we haven't even spoken concerning the matter of keeping of our word (James 5:12). This is a problem for many. Yet, it IS a problem easily overcome. EVERYONE can find ways to be on time. Will you?

--Mike Noble