

Some “What-ifs” to Consider

Dub McClish

What if the church where you worship met every day of the week instead of only two days a week? What if the sermon lasted four or five hours on Sunday instead of thirty or forty minutes? What if your food was taken away for an entire day the first time you forsook the assembly? What if you were placed in stocks for six months the second time you forsook the assembly? What if you were executed for the third offense of forsaking the assembly? Do such suggestions offend us? Well, they might offend some of us, especially those who feel that pure religion is something they can live just as well without as with, anyhow.

I didn't just make these things up. While visiting the site of Jamestown, Virginia, a few years ago, I learned that these very things were practiced by the Jamestown colonists who arrived from England in 1607. They were Anglicans, members of the Church of England. They brought their religion with them, and they practiced it zealously. Label it severe or even legalistic, you cannot deny that they took their religion seriously. There is only one above-ground structure from the early period of Jamestown that still stands—the tower of the first brick church building they built in about 1639. There is no doubt that religion was the center of thought and activity in old Jamestown.

Another practice that seems strange to me was the burial of the dead under the floor of the church building where they sat during the assembly. Just think about being buried where you usually are when the church assembles on Sunday. Some would be buried beneath their house, right under their bed. Others would be “put away” under their recliner in the den. Some would be buried “at sea” in the lake where they usually go fishing each Lord’s Day. Still others would be laid beneath the asphalt of some highway on which they make their pilgrimage every weekend to visit relatives.

While some would judge these practices odd, if not down-right fanatical, we will do well to note that the task they performed in establishing a successful colony could likely not have been done without such discipline and devotion. If we judge them for too much discipline, let us ask if we often have not too little for our own good today?

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in the August 26, 1976, edition of *Granbury Gospel*, weekly bulletin of the Church of Christ, Granbury, Texas, of which I was editor.]

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