



**SERVICE TIMES**

Sunday : 9:30 AM  
10:30 AM  
5:00 PM  
Wednesday: 7:00 PM

**ELDERS**

Todd Cox Jimmy Griffith  
Travis Everett Paul White

**DEACONS**

Derek Anderson Bret Cox  
James Dow Patrick Gaughan  
Ryan Griffith Dan Harbin  
Craig Hecht Danny Meek  
Skyler Meek Phil Parker  
Jay Silvers Travis Starling  
Bryan Tacker Eric Wise  
Steve Turquette

**EVANGELIST**

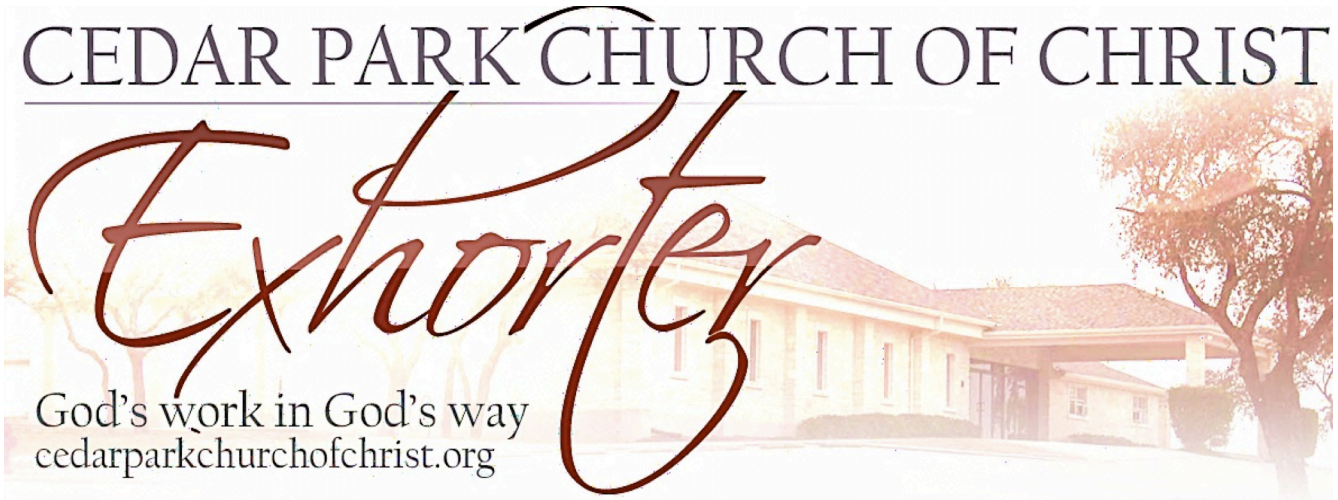
Paul White

3515 County Rd. 174 (Brushy Creek)  
Cedar Park, TX 78613  
512-388-7944

STAMP

---

---



May 9, 2021

**The Bystander Effect**

Proverbs 24:10-12

If you falter in a time of trouble, how small is your strength!  
Rescue those being led away to death;  
hold back those staggering toward laughter.  
If you say, "But we knew nothing about this,"  
does not he who weighs the heart perceive it?  
Does not he who guards your life know it?  
Will he not repay everyone according to what they have done?

There's a famous saying that goes: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." It's a mystery as to who originally coined this phrase, but it still rings true in today's world. For example, have you ever seen a video online of someone being harmed or in danger? If you're like me, as you watch you're asking yourself, "why is someone filming this instead of helping?" It's hard to imagine what we would do if we were there, but these types of events are more common than you'd think. The scientific community calls this phenomenon the "bystander effect." The bystander effect is a theory that states that

individuals are less likely to offer help to a victim when there are other people present.

While the bystander effect is studied and observed in the material world, there also exists a spiritual bystander effect. There are souls in peril around us each day in desperate need of rescuing, and as Christians, we should take action and “pull them out of the fire” as it says in Jude 23. But too often, Christians are content to be passive bystanders, watching and commenting on the state of the world around them instead of reaching the lost. How are we any different than the one who recorded the video? Christians were never meant to be bystanders in this world.

Perhaps one cause of this bystander effect is fear. Fear is a natural, self-preserving response to danger, causing us to freeze or run away instead of running headlong into the fray. It takes tremendous courage to overcome such instincts, and it's impressive to see those who have mastered them. Firefighters, for example, have conquered their fear and run into danger to save lives. Just as firefighters go through training to overcome the obstacle of fear, we also must train ourselves to be “bold to speak the word without fear” (Phi 1:12-14). We must risk persecution to save souls.

The most curious aspect of the bystander effect is that the larger the crowd of bystanders, the less likely it is for an individual to help out. This may sound counterintuitive, but it makes sense - after all, why stick your neck out when there are others who may step up and risk theirs instead? So too, in a large congregation, it's easy to assume others will step up when there's a need. Someone else probably will step up, but are we diminishing ourselves by allowing others to do what we are capable of?

One common excuse for not stepping up is that someone else in the congregation does it so much better than us. Sure, someone may be more talented at teaching a Bible class, leading a prayer, preparing a meal, or showing hospitality, but if we never even try, then we're robbing ourselves of an opportunity to grow. The church isn't a showcase of our talents, but a family that is striving to grow and mature together, and as such, we

accept each other's shortcomings. After all, the widow only gave her two mites, but that was enough to earn her the accolades of the Lord.

An even greater danger of the bystander effect is that we can become complacent enough to let someone else be responsible for what we should be doing ourselves. There are responsibilities that God has given us all as individuals which we can't pass on to others. For example, parents are duty bound to instruct their children in the ways of the Lord, and teach them to love the Lord with all their heart, soul, strength, and mind. If we become passive bystanders and abdicate our responsibility to the Bible class teachers and preacher, our children don't learn to love the Lord from the people they look up to the most. Bible classes and pulpit preaching are good and useful, but they're no substitute for the loving guidance of a father and mother.

In conclusion, the Bible is very clear: Christians should never be bystanders in this world. James 4:17 says, “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.” We must be people who take initiative and step up to save the lost and find opportunities to do good to all men, especially of the household of faith (Gal 6:10). If we have the power to teach, help, and save, then we must be active participants rather than passive bystanders.

Proverbs 3:27-28

Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due,  
when it is in your power to act.  
Do not say to your neighbor,  
“Come back tomorrow and I'll give it to you” —  
when you already have it with you.

- Dan Harbin



*The secret to contentment is not having  
more, but wanting less.*