

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **Ephesians 6:18-20**.
- B. When Paul mentioned the mystery of the gospel, he was probably referring to X (Eph. 3:4; 1Tim. 3:16).
- C. But, tonight I want to talk about some things that are mysteries because God may not understand why these things take place.
- D. If a person is converted to X by obeying the gospel these mysteries should not be present.

I. THE MYSTERY OF THE EMPTY PEW.

- A. Could it be that "freedom of worship" has been interpreted as "freedom from worship."
- B. Why is it that the attendance on Sunday night is two-thirds of what it is on Sunday morning? Why is the Wednesday night attendance about half of what it is on Sunday morning?
- C. The same X saves on Sunday night, and Wednesday night. The same Bible is preached.
- D. Yes, the Sunday PM and Wednesday PM services are expedient; but if we give our complete allegiance to X why the empty pews?
- E. This is a mystery I'm sure God doesn't understand.

II. THE MYSTERY OF THE DISAPPEARING CHURCH MEMBER.

- A. Some brethren drop out of sight, without a trace, and no one seems to know why.
- B. It would be quite a list to take the rosters from years past and see how many people we can't account for.
- C. This mystery also applies to those who seemingly disappear when there is work to be done.
- D. The following stats were done a few years ago on organizations:
 - 1. Belongers = 78%
 - 2. Do-somethings = 15%
 - 3. Actual workers = 5%
 - 4. Leaders = 2%Conclusion... of all the people in an organization only one out of four (22%) are willing to do something to make it run!
- E. I don't think this church is that bad, but to think that there are some out there saved by the blood of X, and not doing anything in return must be a mystery to God.
- F. If you work in the church to be saved the above is possible; but if you work in the church because you are saved it's not possible
- G. The disappearing church member must be a mystery to God.

III. THE MYSTERY OF THE CLOSED BIBLE.

- A. In many homes the Bible is a dust-catcher that is never used. We joke about "when all else fails, read the directions" yet when it comes to life and the Bible we do just that!
- B. Many of the weeks that I spent at Eastern, the Bible was openly attacked and ridiculed.
- C. Think about the time you spend reading. Do you spend time with any of the following:
 - 1. Newspaper.
 - 2. Magazines.
 - 3. Trade journals.
 - 4. Fictional books (ex.: romance novels).
 - 5. Religious books.
 - 6. The Bible.

- D. What do you spend the most time reading? It is not a sin to read any of the above, but it might be if reading those things causes us to ignore the Scriptures!
- E. What does your home libraries look like? Do you have several translations of the Scriptures? God has communicated everything that man needs in the Bible (2Pet. 1:3), yet the Bible is an ignored book. This must be a mystery to God!

III. THE MYSTERY OF BURIED TALENTS.

- A. Are you a person who loves to hear good singing, but do not sing? Are you a person who loves to hear good preaching, but do not take your turn teaching a Bible class? Are you a person who loves to watch others do good things, but do not become part of their ministries?
- B. Xians are gifted people (Rom. 12:6). God has work to be done in and out of the church. Jesus said that the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few (Mt. 9:37).
- C. I believe that every Xian can do more than just show up for the worship services! It is not a sin to have one talent; the sin is not using that one talent.
- D. Not using (burying) one's God given talent must be a mystery to Him.

IV. NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS... ANYONE?

- A. This time of year many people resolve to make changes for the good in their lives.
- B. If any of the four mysteries apply to you; why not clear it up?
- C. You can:
 1. Resolve to fill the pew, not be the reason it is empty.
 2. Resolve to never disappear when X needs you to work for Him.
 3. Resolve to read your Bible more than you ever have.
 4. Resolve to use your talents in the church and not be just a spectator. '
- D. Remember you can do all things through X, who will give you strength (Phil. 4:13).

CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. The four mysteries in tonight's lesson are solvable.
- B. If need be resolve or repent to be faithful in the areas I have mentioned.
- C. Plan of salvation for non-Xians; erring Xians.