

The Steeple

If one looks around the landscape of most any community, with an eye toward the heavens, a steeple will almost certainly soon appear. Why are there steeples? Because someone somewhere had an idea that there should be a steeple on top of their church, and after a little planning, some fundraising, and final construction, it was placed there.

A steeple is a landmark for some, as they search for holy places. Searching for a place where God's people gather, millions have found direction from that steeple rising high into the sky and what is underneath it.

Not long ago I was going to a meeting in another small town, and did not have the address programmed into my GPS. So I looked for steeples. Underneath the third one was the church I was looking for.

A steeple, a tower on top of or near a church, silently points to heaven each day. When people walk by, they can find simple inspiration or hope from just the sight of a steeple.

Often, a steeple has a bell inside. The bells were rung to welcome people to Sunday morning worship. In many communities, the bell in the steeple was also rung in case of emergency, like a fire or storm.

The bells, in churches which still have them, are rung at the beginning or end of worship, as a sign of celebration of who God is, and as a witness to God's love for all people. They can bother people sometimes, as they are wanting to do other things.

Our sexton many years ago was accosted by a man who lived near the church after he rang the bell before Sunday School as was the custom then. "If you ring that bell one more time, I am going to take this rifle and shoot you!" We kept ringing the bell.

Now many steeples have chimes inside. They are very loud, chime the hour and half-hour, and sometimes play hymns all day long. They are a witness which calls attention to holy thoughts, and remind us of hymns from years ago.

Steeple are a silent connection to God from heaven, and reach as high as we possibly can build them. It is important that what goes on beneath them is just as holy and just as thoughtful as the thought and prayers which went into their being placed there.

Jesus went to synagogue, the church of his day, on most Sabbaths. They don't usually have steeples, but in the beginning of his ministry the devil took him to the pinnacle of the temple, a high corner which was several hundred feet high.

When we see a steeple, what direction are our eyes drawn towards? Up. Toward heaven. Toward God.

That's the direction we must all find, when we finally hear that God loves us, and wants us to live forever.

There is a great child's poem with hand motions, a nursery rhyme, which holds up the steeple and the people beneath. "Here's the church and here's the steeple. Open the doors and here's the people."

Here's the relevant steeple question, dear reader. Do you worship under the steeple, or do you pass it by? Is that the church where you love and are loved, or is it the one you used to attend?

Steeple have always been there to point us to God. They beckon people to come from far and near to hear about God. Whether churches have steeples or not, the people must still point to heaven in everything they do and say.

Finally, what is usually placed on top of a steeple? That's right. The cross. "Beneath the cross of Jesus I long to take my stand," goes the hymn. My prayer is that this is where you will be. Always.