

# Good Old Boys: A Dying Breed

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## **From the Preacher's Desk:**

Good Old Boys: A Dying Breed

*(Let me begin by stating explicitly that this is not about good old boys, nor is it about our government. It is, however, a mesh of politico-religious editorial on the state of our existence today. Also by way of disclaimer, let me comment that while there are many good old boy ways which I do not and cannot condone, I love them. Some of my best friends are good old boys. Come to think of it, some of my favorite family members are good old boys. Anyway, I ask that you do not read more into this than is intended.)*

I remember in 1992 when Hurricane Andrew struck our beloved nation a double blow. We could not gain access to Florida in its aftermath, but we (the church at Thayer, MO) overloaded a U-Haul truck with food, water, clothing, etc., and drove it down to New Iberia, LA. We were not the only Midwest congregation to have done so, but the brethren there were so glad to see us come. I have since lost the pictures that I took on that trip, but the destruction we saw was almost beyond description. During the recovery from that storm, there were also scores of people, good old boys from Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Missouri, who loaded up their pickup trucks with chain saws and tools and drove to the affected areas. There they worked to help people that had never met clean up their streets, yards, and repair their damaged homes. They were not expecting compensation, yet many of them gave up a week or so of their lives to do what good old boys do, help out a neighbor, even if that neighbor was in Louisiana.

I consider Hurricane Andrew in 1992 to be the beginning of the end. While the good old boys were flocking to Louisiana, National Guard prevented anyone from entering southern Florida.

2005, enter Hurricane Katrina. For weeks after Katrina, the headlines centered on how the government had not done enough to help the victims. Where were the good old boys? For the most part, denied access due to safety and health concerns.

2008, enter Hurricane Ike. A week after Ike has almost erased Galveston from the map, her own residents have not been allowed back in. As a matter of fact, the mayor has essentially told her residents to go away and not come back for a while. Meanwhile, the good old boys watched it all on TV and didn't even sharpen their chains. And why should they? The government is going to take care of this one.

*(This is not designed to condemn either the government or the good old boys, only to observe the trends currently affecting our society.)*

Enter the church. While I could (and will, eventually, but not today) get into the whole para-church-organization-issue and its relationship to these trends and problems, let's just go ahead and bring it down to the individual level. Here is the million-dollar question: Should the church be supporting the members in their individual works, or should the members be supporting the church in its collective work? Probably most of you would answer that there is no right-or-wrong answer; that some works are the responsibility of the church collectively and others are the responsibility of the members individually. OK. Sounds great. But which are which? In our recent study on the restoration movement on our first Sunday nights, we laid some groundwork for this discussion with the observation that when a work reaches the point where the individual members cannot handle it, the local church should help take up the slack. But in so many instances, when the church "steps in," the members "step out." When

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that happens, interest is going to be lost in the work, and when interest is lost in the work, the individual members are left asking why the church let them down.

Five-year environmental impact studies are expected from our government, but when did Christians begin expecting them from the church? Where are our picks and axes? Where are our shovels and hammers? Is there no work to be done? This cycle has repeated itself to the point that when a need is perceived, too many Christians wait too long for either the church to recognize the need and find a solution, or simply for someone else to do something about it. Are individual Christians a dying breed? Are we in need of evangelism? Then let us evangelize. Are we in need of edification? Then let us edify. Are we in need of forgiveness? Then let us forgive. Are we in need of love? Then let us love.

President John F. Kennedy, in his inaugural address on Friday, January 20, 1961 made this immortal comment: "And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country." Let us stop asking where the church is and go sharpen our chains.