

# SHOULD WE JUST THROW THE "BABY" OUT WITH THE "BATHWATER"?

...SOURCES SAY YES!!!



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Galatians 4:30-31 – There is a Scripture that tells us what to do: “**Expel the slave mother with her son**, for the slave son will not inherit with the free son.” Isn’t that conclusive? We are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

Galatians 5:6 – **For in Christ, neither our most conscientious religion nor disregard of religion amounts to anything.** What matters is something far more interior: faith expressed in love.

Matthew 24:1-2 – And Jesus went out of the Temple, and on the way his disciples came to him, pointing out the buildings of the Temple. But he, answering, said to them, “See you not all these things? truly I say to you that **here there will not be one stone resting on another, which will not be pulled down.**” (In other words... “Not impressed boys!”)

Acts 7:48-51 - "However, **the Most High doesn't live in a house built by humans**, as the prophet says: 'The Lord says, "Heaven is my throne. The earth is my footstool. What kind of house are you going to build for me? Where will I rest? Didn't I make all these things?"' "How stubborn can you be? How can you be so heartless and disobedient? You're just like your ancestors. They always opposed the Holy Spirit, and so do you!"

Okay folks, so I'm not especially brilliant with the titles I come up for blog posts sometimes (haha)... I'm even worse with book titles. I would never make it as a pastor (thank God)... Well, except for the long sermon part. I might add that this will be a bit of a lengthy rant (and everyone who knows me said, "as usual" – ha), hopefully not too redundant – although I admit I tend to reiterate things a lot when I am impassioned about something and really want people to sense the intensity of the conviction I believe the Lord has given me. I NEED AN EDITOR! That might have to wait until I get Truth-For-A-Small-Fee.com published. Hey, I'm kidding you! Hopefully some will find this affirming and also encouraging. May God highlight the truth and whatever may be more of me than Him, I pray it will not be a distraction from His truth.

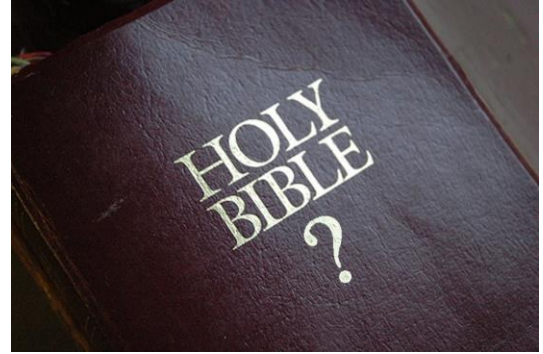
I've also got my helmet on today in case of flying bricks (grin)...

To me this is a subject (i.e. "church" & "religion") that is so "settled" now for me (because of my own journey that I have traveled), yet I continue to get emails about it and occasionally run into discussions with Christians who take great offense at some of my conclusions (or at least are disturbed by them and want to argue). The subject regards whether or not Christians need to (or whether or not they should) attend church. Most of you who frequent this site already know my thoughts on this for the most part. I have heard arguments on both sides of the issue; however, in my personal life, I refuse to let it be an issue at all anymore, since I truly believe that Scripture is so very clear on the matter and God truly has set me free. Nevertheless I will share (or rather I should say "reiterate") some of my personal convictions on this matter.

As always, I invite each reader to consider these things in the light of prayer, your own study of the Bible, and to lean assuredly on the voice of the Holy Spirit who is the One that guides you into all Truth (John 16:13-15). I would not wish to presume God's will for any person, but these are my sincere thoughts. To some this will sound like I'm "preaching to the choir". But since, most of the time, the choir resides in a church service, perhaps that's exactly who needs to hear this. Absolutely, lean on God and follow His instruction for your life according to the path He sets before you, day by day. With that introduction I offer this as food for consideration for those who have ears to hear. If you would like to respond (whether in agreement or total disagreement), please feel free to do so at the close of this posting.

So let's get right into this...

**1. In the first place, NOWHERE does the Bible even employ the word "church".** Most church folks take immediate issue to this statement and start pointing out passages that reference the word "church" in their Bibles. What they neglect to understand is that this word appearing in their Bibles does not exist in the oldest manuscripts of Scripture! It did not enter the translations until many hundreds of years after the first century. The word "church" appearing in virtually every Bible since the 16th century... BRACE YOURSELVES... is derived from a Greek word NEVER USED ANYWHERE IN THE ENTIRE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT!



Our modern word "church" is actually derived from the Middle English word "chirche", which is from the Old English word "cirice". There is speculation about how the word originally came into being, but many scholars believe that it comes from (or perhaps I should say "was inspired by") the Greek word "kuriakon", which is a derivative of "kuriakos". Kuriakos is used in the New Testament (twice) and means "of or belonging to the Lord" (examples of use: 1 Corinthians 11:20; Revelations 1:10). Kuriakon means "the Lord's house" (hence some scholars are under the presumption that this word inspired the word "church" since church is regarded as being "the Lord's house"), but oddly enough, kuriakon is NOT EVER used at all in the New Testament! Even Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary tells us that the word "church" used in the Bible probably comes from this Greek word "kuriakon". So then, let me just present the next logical question... Why isn't "kuriakon" in the Bible? Good question, right? Let's continue with this examination...

The actual Greek word that has errantly come to be known as "church" in modern translations is the word "ecclesia" (sometimes spelled "ekkllesia" interchangeably) and does NOT have any reference to a "church" in the modern sense of the word whatsoever and which bears absolutely no connection with the Greek word "kuriakon"! The word "ecclesia" is a compound of two words that means "a calling – from out of".

1 Peter 2:9 – But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for **He called you out of the darkness into His wonderful light.**

The apostles of Jesus routinely referred to this concept of being "called out" from darkness into the Light of Christ and separating one's self (2 Corinthians 6:17-18) from the mindset of the world (including the religious world). The apostle Paul was even so bold as to demonstrate this union with Christ in contrast to his former life in religion by calling it worthless and on the same level as animal excrement (Philippians 3:7-8)! Becoming joined with Christ meant to separate one's self from every other device that might distract from His Lordship – and so was the case for every person who would be born into this Kingdom. This was not a religion you joined. It was not a religious club or program. This was a total change of life. This was pure union with Christ the Lord. It was full adoption into the Family of God himself. It wasn't something you could lose by no longer attending some religious meeting. There was no idea that you could fall away by neglecting to perform various religious legalisms. Christ alone is King of this spiritual Kingdom. He is Lord. Membership in His Family would not be regulated by any institution on Earth, nor could any device of man qualify a person's right to belong or be dismissed from it. God is the Father of this royal Family and every believing soul is welcome to it!

Thus the early Christians understood the term "Ecclesia" very differently from what most church-going Christians think of today when the word "church" is brought into the conversation. For the early Christians it (ecclesia) was a concept directly connected to the Gospel of Jesus, since they had been saved by Christ, freed from the chains of sin, death and darkness (including the spiritual blindness of religion), and called into the Family of God. The Ecclesia, therefore, is (just as we have already said) the royal Assembly of Christ (comprised of every soul, born-again into the Kingdom of God). It was – in absolute essence – the Family of God; the Body of Christ. To the early followers of Jesus, Ecclesia was never thought of as a religious building or program (as would only transpire in later centuries).

The words "kurkarion" (church – which, as said previously, does not exist in any source biblical manuscript) and "ekkllesia" (assembly) are NOT synonymous! Any Greek scholar will tell you this. In the 16th Century, men of God like William Tyndale (Greek scholar and translator of the first printed English Bible) knew it and did not translate "ekkllesia" as "church"... They burned him at the stake and called him a heretic! As a side note here, the great Reformer Martin Luther also did not use the word "church" in his German translation. Instead he translated "ecclesia" to a word in German that meant "community". The institutional organized religious organization of the day (*the Roman Catholic Church*) sought to destroy Luther as well, but he was blessed to find himself under the protection of the German Emperor and thus spared from a death like Tyndale and others faced.

Kuriakon, or "The Lord's house" (emphasis on "house"), implies a location, a structure of some sort. While someone may suggest the idea that "the Lord's house" could also have a spiritual connotation (since the believer – both in an individual and corporate sense – is the "house" of the Lord), what must be understood is that since the emerging religion of Roman Catholicism already was placing huge emphasis on elaborate structures (which were titled as being "churches"), it is easy to see how this word "kurkarion" would naturally be implied, i.e. the "house" of God being viewed as the church building and all the rituals connected to it.

In a general sense (common to the secular Greek world of the New Testament), the word "ecclesia" held reference to an assembly of persons who gather for one reason or another (emphasis on the people in that gathering); however, Christ used the term with a spiritual context in mind and made reference to His Body, which is comprised by "living stones" that make up a "spiritual house". In other words, we are talking about every person who is a member of God's family, whether they physically gather or not. The fact that they belong to the family of God makes them part of the Body of Christ and therefore a valid member of the Ecclesia; the Lord's spiritual assembly. Fellowship, therefore, can be realized in a vast number of different ways because it's first important to understand that fellowship is not merely some activity engaged in at religious meetings (in fact, I contend that actual fellowship rarely happens at all at religious meetings), but it is something we HAVE presently in Christ Jesus, whether we are physically gathered on earth in some fashion or not. That is why a follower of Christ can instantly commune with another follower of Christ that he has only just met and whom may live on the other side of the planet. Our Fellowship is in HIM! The tangible expression of that communion with other members of the Body of Christ can therefore manifest in a variety of ways (at any time or place); whether through some facet of the Internet, telephone, letters, or physical gatherings. It can happen with as few as two or three people (as Jesus said – Matthew 18:20).

We may not always have the opportunity for physical gatherings or we may need to submit to the guidance of the Holy Spirit to discern whether or not we should gather with a specific group or not. Remember that just because you throw a bunch of automobile parts in a pile, doesn't mean you will automatically have an automobile... The Holy Spirit is the

Master Assembler of His Body and He is the one who connects us to one another (wherever on planet Earth each of us may be). Trust me, religion can't do it better!

Just because man slaps a title on a building and calls it a "church" and tells you to meet at a certain time of the week, doesn't mean that Scripture presents or even implies such an activity, or even that the Lord has sanctioned the activity, nor does it guarantee the kind of fellowship that the Spirit of God desires for the Lord's Body to be expressed... just as choosing to never set foot in one of these man-made institutions does not imply that such a person cannot experience Body life outside the four walls.

It appears that the idea of the Christian Ecclesia being understood as individual groups/assemblies, started to become more popular toward the later part of the first century as many non-Christian observers regarded the followers of Jesus as, basically, groups of rebels. The "group" idea caught on and, in time, the word Ecclesia's first meaning would begin to fade as a more institutionalized concept was applied and many began to think of the followers of Jesus as simply proponents of a new religion and the Ecclesia would eventually become "the Church", with an emphasis on religiously dedicated buildings and religious services. Though I am not certain of the exact date in history when the word "church" began to be used among Christians, it does appear to have occurred a very long time after the New Testament period. This concept of "church" became "officially" embedded in Scripture when translators used the word "church" for the King's Bible (King James), despite the fact that there was nothing in the original text to support this. This is not a myth or a conspiracy theory; this is historical fact. Anyone can do the research themselves and read the 15 rules set forth by the King's Bishop to guide the translation process. The translators were directly ordered to leave the word "church" in the translation despite the fact that there was no legitimate support for it in the source manuscripts they were using. Fast forward to today and you can see the transition of thought from the Ecclesia as simply the Body of Christ to it being a "church organization" is virtually complete. Christianity is now a religion and the Church is a religious organization, complete with special buildings (also labeled as churches).

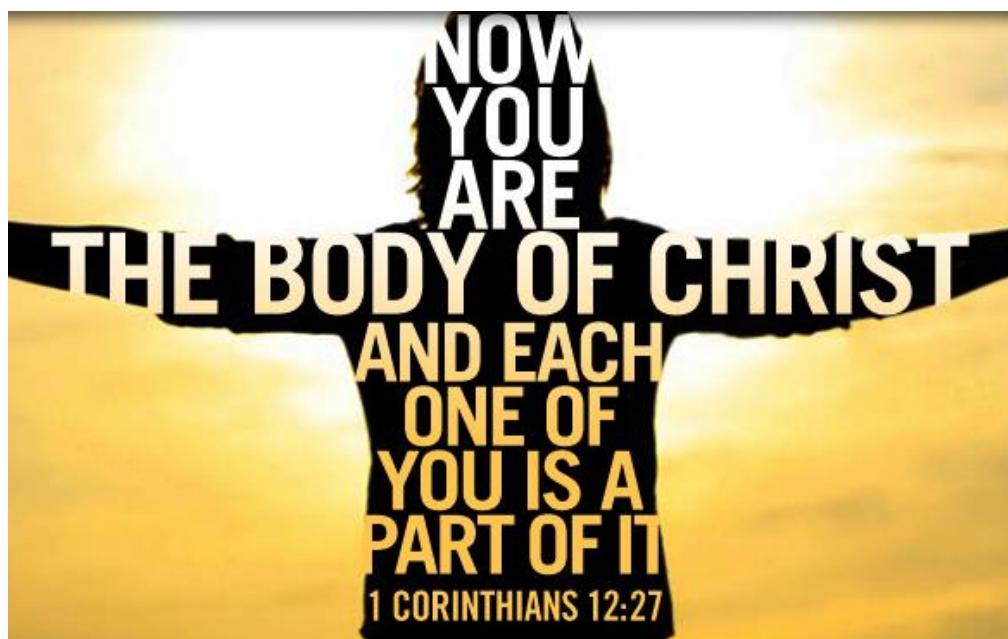
If you do a quick search on Google Images for the word "ekklesia", you'll notice a number of logos for church organizations. Some even show the word "ekklesia" in direct connection with the church building. Below are a few examples I found (click on the image for a larger view)... This is just an obvious example of how ingrained the deception has become among so many Christians.



**2. Nowhere does the Bible speak of building anything known as a “church building”.** In case those in the back row of the church didn’t catch that, I said NOWHERE does the Bible speak of building anything known as a church building! It is simply NOT in the vocabulary of Scripture! From this fact alone we should be able to safely and accurately conclude that no such requirement exists for any person today either; however, plenty of individuals (i.e. virtually every “church pastor” in existence) seem to believe this is part of the Great Commission or something. Someone certainly might be able to argue that church organizations sometimes serve noble intentions or promote Christian values and doctrines and that may well be



(and thank God for the ones that are teaching good doctrine and whose members are endeavoring to follow Christ), but this still does not set any biblical precedent for a requirement to build such organizations or that followers of Jesus must attend them (let alone be joined to them as members in addition to being joined to Christ). It absolutely does not give the right for any person to construct an inanimate edifice, built entirely by man, and then exchange God’s designation for His body (something made with HIS hands) and apply it to a lifeless building. Certainly it does not set forth any biblical precedent that someone who does not choose to attend such an organization is somehow estranged from Christ or “backslidden”. Such organizations (though some may do good) are, therefore, not essential and no more important to Christianity than a novelty t-shirt is with a Christian saying on it. I’m sure some will think that it is putting it much too strongly, but please realize the point I am trying to make here... Christianity (of the biblical kind) is NOT a religion, NOT a religious organization, and NOT something you can conveniently shut up in a religiously-dedicated building called a church. Like it or not folks, there is no “church” in Christianity. **There is only the one, single Body of Christ, which is the Family of God – His glorious Ecclesia.**



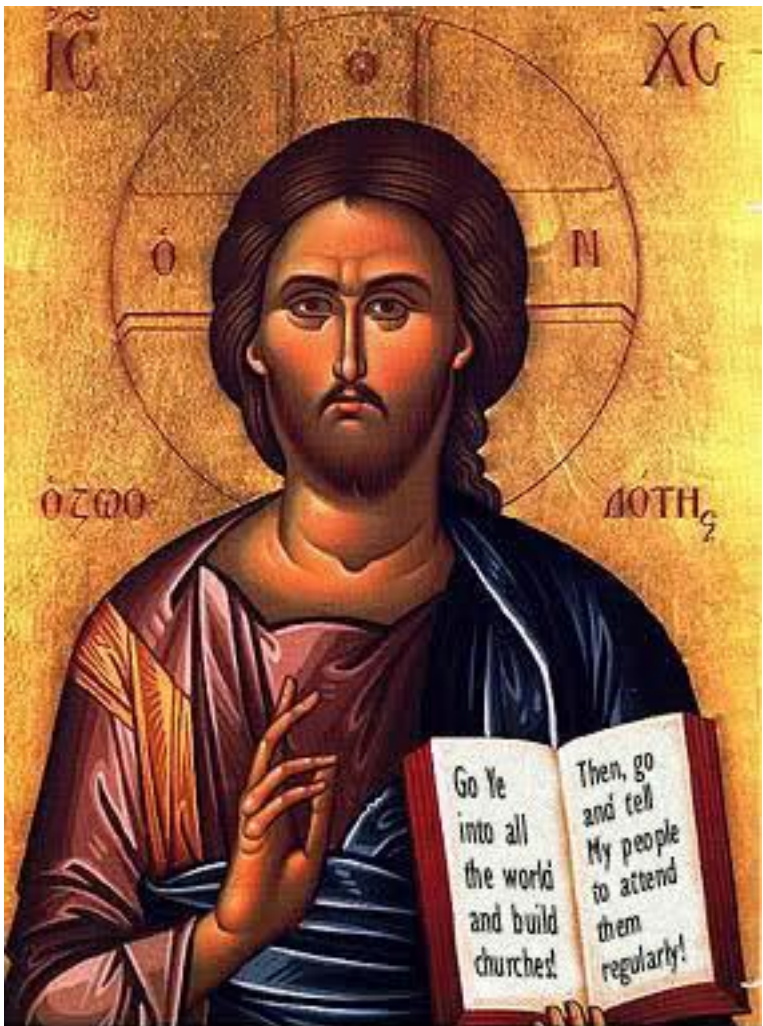


One argument I've heard in response to this goes something like this: "Dave if we don't build churches, then how will we have the means to finance important things like missionary work?" First of all, does anyone besides me notice how such a statement implies that the primary purpose for a church is to collect money from people? Let me tell you a sad fact that is confirmed by many reputable fact-gathering sources; Church fraud far exceeds what church organizations actually give to missions. A report at BrotherhoodMutual.com stated the following: "Increasing at an annual rate of nearly six percent, researchers expect church financial fraud to reach the \$60 billion mark by 2025. That's still not the whole picture. About 80 percent of all cases of church fraud go unreported and therefore are not included in statistics."

The same article even said that churches provide the ideal setting for would-be thieves. Naturally, my thoughts are drawn to Jesus' remark about what happened to the Temple in His day; that they had turned this house of prayer into a den of thieves. Think about that for a moment; even the holy Temple of Jerusalem had fallen to corruption. Is it any wonder that Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, not one stone will be left upon another"? The day of man-made temples for God was over and Jesus himself declared it! Statistically, most churches spend only about 1 percent of their annual budget on missions! ONE PERCENT!!! A few as high as 19% but those cases are extremely rare. Compare those miserable numbers to what organizations like the Red Cross, for example, spend on overhead and advertising; Just 8 percent! The rest actually goes to the target the program was intended to aid. World Vision spends only 14 percent on overhead. The rest goes to Christian humanitarian work. There is far more evidence available to demonstrate how magnificently church organizations FAIL to provide any significant aid to real mission work. And that's without getting to the argument of whether all of the church's so-called "mission work" is really designated by Christ to begin with! Often times church missionaries bring far more than just the Gospel to the lost in other parts of the world. They often bring organized religion right along with them. Many end up just making carbon copies of Western Churchianity in other parts of the world, which have nothing significant to do with the Gospel and finding Christ Jesus as Lord or understanding His body as being people rather than church buildings and religious routines. I do thank God for the few that are following His will and doing His work, but I am not the least bit convinced that church is a help to this endeavor! The evidence proves that the institutional church system is neither a significant help nor is it needed to maintain missions work. Most of the true missionaries I am acquainted with, live on very little and receive next to nothing (if not nothing at all) from any church organizations and yet God is their constant supply. I've heard so many stories of the miracle provision of God that I know in my heart that God's work will be done if He has called it into existence! He is able to finance the work and supply all that is necessary for it to occur.

**3. Nowhere does the Bible tell anyone to attend a church.**

Not only does the Scripture fail to define anything we might call a “church building” but neither does it tell anyone to attend one or finance one or busy their lives with maintaining one. No teaching of Scripture suggests that by attending/belonging-to a religious organization are you made right with God, or that you obtain special favor with God, or that such qualifies you as a Christian or a member of Christ’s body. Therefore, it is not essential to direct anyone to get involved with one, nor should anyone be led to believe that God intends such an activity. And besides, why not just let God speak for Himself! If He had intended it and thought it to be essential, would He not have said something about it in the Scripture? He did not. There is not even a hint of such an instruction either. It is simply not there at all. When then (and on whose authority) do Christians say that church attendance is an essential part of Christianity? It certainly is not part of the



Christianity we find in Scripture, so what version of “Christianity” are they referring to? Why would I or anyone else need to submit myself to any other form of Christianity than the one represented in the Bible? In fact, I think that would be a very dangerous thing to embrace considering what the apostles warned Believers of...

2 Corinthians 11:2-4 – For I am jealous for you with the jealousy of God Himself. I promised you as a pure bride to one husband—Christ. But I fear that somehow your pure and undivided devotion to Christ will be corrupted, just as Eve was deceived by the cunning ways of the serpent. You happily put up with whatever anyone tells you, even if they preach a different Jesus than the One we preach, or a different kind of Spirit than the One you received, or a different kind of gospel than the one you believed.

Galatians 1:6-12 – I am shocked that you are turning away so soon from God, who called you to Himself through the loving mercy of Christ. You are following a different way that pretends to be the Good News but is not the Good News at all. You are being fooled by those who deliberately twist the truth concerning Christ. Let God’s curse fall on anyone, including us or even an angel from heaven, who preaches a different kind of Good News than the one we preached to you. I say again what we have said before: If anyone preaches any other Good News than the one you welcomed, let that person be cursed. Obviously, I’m not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ’s servant. Dear brothers and sisters, I want you to understand that the gospel message I preach is not based on mere human reasoning. I



received my message from no human source, and no one taught me. Instead, I received it by direct revelation from Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 3:6 – Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, **and not after the tradition which they received of us.**

Does this mean that a person cannot benefit from involvement in a church program, if it be one that teaches good doctrine and manifests a Body dynamic? Despite my strong feelings about “church” in general, I do believe God is able to lead every person according to His will. If that will includes a season of participation in a church organization (more importantly among a group of individuals who are seeking to follow Christ together), that is not for me to condemn. I can only say, with absolute confidence, that the Bible nowhere instructs anyone to join, attend, or pay money to a church organization as part of some requirement as a Christian. Nowhere does the Scripture teach that paying money (i.e. tithes, offerings, etc.) to a pastor equates “giving to God” or that such is any requirement at all of the Lord. Giving is something that is orchestrated by love and by obedience to Christ. The so-called “church” has NOTHING to do with this activity! They have no authorization by Scripture to demand it, to manage it, or to suggest to anyone that they are sanctioned mediators between God and men as it concerns ANYTHING – especially giving! So, can you give to a church organization? Of course you can... if love and/or Christ compels you.

I have observed religious organizations that overwhelmingly stay on target with good doctrine and which are not oppressive in legalism. This is encouraging, although perhaps rare, to find. I have also observed organizations (i.e. churches) that do a good job of simply utilizing their environment as a place for members of the Body of Christ to gather and enjoy one another’s company and to facilitate a place for prayer, ministry and fellowship. In general these are not bad things and I would not condemn them; however, virtually every church organization I have observed, despite whatever good they may contain, often tend to impose their share of error. While some leaders in these organizations warn that those who disconnect from church activity and meetings will likely be more prone to deception and error, on the contrary I have seen how churches tend to magnify the problem of deception and the spread of false doctrine – because when a church gets it wrong, they pass along that error to everyone in the organization. Such problems are hard to imagine when no “church institution” exists among brothers. You may have a brother or sister in Christ fall into some error, but without a massive organization in the mix (funding and fueling the error), there is pretty little chance of the error spreading like wildfire. Furthermore when someone regards the Body of Christ as an organic spiritual assembly comprised of Believers all over the world who are supposed to submit to one another in the Love of Christ, it is far more likely (in my opinion) that one person in error (but who accepts the biblical design of the Body of Christ) may be open to correction from another brother who walks in God’s Love and truth. This can happen easily where relationships, rather than religion, are paramount. Furthermore, even some of the best religious organizations tend spend a lot of effort on self-preservation and getting people to continue the thought that church is essential. Since the Bible does not indicate such, even the best churches are espousing massive error right there and spreading it around... and if they fall into the deception that being a Christian involves church as an essential component, then they are also dabbling with the Gospel and that makes them a danger as well.

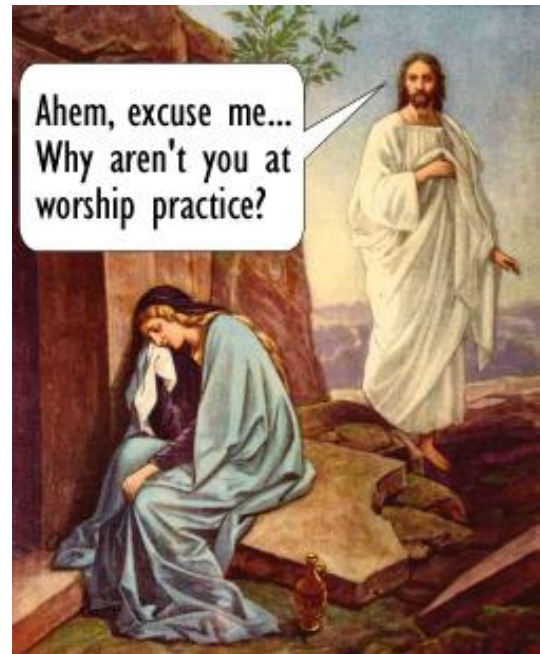
In other articles I’ve discussed the passage in Hebrews that talks about “not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together,” which is a common verse used to justify a requirement to attend church. Rather than reiterate all of that here, you can read the article yourself by

clicking this link. I cannot tell you how often I've heard folks bullied by church leaders and other Christians by the misuse of this passage of Scripture, which is absolutely NOT talking about "going to church".

**4. Nowhere does the Bible even imply that Christians are to invent religious programs, package them and distribute them through weekly meetings, and then label this "church" and then also lead others to presume this is the definitive mark of Christianity (weekly religious meetings and programs).**

In "church world" even the notion of "serving God" ends up getting translated, principally, as "serving the church". Furthermore any concept of "giving" usually ends up getting translated as "giving to the church". What the Bible refers to as "ministry" simply means "to serve others in the manner of Christ." The institutional church machine, somewhere along the line, turned this into some official-sounding concept called "entering The Ministry". In doing so, they exchange the organic, love-motivated, Christ-submitted life of the Believer for a slighted variation of what Scripture teaches.

Because there is now this thing called "The Ministry" and because that thing is generally accepted as something to be ordained and maintained by a church organization, the supremacy of Christ in the "minister's" life is demoted to second place (in most cases). How is this not an anti-Christ mindset?



This entity called "church" has become the ultimate mediator between God and man. It inserts itself in-between virtually every facet of the attending person's life. Though God is generally credited as the source and the church as being His instrument, the simple and obvious reality is that the church organization often becomes the prime motivator and manipulator of an attendee's or minister's behavior – judging whatever the organization deems acceptable (in the name of God) and attaching God's name to the things it sees as essential. For a person to effectively get along in most any of these organizations, it might be best if he numb his mind to anything other than what the organization presents to him, since thinking for one's self too much (or even with a personal intent to seek the Lord and follow His leading) may be viewed as a rebellious attitude and one that God does not approve of since it doesn't embrace the church organization as the final authority and mouthpiece for God in that person's life.

The entire concept is a man-made fabrication. In fact, many times, it is simply anti-Christ in nature, since it routinely usurps His authority and drowns out His voice by imposing its own! Even the best churches, VERY OFTEN, fall prey to anti-Christ tendencies, though they would never admit such or even wish to think this was possible.

Does that make the activity of attending church services a bad thing in every case? Not necessarily (perhaps not at all in some cases)... unless it causes people to rely less on the Holy Spirit than it does on the religious system. The bottom line is that "church" has NOTHING to do with Christianity as far as the Bible is concerned (and God has NEVER sanctioned that some official earthly institution would stand in mediation between people and God), therefore it is futile to hold others in judgment accordingly.

All of us have short-comings (whether we ascribe to the practice of attending church or we don't). While I was a church man myself, even though (looking back) I was under a good measure of deception, I truly did have a heart that desired to know God and to believe the truth. Thank God that He looked into my heart and led me out, and was long-suffering with my ignorance and error. He was gracious and good. His kindness led me to repentance. If a person is a true follower of Jesus (whether he attends a church organization or not) HE OUGHT TO NEVER JUDGE ANOTHER BELIEVER IN CHRIST BY REASON OF WHETHER HE ATTENDS A CHURCH OR NOT!

Colossians 2:16-17 - Therefore, let no one judge you because of what you eat or drink or about the observance of annual holy days, New Moon Festivals, **or weekly worship days**. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the body that casts the shadow belongs to Christ.



I realize that expressing some of these conclusions I have about church may inadvertently offend some people who enjoy attending church. That having been said, if you are missing the whole point of what I am talking about here then perhaps you need to be offended. If you think some building made by the hands of men has any equality to the ONE Body of

Christ that is fashioned only by the hands of the Lord, then you are deluded and need to be set free. **There is but ONE Body of Christ** – not many bodies of Christ! My desire is not to suggest that attending a church (in and of that action itself) is somehow evil or that God will be displeased with you if you do so (That is most certainly between you and Him). My desire is only to emphasize this one fact; **the Bible does NOT speak of church attendance, it does not teach church attendance, it does not suggest or imply church attendance, the word church is not even technically biblical, nor does the Bible EVER define the Body of Christ in terms of a religious organization of any kind or at any time. Church attendance did NOT exist when the Scriptures were authored and attending church was NEVER a practice of any Believer in Christ on planet earth!** I'd say that's a pretty intense list of facts, wouldn't you? Whether this next statement offends someone or not, the simple fact of the matter is that "church" as we know it is (at its traditional core) wholly a man-made product devoid of ANY Scriptural foundation, support, instruction, or suggestion. It simply DOES NOT EXIST in the pages of God's holy Word! It is therefore OBVIOUSLY non-essential in terms of what Christ requires to be a member of the Family of God or to grow spiritually and to fulfill whatever purpose it may be that God places on your life. You can, quite honestly, take it or leave it. I chose to leave it and have never regretted the day I did, nor have I suffered spiritually as a result! I am closer in my relationship to the Lord today than ever before and I love life with a fullness of joy that only is realized by the freedom that Christ brings.

I have observed many church organizations who try to answer the question of whether or not a Christian should attend church. Virtually all of them will NOT give a completely honest answer. Most will slight the discussion for the purpose of self-preservation (to keep those butts in the pews – if you don't mind me putting things a little crudely). Many will attempt to take the "safe" route by first stating that attending a church, indeed, has nothing to do with salvation. At least they are speaking truth here. They will often rightly say that God does not require church attendance to be part of His family. But they generally follow this statement by suggesting that church is very important to become involved with if you really intend to grow as a Christian (thus you'll notice they have just made church attendance essential at this point). Virtually every salvation call I have heard

preachers give tell people to first turn to Christ and then “find a good church to attend”. It immediately becomes part of the requirement. If church attendance is not added to the pattern of evangelistic outreach, many people believe that this amounts to irresponsible evangelism. I remember the days, working in church outreach events, when we’d talk about other religious groups and how terrible it was if a particular Christian outreach effort failed to invest in “follow-up” of those being saved (i.e. a “follow up program”). “Follow-up” is often just a clever word for making sure the new convert gets plugged into a church organization. Few, if any, avoid making church part of the requirement in the “follow-up” process of “disciplining” a new convert.

I often wonder what the modern church would do with guys like Philip, who led someone to Christ (by specific direction of the Holy Spirit – not some evangelistic church mandate or program), but failed to get him plugged into a church group immediately after his conversion (Acts 8:25-39)... If you recall this story, Philip led the man to Jesus and then THE HOLY SPIRIT completely removed Philip from the scene at once! The newly born-again man was left entirely on his own! Do you think it is possible that God thought He was able to lead this man Himself? Why would God lead a man to faith in Christ and then remove the evangelist from the scene immediately without any “follow-up” program being assigned?



In Acts 16 the apostles Paul and Silas had been locked up in prison when the Lord supernaturally freed them of their chains. The whole event resulted in the jailer coming to Christ. After the conversion, the jailer invited them to his home for dinner and the man’s entire family believed the Gospel. The very next morning Paul and Silas left without any “follow-up” program being instituted. There was no instruction for the jailer and his family to find a good local church in the area. The text simply says that he and his family rejoiced because now they all believed in God.

The stories like this go on and on, all without any instruction to get plugged into a church. My thoughts are also drawn to Acts chapter 18, where Paul was directed by God to go to

Corinth and preach the Gospel. The Lord spoke to Paul in a vision and told him not to be afraid and that no one would attack or harm him because many people in the city belonged to Him. Isn't it interesting that God didn't tell Paul to go start a church? Neither did He tell Paul to attend one while there to setup a base for his mission work. He didn't tell Paul to get in touch with the leaders of a big religious organization in town. He didn't tell Paul to make sure he told the ones that would come to believe in Jesus to start attending church immediately. Again, THERE WERE NO CHURCHES! God's only instruction was to do what He said and not fear because there were many people throughout the city that belonged to Him. That tells me that these Believers in Christ were everywhere, not just pent up in some church building as frequently attending members of a religious organization.

My point simply is that you see no examples of a concept of religious organization among the early Christians. You don't see them building churches or teaching others to do so. You don't find ANY counsel to attend any such thing. You DO, however, see Paul encouraging people to love one another, support one another, pray for one another, encourage one another, etc. It's also important to understand that when Paul wrote his letters to the Corinthians Christians (latter on), this was not to some organization known as "The Church of Corinth". It was a letter to ALL the followers of Jesus throughout the entire city. The letters would have been spread throughout the city, in the homes of Believers, and anywhere they might gather together. Nothing called a "church building" was ever even thought of or implied.

Some will say, "Ah, but they did gather together in public places or in homes, so this is essentially the early manifestation of church and the activity of attending church." My response? No, it's only an indication that Believers gathered together at different times. If I get together once in a while with my family and some Believing friends to have some dinner and talk about Jesus or just hang out with my brothers and sisters in Christ, have I just started a church organization? Of course not! I am simply together with members of my family in Christ. It's as simple and organic (and wonderful) as it sounds. There's nothing religious or necessarily routine about it. A gathering is NOT a church organization. The very notion is... I'm sorry... stupid!

Still so many today believe that you must attend a religious organization. They teach and push people to accept this ideology despite its complete absence from Scripture! They believe that, in order to grow spiritually in an effective manner, this must transpire. The argument is often given that the Lord's body includes many people, not just you and Jesus. The implication is made that if you do not attend a church, you will therefore be isolating yourself from the Body of Christ. Another argument is often made that when you come to Christ you have to "change your playground and your playmates" and therefore church is the logical alternative to your old lifestyle. I disagree! Christ is the ONLY alternative to your old lifestyle! Furthermore, Jesus never kept to a particular "playground" or "playmates"! In fact, He made himself at home among people wherever they happened to be. You might remember this story:

Matthew 9:9-13 – As Jesus was walking along, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at his tax collector's booth. "Follow Me and be My disciple," Jesus said to him. So Matthew got up and followed Him.



Later, Matthew invited Jesus and His disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. But when the Pharisees saw this, they asked His disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with such scum? " When Jesus heard this, He said, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do." Then He added, "Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: 'I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.' For I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners."

Did Jesus call these "disreputable sinners" to a church meeting (or did Matthew for that matter)? Was the prescription for what ails them a church service? No... Christ called men unto himself. Even Matthew, once He decided to follow Jesus, then invited his friends over to **HIS OWN HOUSE** for a party and Jesus was the central figure. They didn't go to a revival meeting. They certainly didn't go to a "church meeting". They were among friends and Christ Himself was present among them (even as the Guest of Honor). If Matthew, being a new Believer, was free to invite his old buddies over to his own house for a party, expecting that Jesus would be there as well, why would this be frowned upon by many of those who support traditional church? I think it's because the traditional church mindset doesn't have confidence in the reality of a living Christ. They are mostly stuck back in "What Would Jesus Do" land (where they sit around and make up ideas of how they imagine Christ – whom they apparently don't believe is alive and present – might do things). Funny thing is, they seem to think what Jesus would do is always send everyone to church. They have virtually no confidence in a risen Christ who is able to presently interact among Believers (and with non-Believers present as well) and to work among them (with power and wisdom)... Instead they always, always, always rely on the religious machine called church. Sigh...

But some will argue, "Dave, you have to be reasonable about this subject. For some people the worst thing for them really would be to leave them in an environment that includes their old sinner friends. Remember, bad company corrupts good habits." Indeed it does... So why would we not expect that the company of Jesus was good company for a corrupt crowd? We simply cannot presume that prescribing an environment of religion is the solution. Remember that the apostle Paul was a pretty rough character before he came to Jesus. He was actively engaged in KILLING Christians! When he came to Christ, GOD himself is the one who disciplined him and called him to ministry!



Galatians 1:13-17 – You know what I was like when I followed the Jewish religion—how I violently persecuted God's church. I did my best to destroy it. I was far ahead of my fellow Jews in my zeal for the traditions of my ancestors. But even before I was born, God chose me and called me by His marvelous grace. Then it pleased Him to reveal His Son to me so that I would proclaim the Good News about Jesus to the Gentiles. **When this happened, I did not rush out to consult with any human being. Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to consult with those who were apostles before I was.** Instead, I went away into Arabia, and later I returned to the city of Damascus.

How could Paul presume to, first of all, come to Christ without responding to an alter call or saying a sinner's prayer... then think himself to be qualified to preach the Gospel as an apostle without having first gone through some church follow-up program and ministry training course through a church Bible college? How could Paul hope to obtain the right kind of influence necessary for encouraging proper spiritual growth if God kept him completely away from other Christians after his conversion for three whole years? Can you see what we're talking about here? It is only our religiously-influence presumptions that lead us to think new converts need a discipleship program and to attend regular church meetings in order that they might grow spiritually and stay safely unspotted from the world.

I'm sorry but, too often, the modern church acts like God is dead! It's as though they fear that without a carefully, fine-tuned church program in play, people will fall back into sin. I believe they think this because they do not really believe that Christ is living and able to effect genuine change in lives without the arm of the religious machine called church. Christ is a mascot for most of those attending, not really Lord and Master. Individuals are not necessarily viewed as simply members of the Body of Christ but as members of the organization and if they be members of the organization it is thought that they are automatically guaranteed to be members of Christ. Though some would deny that this mindset exists, I am wholly convinced it does exist. I have observed, time and again, as people have been judged according to their level of church attendance (or lack thereof) rather than any mutual fellowship in Christ.



Proponents of organized religion generally believe that the only way to effect change in a life is through some church program or seminar. How, I ask, is this any different from what virtually every other religion on the planet does? They all employ programs that are inspired by some dead guru's teachings. In the end, you may be able to influence a few by training them to "change/clean-up the outside of the cup" by encouraging new habits, but even Scripture teaches that such things are powerless to effect the inner man. Only Christ can do that by making a new creation and renewing the mind by the power of the Holy Spirit day by day.

To me the "organized church mindset" is similar to how a number of the early Hebrew Christians tried to maintain the religion of Judaism along with their new-found relationship with Christ. The book of Hebrews was written for a mixed audience of Jewish and Gentile Christians who lived in Rome or perhaps Jerusalem. These Christians, it seems, had begun

to doubt whether Christ was really the Messiah and they were returning to the works-righteousness mindset of the Law of Moses, which by this time had also become overwhelmed with legalism.

These Christians had come to focus so much on external religious practices that they were losing sight of the truth. The letter to the Hebrews illustrates how there were many of the early Christians who did not fully grasp the freedom afforded them by Christ and, more importantly, they were now failing to recognize that He was the Lord. They were still dabbling with legalism, hybrid Christianity, and some were falling away from the truth, though they continued to maintain a religious exterior, belief and involvement. To put it more simply, they were turning from the Way of Christ back to organized religion. It was a great deception. The author of Hebrews sought to admonish and encourage them to hold fast to the truth, don't fall back into error, because God is not pleased with any who draw back into that false mindset of religion.

Hebrews 10:29-39 – Just think how much worse the punishment will be for those who have trampled on the Son of God, and have treated the blood of the covenant, which made us holy, as if it were common and unholy, and have insulted and disdained the Holy Spirit who brings God's mercy to us. For we know the One who said, "I will take revenge. I will pay them back." He also said, "The LORD will judge His own people." It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Think back on those early days when you first learned about Christ. Remember how you remained faithful even though it meant terrible suffering. Sometimes you were exposed to public ridicule and were beaten, and sometimes you helped others who were suffering the same things. You suffered along with those who were thrown into jail, and when all you owned was taken from you, you accepted it with joy. You knew there were better things waiting for you that will last forever. So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you! Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that He has promised. "For in just a little while, the Coming One will come and not delay. And My righteous ones will live by faith. But I will take no pleasure in anyone who turns away." But we are not like those who turn away from God to their own destruction. We are the faithful ones, whose souls will be saved.

So many church goers today have fallen prey to a most similar twisted religious thinking since their leaders, many of them, have walked in this manner before them. I am reminded of Jesus' rebuke of the religious leaders in the first century (Matthew 24-28), who paid much attention to outward appearance of religion, but were still full of corruption within. All the external religion they could muster was not enough to clean their hearts or change their lives in the manner that God finds significant. Thus even today we have so many people in religion that spend a lot of time on externals but who deny the in-working power of the Holy Spirit. They may even use His name, but they do not truly allow Him to lead. This is one of the great deceptions of religion; It focuses on externals yet contains no power to change the heart! Though many religious leaders in Christian churches today preach some good things, many continue to practice something else. They talk about Christ as Lord, but then impose a mindset of reliance on religion. They talk about relationship with God, but then continue to insert themselves as mediators between God and them. This is a lie!

1 Timothy 2:5 – For God is one, and there is one Mediator of God and of men, the Man Christ Jesus...

Listen, I am not opposed to Godly fellowship as described in the New Testament. We who are part of God's family are intended to express His life together. But God is the one, by His Holy Spirit, who is responsible to knit fellow believers together and it is He who calls



them to various works. No organization can justly propose (with any authority of God) to be the manager and mediator of such activity. The mistake of the organized church mindset is that it assumes that fellowship must be realized only within its walls and extended out only through its mechanisms. Thus, I believe, it does not fully trust Christ as Lord (and I believe that is even putting it mildly). Religion usurps the authority and relationship of Christ with His body and inserts itself in the middle.

As mentioned previously, churches tend to see the answer to virtually every spiritual condition humans struggle with as being most effectively resolved by participation in some special church program or service. In fact, a lot of folks just generically prescribe going to church itself as the solution. A relationship with God? Not necessarily necessary, so long as you faithfully go to church! Did the Lord tell you to attend? Not important whether He did or not because church is the accepted answer for everything! "Just get plugged in," they say. Of course these folks probably wouldn't put it in as blatant terms, but I do think this is

a fair assessment of things, for if you look at the organized church system in general, is this not what it is principally comprised of (programs, study groups, organized processes – all governed by a hierarchy of church leaders)? These events are thought to occur (or should occur) primarily within a church service and need accompaniment by skilled musicians and leaders who can speak in soft low voices at just the right times to encourage response from the congregation. While I may get some "feedback" for overly generalizing what occurs in most Christian churches, what I tend to see most often is simply a well-rehearsed program in play. If everyone does their part it creates a lovely emotional experience, which is often mistaken as being a "move of the Spirit". People in churches routinely demonstrate that they do not know the difference between emotionalism and "the anointing". If something makes them feel warm and fuzzy inside, it must be "the anointing of the Holy Spirit." Please understand, I am not meaning to suggest that God has no emotions or that He never touches our emotions when we are communing with Him. I am simply saying that I believe the devil has manipulated many through religion with the orchestration of things that manipulate emotion.

Even if there is "open ministry time" in a religious service, it too is essentially a scheduled event, organized and managed by the routine. I remember many times, as a participant on church worship teams and while assisting church leaders in preparation for services, how often "ministry" was scheduled into the meeting. They would say, "First we will have 4 fast songs, 3 slow songs, a prayer, take up the offering, have the sermon and then have a time of open ministry and then dismiss."

In my view, these kinds of things really have nothing to do with true fellowship and I do not believe that a person is necessarily experiencing "body life" just because they frequent a church meeting, but I do think this is the myth that has been sold to the masses. When I was talking earlier about the argument many church folks espouse that young Christians need to "change their playmates and playground" by attending a church, this is the deception I am referring to; The notion that attending church somehow automatically



guarantees that a person will grow spiritually and in a healthy manner because they attend church. I dare say that I cannot think of any greater fantasy!

I am absolutely not opposed to the body of Christ carrying one another through struggles or helping young believers on their journey. We should be mindful of our brothers and sisters in Christ and their weaknesses and always be ready to help each other. I realize that the basic premise of "church" being a "community" of believers has a certain ring of truth to it, but the real truth is that the Lord's community of believers exists regardless of the religious institutions of men.

But I do not accept that the answer to spiritual weakness or the hope for spiritual growth is church attendance. I do not say that churches never engage positive functions or even that the Lord never uses church programs. He may and I would not presume God cannot use any means He so desires to effect a positive effects in someone's life. So then, some of you will ask, why would I say that church is not the answer? Because I wouldn't say that ANYTHING is the answer besides the Lord Jesus Christ and I wouldn't push any other solution on anyone beyond the one solution that is sufficient; Christ himself. You can add any prescription of religion and call it a good thing, but I will just call it religion. Religion does a lot of things that appear "good" on the surface but the devil is often in the details. Admittedly, often times it's just man in the details. Either way, religion NEVER trumps the in-working power of the Holy Spirit! I am weary of seeing how organized religion is so often given as a prescription for everything under the sun. Time and again I have been told, "Dave, don't be so negative... Give it a chance... See how the Lord can work in this." Friends, I have given it a chance. I have trusted (and still do) that the Lord is able to use ANYTHING to accomplish His will, but I have not often seen much good come of saturation with religion. Even the best religious programs often result in spiritual stagnation. In fact, I am so completely convinced that it does so much more harm than good, that I will not treat it with any elevated sense of dignity as though it were divinely sanctioned. It (church) is a man-made program that does more to get in the way of the affairs of God than it does ever yield to it.

I really prefer not to be confrontational about this subject. I don't have any desire to be the stick in the mud of the happy church man. The bottom line is, I just don't care about church. I don't believe it to be essential in the least. I don't spend my afternoons wondering if I should start attending again or not. I also don't care if a person attends it or not. I have no concern at all for a person to get involved in one once they "find Jesus" and I don't judge a person based on whether they attend one or not.

Am I a biased? Sure. Some will ask, "What happened to you Dave to cause this bitterness against church?" What happened you ask? Jesus happened to me! He set me free from the lies of the devil! Any true follower of Christ should be aware that Scripture teaches that there is only one mediator between God and man and that is Christ. Yet the church goes seems to believe there is another mediator in the mix; the holy church system. This is a lie. This is error.

If I am completely honest with you I will admit to you that, as I write this, I feel some pressure... Pressure to be "religiously correct" (for lack of a better way to put it). I find myself trying to be "diplomatic" and "accommodating" so that I am careful not to be misunderstood or to unnecessarily offend anyone. The reality is though, I am so disconnected from any personal concern about "churchianity" that I wish I could just use strong language to express how little I care about it. Few things infuriated me more that to make the acquaintance of a professing Christian and begin talking about the Lord, then to have them ask, "where do you go to church?" That question itself isn't so bad, but it's what happens after I give the answer. Most of the time, the answer "I don't go to church," or

"I'm not a proponent of the whole church thing," doesn't set well with a lot of Christians. They generally shift into all kinds of defensive modes. Either they will immediately presume you have been hurt by a bad church experience (which may be true... and to which I say "so what") or they may presume you just haven't found the right church (i.e. theirs). Some want to enter a judgmental debate with you. Others just change their tone or hastily move toward closing the conversation. Rarely does the person asking care nothing about your answer if it is to suggest you don't "do church". I am at least pleased to say that there has been at least one occasion out of the many others where a person really didn't seem to care that I didn't attend church and continued having a wonderful conversation about the Lord. That response is incredibly rare... but I have to say that because it is rare does indicate that it is possible for a church person to not be consumed by the typical religious mindset.



I will also say that I have never believed that just because a person attends a church they are automatically distant from Christ or ignorant of what it means to be a true member of His body. The truth is, I do not know every reason why people attend. Is it possible that God may call some to attend? My answer to that is to say that I know God calls many different brothers and sisters to many different works. If I believe that God calls some to a mission field, who am I to say that mission field cannot be a church organization for the purpose of reaching those inside with the truth. That having been said, I have heard people use just such a response as an excuse for returning to the religious system. They say with their lips that God has called them to the church as a mission, but they are not actually speaking any truth to those inside. They merely fit in with the crowd and are playing the same church game as most everyone else there. God knows those who are truly called and those who are playing and He will deal with them in His own way and His own time. For the rest of us, though we must be careful about judging unrighteously, we do have the responsibility to observe the fruit on the tree and, like Jesus told us, no good tree can bear bad fruit. And like Jesus said of those blind guides, the religious leaders, "leave them alone for if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch." I like to say that, if both fall into the ditch, at least maybe then they will finally look up and seek God for His help to pull them out of the mess they have gotten themselves into.

Many of you may not know that my wife was not a Christian when we met. In fact, even now "Christian" is probably too bold a term for her taste. (Sometimes it is for my taste as well). For her, faith has been a process of slow introduction to the teachings of Christ and then observing and calculating. She was not raised in church and never had even heard the Gospel of Jesus before we met. I didn't even think that was possible (that someone raised in this day and age could go their whole life without having heard the Gospel), but indeed she had never heard the Gospel story. I was the first to tell her about Jesus. She believed. I thank God she was never



infected by church world and if God hadn't pulled me out when He did, I probably never would have given her the time of day. In fact, many friends and family struggled all the way through our engagement because they thought I was unequally yoking myself to a non-believer. The truth was that their anxiety (and, yes, even my own at times) was due to our preconceived mindsets that put church in the middle of everything rather than Jesus. Today I can't imagine anyone more suited for me than her and I love her with all my heart. God knew what He was doing when He put us together... and, surprise surprise, it was not a match made in church.

All of that simply to say that it's given me a whole new perspective on what it really means to trust the Lord in the midst of life. **Nothing about my life today fits conveniently in a nutshell called "Christianity" and I'm not interested in any such fabrication either.** My wife is not interested in some phony brand of religion and so I am of absolutely no help to her if I try to give her such. The really beautiful part about all this is that when we keep it real, God truly is right in the midst and I don't have to try to be religious... I just trust God to be Himself (and He is NOT religious). Day by day He leads us and teaches us and we grow. Why would I want to mess up the mix by adding church to it?



I will also admit to you that we both have darkened the door of a church on several occasions (with pretty much the same attitude as if we were going to the movies). We have some close friends that are involved and have dropped in from time to time to hang out and be entertained. Since God is the subject of the entertainment, it's sometimes a bonus, but we don't really over-inflate any expectations about going. We do not "attend" nor are we "members". My wife, in her own desire to want to have some connection with other women and grow in her understanding of Scripture, has tried attending some of the women's "bible studies", "book clubs" and such at the organization on occasion. In fact, she took the study materials seriously and some nights would go over the

reading with tears, trying to answer the questions honestly and process the instruction (some of which bored and annoyed me as I read through it with her). She said the women were nice and she enjoyed getting together with people but found it very hard to fit in or benefit from the class. She was not connecting well with all of the material and didn't relate to all the Christianese and religious ideology. In fact, some of the reactions of others present made her feel inferior or even stupid. She knew they didn't consciously intend that, but it didn't change the fact that this is what they were projecting because of the mindset they were all under.

In our home, she has learned that prayer is not some ritual, it is simply talking to God as you would a friend (not necessarily a bow-your-head and close-your-eyes thing), so the first time she attended a women's group and heard what they called prayer, she wasn't sure how to react. (example) "Father God we come before you Lord God, and Father God we just thank you Father God that you Lord God have given us this opportunity Father God, Lord God so that we can come together Father God and Father, Father, Father, oooooooh, yes Lord, yes Father..." Some of you know what I am talking about. Though I mean no disrespect for how people choose to address God, I only can say that when you haven't been raised in church and don't normally talk to your close friend that way (saying their name 10 times in a sentence) and then actually saying virtually nothing significant throughout the entire ordeal except "Father God", it's rather weird to try and relate to God that way. I am glad my wife was not raised in church world, but she has already learned

first-hand how opposite from reality and normality it is on so many occasions. We both know that sometimes you have to overlook the quirks of people to see the heart, but I'd be lying if I didn't say it was distracting, silly and a bit annoying to my taste... and I really think that some people have learned to talk this way to God, not saying much of anything, while working themselves up to think they are really moving mountains spiritually. Maybe they are, I don't know. I am mostly drawing from my own experience in church world and how I remember the same kinds of things present in the way I learned to talk to God (all because of church world influence), but I also remember (deep in that honest place of my heart) how fake it felt, how void of any depth of relationship, and yet I continued because it made me sound spiritual (and I hoped I was actually spiritual, even though I didn't dwell on the thought that I might not be). It would be years before the blinders came off my eyes to really face what I was doing, so I do have grace for others, and yet I want them to see so badly as I now see.

One of the first church services Tammy and I visited together just so happened to be a "pre-church meeting" (I really don't know what else to call it). In other words, this was a new church that had not officially launched yet, but those who were all involved in the launch were still having services in preparation for opening day. We were invited so that's how we wound up in the meeting. Now, keep in mind that, at this point, my wife had very little experience with church world. During the sermon the pastor was instructing the congregation to be sure to smile when new people come, to go shake their hands, and to really show them that we are a happy people. Now, after 30 years in church world (for me) these kind of talks weren't too surprising (even though they still annoy me incredibly). To Tammy's virgin-to-church ears all this sounded like was "don't forget to pretend you're happy so they will think you're happy." The congregation was



also instructed to act a certain way so that outsiders would want to become insiders. Basically, "put on a good show so that people will want to attend the show on a regular basis." Again this just sounded to her like a training session in manipulation. That's exactly what it was! Not that these folks consciously realized what they were doing or stopped to even think about how it might come across to someone outside their circle, but my wife's thinking was, if it was genuine you wouldn't have to fake it... You wouldn't have to rehearse it... You wouldn't have to manipulate anyone all for the purpose of getting them to want to attend this new organization you are trying to build. She was right on and that's exactly what I was thinking. In fact, this was something I had struggled with even during my church-attending days. Why are we teaching people to deceive their neighbors, just to get them into church? Where is Christ in that? Tammy said to me that if someone walked up to her and invited her to a place like that, knowing what she had just learned in this pre-church service, she would say, "Thanks, but no thanks," and walk away. I wish I could say this was the first time I had been exposed to the "manipulate the lost" mindset of church world, but unfortunately it's all too common! Many times the so-called "acts of charity" are there only to pull you in.

Another common manifestation of this is when offerings are taken in church services. I can't tell you how many times I've heard a pastor say, "If you're visiting with us today, please don't feel obligated to put anything in the offering. We want you to feel welcome and at home and there is no obligation. We're glad you're here." Yet, at some point, this attitude changes once you become a regular at the meeting. No longer is this cheerful welcome extended to you. Gone is the freewill element of giving. Now you belong to us, so

your money does too (ahem... I mean "to God")... You better tithe so God can bless you otherwise your life will be subject to hardship because God's protection, provision and blessing will not be able to grace your life since you are robbing from Him. Ouch! How many of those new visitors do you think would stay if they knew this was going to be the guilt trip they received after they decided to officially join the club? Probably not too many. And when I say "officially join the club" it probably should be noted that this is often where the heavier legalism is introduced. Some churches even have a "contract" or "covenant" that new members have to sign before they are accepted as members. Many churches also distribute, at this time, an official "tithing number" to identify you by.

Still some never fully realize the kind of heavy-handed doctrines that really exist and drive the whole system unless they happen to be "promoted" to some "ministry status". When I was a church boy there were many things I never would have believed our church really held to, until I was privileged to be included among the upper ranks of so-called "ministry." Working alongside of the leaders of the church, having dinner at their homes, and riding in the car with them on the way to meetings and conferences I heard and witnessed a lot of things. As the leaders would get comfortable with me around, they would talk openly. For many of these men, church sounded as though it were little more than a business by which, from my perspective, some of them actually profited handsomely. People in the congregation were talked about as though they were only numbers. I'll never forget riding home in the backseat of one pastor's Cadillac one Sunday afternoon on the way home from church when I heard him say these words to his wife: "How much money did we take in this morning?" By-the-way, this was the inaugural service of a small sister-church and only about 30 to 40 people in attendance. This pastor's wife replied, "A little over a thousand dollars." The pastor remarked, "Not bad for a first service." Like two thieves who had just concluded a successful heist, that's exactly how this struck me. It grieved my heart.

As I observed, over the years, how the business of church was orchestrated, I could see that the entire program was a manicured performance that needed to be well run so that it would be effective in not only pleasing the regulars and keeping the tithe money flowing in, but also to attract new blood. I'm telling you, men that I never would have believed operated under such carnal motives, I was shocked to hear their conversation when among "safe company". As my own eyes began to open, I did share this with a couple of close friends because it disturbed me. They would not believe me. They presumed I was distorting something or misunderstanding. I was not. I was beginning to see what others had seen before me that, in the past, I also rejected at first because I could not imagine it to be true. When I began to speak up to leaders (with respect and love) about the concerns that were mounting, it did not go well. I suppose they presumed that rebellious tendencies were budding and I was admonished to align myself with church doctrine regardless of what I thought Scripture taught or else. I shared reason from Scripture and was continually told that either I simply did not possess the biblical understanding they did, or I needed to just forget about all that because "that's not what this church teaches."

It wasn't long before I was hearing rumors (undoubtedly started by church leaders) about me having problems with submission to authority. Though I never sought to make waves and always discussed my issues with leaders directly, either in their church office or home personally, the leaders were already doing damage control. Like Toto in the Wizard of Oz, I had seen the man standing behind the curtain as it were and he did not wish to be exposed.

The really sad part is that I discovered that these mindsets were not isolated to the church I attended or just one particular denomination. Other churches in town had the same issues. Pastors that I thought were good and godly men (and perhaps they were at some point in time) were sometimes not as good as I once presumed. From leaders that

routinely took personal vacations in the name of “ministry conferences” so that the church funds paid the bill and the congregation wouldn’t be aware, to all kinds of odd doctrines, annoying legalism, and just simply dead religion – I began to see that this was everywhere. My eyes were open and I would never be able to go back to that time of ignorant bliss that once ruled my life as a church member.

Ugh, I could go on with these kinds of details but I’m already bored and most of you reading this are already familiar I’m sure. Some of you have been through similar ordeals and much worse. I am so thankful to God that those days are behind me. I really and truly do not miss them at all. Sometimes I miss the people, but I have to say that when I realized that so many of them were not willing to continue a relationship outside the four walls of the church building and oversight, it made it harder to miss someone who apparently didn’t regard me as a true friend and brother anyway. Yes, this was a painful realization, but a realization nonetheless. That might sound a little cold, but I have to put the focus back on the very system that causes this to occur in the first place.

I know that many of those in the church system are as deceived as I was. I know they don’t intentionally do all the things they do. Many are well-meaning but are ignorant and have been programmed to think and act a certain way for a very long time by this religious machine that seeks only to preserve itself at any cost. I have faith that my true brothers and sisters in Christ, within those walls, will eventually heed the Lord’s voice speaking to their hearts... and, as we mentioned before, we will know them by their fruits. Those that truly walk with God and are known by Him, they will demonstrate the fruit of righteousness. They will love one another, even those that care nothing for the program and there will be no judgment in their heart. I know there are a few, otherwise I wouldn’t have even mentioned it.

A friend of mine once told me, “Dave, once in a while you have to take a new snapshot of people.” What he meant was, we need to remember that people do change (just like we do, if we allow God to change us). Sometimes the way we remember someone from our past (with all the disgusting church influence attached) may not be the exact same way that person exists now, since we have been away for a long time. Sometimes, I will be the first to admit, it is difficult to tear up old snapshots. It is as though the old picture is burned in the mind and it brings up all the old emotions and all the junk that God has since washed away. But it’s also a challenge in forgiveness and love. It’s a checkpoint. Sometimes taking a new snapshot will only reveal that the picture looks pretty much the same, but sometimes it will look different and ought to encourage us to pray for that person. I felt this important to share because as much as I hate “church” as it is known today, I do not hate people... especially the people of God who are presently caught up in deception. God’s compassion does grip my heart and I can tell you that I have tasted a Godly manifestation of what it can be like when His people come together WITHOUT all the religious trappings of religion and churchianity. I want all of us to experience that!

Though aspects of the latter days of my church life involved challenges, frustrations, and some hurts as well, I believe all of these were part of the process of dealing with the deception I had been under (deception which I was also responsible for embracing) and coming to grips with truth and then seeking what to do next. God also used many of these experience to help me see others through His eyes and to forgive those that had inflicted wounds in my heart or that had just angered the snot out me. The end of my church life, in many ways, was a devastating experience as much as it was the gift of God, which is how I see it today. I had to process the pain of rejection from people I once regarded as family and I had to learn all over again what it meant to have a relationship with the Lord – one on one. I really thought I knew. I thought I was spiritually advanced. I prided myself on my devotion to the church. But now it was like someone reset the odometer to zero and I

didn't even know how to hear the voice of the Spirit. Well, I think I did know (deep down) but I had to first learn to cope without the comfort of all those other "voices" I had become accustomed to (like sermons, religious books, soundtracks, conferences, counselling sessions, other Christians, etc. – all those things that, while some of them can be good, make it easy to be lazy and avoid really engaging a direct relationship with God).

I now understand how serious it is to consider that passage of Scripture where Jesus said that at the final Judgment many will call Him Lord and talk about all the things they did in His name, but He will look at them and say, "I never knew you. Depart from me, into everlasting fire, you who practiced the things I did not authorize!" When my own eyes opened I began to see how deceptively an allegiance to the "churchianity" mindset can lull a person into a place where they believe they are right with God and serving Him (because they are devoted to church life), but are actually in opposition to Him because they really have no relationship with Him and they do not obey what He tells them to do. His voice (that still small voice of the Spirit) gets drowned out by all the other voices of religion. I had much repenting to do once the scales came off my eyes...

How wonderful it is to now be at a place in my life where I can talk to my Father (without all the religious lingo) and be able to discern His voice in return (so much clearer than before and becoming clearer every day). I tell you I would not trade all the church attendance in the world for my relationship with Christ as it stands today!

If you like church, good for you. I'm not going to tell anyone how they should involve themselves. But at the same time, if you have felt conflicted about this subject, I hope I can encourage you a little. Just forget about the whole thing if it causes you any anxiety. The Lord is our Light and Truth. His Family is our Family. We do not need some made-up invention of religious man called church. We only need Him. **When we approach this revelation and realize that the Body of Christ IS the Ecclesia Jesus spoke about, we will stop worrying about the man-made religious institutions of men with all of their legalism and obligations and mixed up doctrines and practices. We can safely let them go. They are truly not needed to walk in relationship with the Master or to be included as a valid member of His Body. The Church, if you must have that word, is PEOPLE! The institutions of religion matter not!** The second those institutions begin to take a central place and mediate people's relationship with the Father, they are become as idols and ought to be immediately discarded.

I was watching a video the other day where the pastor lamented about how so many people are leaving "the Church". So many don't even realize what they are saying when they use this term "Church". They use it as though they were describing Catholicism (which is understood by Catholics as being "Mother Church" – the voice of God on earth)... The funny thing is, when I hear these same statistics I tend to rejoice. Good! Thank God people are becoming more and more dissatisfied with the whole business of churchianity and thank God many are leaving it behind. PRAISE GOD!

2 Corinthians 6:16-18 – And what union can there be between God's temple and idols? For **WE are the temple of the living God**. As God said: "I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be My people. **Therefore, come out from among them, and separate yourselves from them, says the LORD**. Don't touch their filthy things, and I will welcome you. And I will be your Father, and you will be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty. "

Maybe if enough people leave and become so utterly disillusioned with organized religion, someone sitting on their pew in church will wake up and realize that we aren't going to win the world with religion. The only thing that will do any good is the real thing! If religion is



all we have to give them, then it ought to die. If that's the best we can do, then may every religious organization on earth dry up and close its doors forever.

I'm not the least bit worried about the whole thing!

**If Christ be real then He is the real cure to what no religious program can effect.** I love the old Andrae Crouch song that sang, "Jesus is the Answer for the world today... Above Him there's no other, Jesus is the Way!" Indeed HE is! There is no other way! There is not "Jesus and church". There is simply Jesus. We who forsake all to follow Him are His Assembly. We are the Ecclesia of God. This divine revelation cannot even compare, nor is it worthy to attempt to be compared, with some religious organization manufactured by, ruled by, and maintained by men. Just as Jesus rebuked His disciples for being enamored with the beauty of the religious buildings of their day, so I believe His voice calls to all that have ears to hear:

Mark 13:1-2 – As he walked away from the Temple, one of his disciples said, "Teacher, look at that stonework! Those buildings!" Jesus said, **"You're impressed by this grandiose architecture? There's not a stone in the whole works that is not going to end up in a heap of rubble."**

To those who find these words disturbing, I really believe I understand your concerns (many of them). As you have already heard some of my testimony here, I was a devout church boy for better than 30 years of my life. I know what it feels like to encounter this kind of talk concerning church and, when church has become such a beloved part of your life; there is a tendency to want to defend it. No one likes to think that something they've wholeheartedly embraced could have been wrong (or at least contained error). When we've been told all our (church-going) lives that something is essential and then someone comes along and says, "No, sorry, but it's really not," this does not usually process well on first take. I understand. It did not process well for me either at first. Because of how emotionally attached we have become to the thing we have been deceived by, there is the notion that it must be of God because I follow God and God would not allow me to make such a grand mistake and, by-the-way, how dare anyone speak derogatorily of it. But what you need to understand, dear friend, is that God will allow a person to be given over to strong delusion if they continually resist His Spirit and embrace lies and illusions. This is a serious thing to consider. None of us are above the potential to fall into error and if we require repentance we ought to just humble ourselves and do so, that God's healing and restoring power can begin to work in our lives.

2 Thessalonians 2:12 – Since they refuse to trust truth, they're banished to their chosen world of lies and illusions.

Once the lights come and the truth grips your heart, yield yourselves to the grace of God completely. Call upon the Lord to lead you and to guard your mind from the lies of the devil. Humble your heart and let the Holy Spirit show you how to see through His eyes and He will help you understand why some people do the things they do (perhaps like you have done yourself in the past) and He will show you how to forgive and how to respond to them. Revelation does not equal roses. There will absolutely be struggles ahead. Realize that once you taste freedom and truth, those old mindsets will try to bully you. They will try to pull you back. There will be trials along the path of change and spiritual growth. Just as the children of Israel became weary in the wilderness and started to complain about how good things were back in Egypt, you will be tempted to go back as well. The Lord will show you what your own spiritual Egypt is. It is essential that you train your heart to hear only Him. It takes time. It will not be easy at first. But be encouraged because the Lord is on your side and you are not alone on this journey!

May you be encouraged on your journey and if you can accept this concept of “letting the church die” concerning the grip and influence it has had on your life, understanding that we are not talking about God’s Family, but rather any system of man that rises up as an obstacle to the mediating work of Christ Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit, I pray you will begin to experience the joy that comes from yielding only to HIM. In time I believe you will discover that there are MANY others on this journey! The Body of Christ is not diminished by this revelation. Rather it is more clearly identified. You simply cannot afford to allow relationship with the Master (Christ Jesus) to be circumvented or replaced by any other means.

Colossians 2:20-23 (MSG) – **So, then, if with Christ you’ve put all that pretentious and infantile religion behind you, why do you let yourselves be bullied by it?**

“Don’t touch this! Don’t taste that! Don’t go near this!” Do you think things that are here today and gone tomorrow are worth that kind of attention? Such things sound impressive if said in a deep enough voice. They even give the illusion of being pious and humble and ascetic. But they’re just another way of showing off, making yourselves look important.

Galatians 2:20-21 (MSG) – Christ’s life showed me how, and enabled me to do it. I identified myself completely with him. Indeed, I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and **I am no longer driven to impress God. Christ lives in me.** The life you see me living is not “mine,” but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I am not going to go back on that. **Is it not clear to you that to go back to that old rule-keeping, peer-pleasing religion would be an abandonment of everything personal and free in my relationship with God? I refuse to do that, to repudiate God’s grace. If a living relationship with God could come by rule-keeping, then Christ died unnecessarily.**

1 Timothy 4:1-9 (MSG) – The Spirit makes it clear that as time goes on, some are going to give up on the faith and chase after demonic illusions put forth by professional liars. These liars have lied so well and for so long that they’ve lost their capacity for truth. They will tell you not to get married. They’ll tell you not to eat this or that food—perfectly good food God created to be eaten heartily and with thanksgiving by Christians! Everything God created is good, and to be received with thanks. Nothing is to be sneered at and thrown out. God’s Word and our prayers make every item in creation holy. You’ve been raised on the Message of the faith and have followed sound teaching. Now pass on this counsel to the Christians there, and you’ll be a good servant of Jesus. **Stay clear of silly stories that get dressed up as religion.** Exercise daily in God—no spiritual flabbiness, please! Workouts in the gymnasium are useful, but a disciplined life in God is far more so, making you fit both today and forever. You can count on this. Take it to heart.

1 Timothy 6:20-21 (MSG) – And oh, my dear Timothy, guard the treasure you were given! Guard it with your life. **Avoid the talk-show religion and the practiced confusion of the so-called experts. People caught up in a lot of talk can miss the whole point of faith.** Overwhelming grace keep you!

James 1:25-27 (MSG) – But whoever catches a glimpse of the revealed counsel of God—the free life!—even out of the corner of his eye, and sticks with it, is no distracted scatterbrain but a man or woman of action. That person will find delight and affirmation in the action. **Anyone who sets himself up as “religious” by talking a good game is self-deceived. This kind of religion is hot air and only hot air.** Real religion, the kind that passes muster before God the Father, is this: Reach out to the homeless and loveless in their plight, and guard against corruption from the godless world.

## TIME TO THROW THE BABY OUT WITH THE BATHWATER!



There are plenty folks from church world who have said to me, "Dave, you have to be careful not to throw out the baby with the bathwater." How many of you have either heard or used this expression in the past? To those who use this for the sake of implying that by rejecting "church" I am somehow rejecting everything God desires for His people, I would like to call your attention to a most important passage of Scripture.

The apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Galatian Christians. They were being deceived by false teachers and pulled back into religious legalism. Paul was concerned for them, because they were inadvertently beginning to embrace a different gospel and a different Jesus. Understand that this "other gospel" had truth mixed in with it and that is why they were effectively deceived by it. This religious ideology they were embracing was infecting everything and Paul eventually put things in some very bold, in-your-face, terms.

Galatians 4:28-31 – And you, dear brothers and sisters, are children of the promise, just like Isaac. But you are now being persecuted by those who want you to keep the law, just as Ishmael, **the child born by human effort, persecuted Isaac, the child born by the power of the Spirit.** But what do the Scriptures say about that? "Get rid of the slave and her son, for the son of the slave woman will not share the inheritance with the free woman's son." **So, dear brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman; we are children of the free woman.**

Did you see that? Two things... One, **the "child born by human effort" persecutes the FREE child, born by the power of the Spirit of God!** It is to be expected that those in the religious camp will persecute those who have chosen to have nothing to do with it any longer. But then notice what Paul says. These are sharp and very direct words... Paul not only says to throw out the baby with that bath water, but to throw out it's mother too! Ouch! Could it be any clearer that there is no room for mixing religious legalism with a person's relationship with God? It is abundantly clear! Can you imagine some religious person saying to Paul, "Hey Paul, now you shouldn't be so hard on those who embrace a little bit of religious legalism along with their faith in Christ. After all, they mean well... You can't just throw out the baby with the bath water here," and Paul replies, "Yes, I can and I will... I'll throw it out, and his mamma!" That is exactly what he said!

There is no excuse for letting religion take the place of relationship in our lives. There should be no fear of letting anything that smells of religion and legalism go. There should be no fear in discarding any device authored by man which purports to make itself a mediator between God and His people. Since "church" routinely dabbles in these departments (that only belong to Christ)... well... I think the point is rather obvious by this time, isn't it? I am quite content to let it go. I don't feel ANY inspiration, motivation or obligation to pray for God to revive it, heal it, or restore it, because God obviously never sanctioned it to begin with. Why would He restore something or call people to something that He never prescribed for them in the first place (not to mention which has primarily only stood as a continual obstacle to the work of His Spirit in people's lives)? Instead, I

believe, He calls people out unto Himself. He has been doing this since the very beginning. God's interest is people, not religious institutions. This truth was even demonstrated in the Old Testament in God's dealings with Israel:

Isaiah 1:12-17 - When you come before me, who ever gave you the idea of acting like this, Running here and there, doing this and that-- all this sheer commotion in the place provided for worship? "Quit your worship charades. I can't stand your trivial religious games: Monthly conferences, weekly Sabbaths, special meetings-- meetings, meetings, meetings--I can't stand one more! Meetings for this, meetings for that. I hate them! You've worn me out! I'm sick of your religion, religion, religion, while you go right on sinning. When you put on your next prayer-performance, I'll be looking the other way. No matter how long or loud or often you pray, I'll not be listening. And do you know why? Because you've been tearing people to pieces, and your hands are bloody. Go home and wash up. Clean up your act. Sweep your lives clean of your evildoings so I don't have to look at them any longer. Say no to wrong. Learn to do good. Work for justice. Help the down-and-out. Stand up for the homeless. Go to bat for the defenseless.

If anyone is offended by truth, I cannot apologize for that. The truth is what makes people free and God is still calling people to freedom... all those who have ears to hear and hearts to respond.

Hebrews 13:13-14 – **So let us go out to Him, outside the camp (of religion)**, and bear the disgrace He bore. For this world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come.

And remember this.....

John 8:36 – if the Son has set you free, **you are truly free.**

Galatians 5:1 – Stand fast therefore in the liberty with which Christ has made us free, and **do not again be held with the yoke of bondage.**

God bless you guys! May you continue to grow in the grace of our Lord Jesus and the wonderful freedom He has granted us.

With much love,  
Dave



## **Bible versions used in this document include:**

MKJV, NLT, CEV, GW, Message, and others. Apologies where individual versions may not always be referenced. When writing, I am often copy and pasting from the e-Sword Bible software program, which I heartily recommend ([www.e-sword.net](http://www.e-sword.net)). It is a fantastic FREE resource, complete with many Bible versions (all Christian sourced – no cult versions), commentaries, lexicons and Bible dictionaries for reference work.

## **Note about the use of paraphrase versions of the Bible such as the Message:**

*(a.k.a. "The article after the article")*

Some folks prefer only one specific version of the Bible and tend to believe that their preference is the most correct. I grew up on KJV and still use it today; However, some versions (in my studied opinion) do a better job of conveying the truth in the passage more clearly in modern language than does the KJV, so I use these wherever possible. One example of this is where various texts may refer to the Jewish legalism of circumcision. The apostle Paul makes use of this requirement of the Law of Moses to demonstrate that it had become a legalistic ritual that men had presumed made them righteous or "qualified" if you will, rather than embracing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which entailed a "circumcision of the heart" in a spiritual context. Some, rather than emphasizing one or other, would attempt to blend the concepts together (morphing religious legalism with faith in Christ), but this extinguished the liberty of the Spirit and trust in the finished work of Christ as well as the day-to-day obedience to His guidance. This was a major concern of Paul's and he addressed it with frequency and urgency.

Some modern translations, such as the Message (which is actually not so much a translation as it is a paraphrase), uses modern language to demonstrate the intent of Paul's discussion so that the truth is highlighted for modern-day readers. Please observe the following examples:

Galatians 5:6 (KJV) - For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

Now observe how a modern version like the Message represent this verse:

Galatians 5:6 (Message) - For in Christ, neither our most conscientious religion nor disregard of religion amounts to anything. What matters is something far more interior: faith expressed in love.

I would argue that the Message accurately conveys the point of the statement Paul made (even though it does literally use the word "circumcision"). Modern Christians don't dabble in circumcision, but Paul's point was not merely circumcision. It was what circumcision had become for the early Christians. The Judaisers were pushing the expired Old Covenant legalism (along with all of the religious "updates" to the Law they had added as well) on New Covenant Believers.

I argue that the same has happened today with other legalisms, such as tithing. I believe you could just as easily replace the word "circumcision" with "tithing" (for example), since this has (in a very similar regard) become the "circumcision" of the day in most churches! By replacing the literal reference to circumcision, versions like the Message are not damaging the intended context of the passage or changing Scripture; Rather they are highlighting it so that it is not dismissed as simply, "Oh, that doesn't apply to us because we're not Jewish and don't deal with circumcision." Many Christians tend to read such

passages and completely miss the point – that God intends to deal with their religion and discard it where it gets in the way of their obedience to Christ and relationship with the Father.

This is why I will use various versions interchangeably. My heart is to highlight the living truth of Scripture because God does speak through it today! Those old writings are just as relevant in our day. That having been said, if you are intending to do a literal, textual study of the literal language of Scripture, then the Message would probably not be your version of choice because its intent is to be used as a paraphrase.

It both amuses and annoys me when some Bible teachers or preachers profess disapproval of versions like the Message, saying that “God’s Word doesn’t need to be paraphrased because anyone can understand God’s Word if they trust the Holy Spirit.” (This is essentially the same argument that those in the KJV-only camp use as well). But those same preachers will then spend the next hour in a sermon (not to mention scores of web articles, videos, and whole books they author) explaining that very KJV verse with their own mountain of explanation, commentary, modern-day comparison, and even their own paraphrase of the passage to bring out the meaning. In essence, as you can plainly see, they are doing the same thing they are complaining about! It’s absolutely ridiculous!

I want to assure readers that I diligently seek to avoid what some preachers do in using other versions to manipulate the text to fit with their sermons. My honest intention is to represent what the context reveals to the reader. If a passage of Scripture, contextually, could cause a conflict with how the paraphrase conveys the verse on its own (leading to a perception of manipulating the passage for some personal objective), I will either not use that passage at all or I will address the context to be clear. I absolutely do NOT believe in proof-texting for the purpose of defending a personal viewpoint that is not in harmony with the overall context of the passage. If anyone is concerned that I have done this in any place, please contact me and I will genuinely regard those concerns. I have no interest in twisting God’s Word to fit my views. I do, however, want God’s Word to transform my life and amend my own misconceptions by replacing them with His truth. I also believe that too many (church-going) Christians have dismissed powerful instructions in God’s Word due to proof-text manipulation or dismissal of passages because they don’t appear to make sense in a modern context. The devil has deceived many with such tactics and I intend to uphold the Word of God completely and honestly.

If someone is offended because I am not KJV-only, then please know my intent was not to offend you. I love you and I have a high respect for the KJV Bible; it is a decent translation. It was my own father’s favorite version and the version I learned to memorize Scripture with. In fact, when using my Bible software, I tend to search the passage I am thinking of in KJV language to find it and then I view the alternate translations for comparison.

I absolutely do have the highest regard for Scripture. My conviction, however, is also that the KJV is just as prone to misuse and even translational issues as any other version and to dismiss this reality is either naïve or foolish. That does not mean I think it is heretical or should not be used for reading or study. I am simply encouraging readers to be wise, study, consider the historical issues, seek the Lord and allow the Holy Spirit to highlight His truth.

I must say clearly though, I am not a proponent of what might be referred to as the “cult” of KJV-only-ism. While I respect individual appreciation of particular versions of Scripture (including the KJV), I do believe the KJV-only mindset is illogical and errant on multiple levels. The historical fact of the matter is that aspects of the KJV Bible were tampered with

by religious authorities. As long as a person understands this (or at least is willing to examine the evidence with a teachable heart), they can still utilize the text in an honest manner, but to dismiss the facts for the sake of the love of a version is simply unacceptable in this writer's opinion and is evidence of cult-like behavior.

I 100% believe the Scriptures are infallible and inspired by God as they exist in their original source manuscripts. The KJV, as good a translation as it is, is also subject to problems caused by translators (as well as the King himself and his overseeing Bishop who tainted the work with their own agendas). If someone does not believe this, I encourage that person to honestly study the history of the KJV Bible and NOT from a KJV-only resource, which (in my experience) always manipulates the history to avoid any challenging obstacles. One of the best writings on this subject is the book "The Great Ecclesiastical Conspiracy" by George Davis and Michael Clark (available for free through the eBook downloads section of TruthForFree.com).

The truth is that virtually ALL of our English translations have been tainted by religion in some way. The most obvious example (as has been discussed briefly in this document) is the inclusion of the word "church" rather than "community" or "congregation" or "assembly of believers". History bears this reality out. I encourage readers to be wise and diligent in their study of the Scriptures.

Some may say, "Well I'm not a Greek scholar and I don't have the luxury of knowing the original languages to figure all that out." I understand the complaint, however, the truth is that we are most blessed in our day to have EASY access to study materials that highlight the original languages and their direct translation and contextual and historical significance and meaning. Many of these resources are also 100% free of charge, so there is simply no validity (in my opinion) to the complaint unless a person is simply choosing to be lazy and not a diligent student of the Word as God expects!

2 Timothy 2:15 (MKJV) - *Study* earnestly to present yourself approved to God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.

Acts 17:11 - These people were more receptive than those in Thessalonica. They were very willing to receive the message, and every day they carefully examined the Scriptures to see if those things were so.

I offer this somewhat lengthy explanation of my use of various Scripture versions because I have received comments, questions and complaints about it in the past from folks. As always, if someone believes I have misrepresented any passage of Scripture, I earnestly invite you to contact me and share your concerns. I am not untouchable or unteachable in this regard. My heart is to earnestly uphold the truth and represent Scripture honestly and accurately at all times.