



Answers
In the Bible

To

Problems
In the Church

Jim Massey

Answers in the Bible to Problems in the Church

By

Jim Massey

**Published by
J.C. Choate Publications**

Winona/Singapore/New Delhi/Cebu City/Jakarta/Cape Town

© Copyright 2005 J. C. Choate Publications

First Printing in Nigeria in 1964
First Printing in USA, 5,000 copies
Second Printing in USA, 3,000 copies
Cover Design, Betty Burton Choate
Typesetting, Eulene Ramsey
Layout and Design, Barbara Ann Oliver

Order From:

J.C. Choate Publications

P O Box 72

Winona, Mississippi 38967

Phone: (662) 283-1192

Fax: (419) 791-0505

E-Mail: choate@worldevangelism.org

Web Site: www.worldevangelism.org

Table of Contents

Introduction	iii
Publisher's Statement	v
The Bible, the Church, and Problems.....	1
Be Strong in the Lord	4
The Problem of Polygamy	7
The Problem of Covetousness	15
Problems of Morality	31
Problems About Worship	46
Woman's Place in the Church.....	62
Problems About Customs and Traditions	66
Problems of Denominational Beliefs and Practices ...	80
Problems About Preacher Support	102
Problems About Disfellowship	122
Conclusion: What Would Jesus Do?	131

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:15,17).

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1 Peter 2:21).

Introduction

This study booklet on church problems is not a book of authority. It is not a catechism or creed. It has no official power behind it. It must not be used as a rule of faith and practice among churches of Christ. It has a human author.

Churches of Christ have no book of authority except the Bible. The Bible is the only book which is inspired of God, and which will thoroughly furnish the man of God unto all good works (2 Timothy 3:16,17). Men's commandments make worship vain (Matthew 15:9).

The following booklet, "Answers in the Bible to Problems in the Church," is the study of common problems in the church. Its purpose is not to be a book of authority, but to point the reader to the Bible as God's **only** source of authority. This booklet may be properly used only if its purpose is well understood.

Treat this booklet as you would treat its author if he were answering your Bible questions. Do not trust his words, but turn to your own Bible to see if these things are true (Acts 17:11). Do not believe every teacher, but prove the spirits whether they be of God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world (1 John 4:1).

Every Christian is commanded to study to show himself

approved unto God (2 Timothy 2:15). No teacher can do your personal study for you. A teacher can guide you in your study (Acts 8:30,31). But he can also misguide you if he is wrong (Matthew 15:14). You must examine for yourself every teacher and every teaching by the Word of God. Man's words may err but God's Word is safe and sure.

Publisher's Statement

We have printed other books by Jim Massey and now we are happy to add this one to that collection. Its writing grew out of the years that Jim and his family did mission work in Nigeria, and all of the problems they dealt with in that setting. Knowing that many in other places would be asking those same questions, the answers were compiled and printed in book form back in February of 1964 in Aba. As far as I know, this is the first time it has been re-printed.

Although this book has to do with questions asked by Nigerians, and there would be a few subjects that are peculiar to that country, the book as a whole could be used as guidance anywhere in the world. That is why we have seen fit to re-print it.

Answers in the Bible to Problems in the Church will continue to be used in Nigeria, as brethren learn that it is back in print. World Bible School teachers will send it to their students and many of the local people there will be ordering it directly from us. We would hope, also, that it will be used in many other parts of the world.

Bro. Massey is no longer with us, but he lives on

through his writings. We salute him for the great work he did throughout his lifetime and we know that thousands will appreciate his wisdom and knowledge after reading his **Answers in the Bible to Problems in the Church.**

J.C. Choate
Winona, Mississippi
April 26, 2004

Answers in the Bible to Problems in the Church

By

Jim Massey

Chapter 1

The Bible, the Church, and Problems

The church of the Lord Jesus Christ has always had problems. This has been due to two basic reasons: (1) The church is made up of human beings, and human nature itself is a many-sided problem. To change selfish sinners into self-sacrificing imitators of Jesus Christ brings a multitude of continual problems. Furthermore, (2) the church is “in” the world but not “of” the world. This means that the principles of Christianity will constantly conflict with the worldly ideals of non-Christians. Weak members will try to bring the world into the church with them and to live like worldly people. Problems, then, have always been in the church because of what is “within” and what is “without”. Human selfishness on the inside and worldly temptation on the outside are the main sources of problems in the church.

But the church’s problems are not hopeless. Christianity is not an impossible life. In the book of First Corinthians we read of many serious problems in the Lord’s church at Corinth in the first century. This was almost two thousand years ago. Every church mentioned in the New Testament had problems. Yet all problems, old and new, are

able to be overcome. The apostle Paul said, *“I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me”* (Philippians 4:13). In Christ Jesus are *“hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”* (Colossians 2:3). The Lord told Paul, *“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness”* (2 Corinthians 12:9). The grace of God is more than sufficient for all our weaknesses and problems. In Christ Jesus is found the answer and the wisdom for every difficulty.

This wisdom and these answers are to be found in the Bible. *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”* (2 Timothy 3:16,17). The Bible thoroughly or completely furnishes the man of God unto all good works. It provides instruction for all his needs. It supplies the answers for all his problems. The purpose of this booklet, *“Answers in the Bible to Problems in the Church,”* is to show that the Word of God can answer all problems of all ages in the Lord’s church.

Let the reader therefore understand that the many difficulties in the church in any age are merely different expressions of the two major problems listed above. All church problems would be solved if every member were fully converted into the likeness of Christ, and if worldliness were kept entirely out of the church. Consequently, trying to conquer any problem in any congregation is actually just trying

to completely change its members into the likeness of Jesus on the one hand, and trying to keep the world entirely outside the church on the other. Throughout the present booklet these two necessary goals will repeatedly be emphasized. Every church problem is due to an internal or an external difficulty. And the answer to every problem is found in overcoming that difficulty.

Every congregation must conquer its weaknesses and problems or finally be conquered by them. A church's struggle with its problems is its struggle for its life. Satan will defeat every Christian and every congregation which does not defeat him. Christianity is a continual warfare between right and wrong, and between truth and error. Defeat brings ruin, but victory brings strength to the church. The battle is always on. The stakes are always high. The results are always decisive. The history of every congregation could be written around its battle to overcome its problems. The Bible names strong churches, and it names weak ones. The strong congregations are the ones overcoming their problems. The weak congregations are being overcome by them. It is the prayer of the author of this little booklet that members of the body of Christ may find this present study helpful in overcoming every problem. If Christ is glorified as the master of every problem, if the Bible is exalted as the answer to every difficulty, and if Christianity is set forth as the only way of truly successful living, the purpose of this booklet will have been accomplished.

Chapter 2

Be Strong in the Lord

Ephesians 6:10 says, “*Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.*”

All churches of all ages have had weaknesses. Strong churches overcome their weaknesses; weak churches are overcome by their weaknesses. It is necessary, therefore, to understand what a church’s real weaknesses are so as to overcome them instead of being overcome by them.

The only possible way that a church can be weak is by weak members. The church in Jerusalem was being persecuted when its members were being persecuted (Acts 8:1-3). This shows that the church is its members. Every congregation is made up of “living stones” which are its members (1 Peter 2:5). Unless a church’s stones (members) are weak, the church itself cannot be weak.

It is true that the world about the church is strong. Christians wrestle against strong oppositions and powers (Ephesians 6:12). The devil is like a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8). But the strong opposition of the world outside the church cannot make the church weak, unless it first makes the members weak. Persecution against the church is like the sun which makes well-rooted plants grow. But the same

sun makes shallow plants weaken and die (Matthew 13:3-6,20,21). Likewise, the persecution of the world can make the church strong, or it can make the members weak who are not strong enough to resist. The church at Smyrna was under tribulation and poverty. Its members were being tried, imprisoned, and killed, but it was a strong church. Even though it was located in a strong center of blasphemy where the “synagogue of Satan” was, yet it was encouraged to “overcome” (Revelation 2:8-11). Outside opposition itself cannot make a congregation weak unless it does so by making the members weak. Financial poverty cannot of itself make a church weak. The church at Smyrna was physically poor, because the Lord knew their “poverty,” but really they were “rich” (Revelation 2:9). Being poor in money makes Christians see how rich they are in spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3). Financial poverty, therefore, need not make a church weak unless it causes the members to be weak. The church will be strong if its members are strong. But strength outside the church does not mean that the church within must be weak.

Human flesh is naturally weak. Our spirit is often willing but our flesh is weak (Matthew 26:41). Even when we may wish to serve the law of God with our mind, we may fail and serve the law of sin with our flesh (Romans 7:25). In our flesh dwells no good thing (Romans 7:18). The flesh lusts against the Spirit so that we do not the things that we should and would do (Galatians 5:17). This is why man must not trust in his own fleshly power to try to overcome

his weaknesses. Physical or natural power cannot control and conquer our problems. We must be strong “*in the Lord and in the power of His might*” (Ephesians 6:10). We must “*put on the whole armor of God*” so that we may stand against the wiles of the devil (verse 11). God is all powerful. His might is exceedingly great. When we go to Him and depend upon Him, we are able to overcome.

The Gospel is the “*power of God unto salvation*” (Romans 1:16). Christians can overcome as Christ overcame (Revelation 3:21). We must turn from ourselves and turn to God’s power as it is revealed for us in the Bible. The Word of God is quick and sharp and powerful (Hebrews 4:12). When we use the Bible to learn of the strength and power of God, we cannot be weak, we cannot fail. God’s power is made perfect in man’s weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). When we see that we are weak and turn to God’s grace for strength, then we are strong.

We can do all things through Christ which strengthens us (Philippians 4:13). In spite of the fleshly weakness of man, Christians can be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. When a congregation’s members are strong, the congregation is strong, for the congregation is made up of its members. Only by weak members can a church be weak, and only by strong members can a church be strong. And members can be strong, not in themselves, but only in the strength of the Lord.

Chapter 3

The Problem of Polygamy

What is polygamy?

Polygamy is marriage to two or more wives. The first recorded polygamist was Lamech who took unto himself two wives (Genesis 4:19).

Is polygamy the same as adultery?

Adultery is the sinful intercourse of a person with someone who is not his one lawful and Scriptural marriage partner. It was forbidden in the Jewish law (Exodus 20:14) and was punishable by death (Leviticus 20:10). Polygamy is merely adultery on a permanent basis. Polygamy is always adultery, but adultery is not always polygamy.

Is adultery the same as fornication?

The origin of these two words was different, fornication being the sin of unlawful intercourse by an unmarried person, and adultery the sin committed by a married person. But in New Testament usage the words several times are used to mean the same thing (see Revelation 2:20-22). Therefore, adultery and fornication are essentially the same sin according to the Bible meaning. It might be said that they are different forms of the same sin.

Does the New Testament forbid polygamy?

The New Testament says that marriage to another partner while the first partner is still living is adultery (Romans 7:1-3). No fornicator or adulterer shall inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9,10). Since a polygamist is an adulterer, he cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

Is polygamy sinful for a man and for a woman?

1 Corinthians 7:2 says, *“Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.”* Polygamy is sinful for male or female. Women married to the same husband do not each have their own husbands.

Is it possible to escape from polygamy after practicing it for a long time?

1 Corinthians 6:9,10 lists many types of sinners, including fornicators and adulterers. As noticed above, a polygamist is actually an adulterer (Romans 7:1-3). Then 1 Corinthians 6:11 says, concerning the members of the church at Corinth, *“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”* These adulterers and fornicators had repented and been cleansed from their past life by obeying the Gospel. If all types of sinners could be cleansed in Corinth, all types, including polygamists, can be cleansed if they repent and obey as did the people of Corinth.

Is it Necessary for one to repent of the sin of polygamy?

Repentance is a change of mind which results in a change of life (Matthew 21:28,29). Before a person is baptized for the remission of sins, he must believe in Jesus Christ (Mark 16:16), confess his faith in Christ (Acts 8:37), and repent of his sins (Acts 2:38). Without real faith, without a sincere confession of his faith, and without real repentance, baptism does not bring remission of sins. To be baptized without repentance cannot bring forgiveness (Acts 2:38).

How does one repent of polygamy?

The sin of polygamy must be repented of in the same way as any other sin. The polygamist changes his mind, heart, and life. He turns away from all his sins and turns to Christ, the Savior from all sin. He reverses his entire life and determines to change every sinful practice. But his repentance is not real unless he brings forth the fruits of repentance (Luke 3:8). This means putting away all wives except the true one. Just as a thief must give up stealing, so must a polygamist give up polygamy, or else his repentance is not sincere, and his baptism is worthless.

Which wife is the true wife?

A man's first wife is his rightful wife unless she was already the rightful wife of another man when he married her. The first wife a man marries is his only Scriptural wife. All others are merely women living with him in adultery

(Romans 7:1-3). In order to genuinely repent, he must therefore put away all other women except his first rightful wife.

Who will provide for the wives and children who are put away?

Sin always bring serious problems. Prevention is always better than cure. The above question states one of the serious difficulties resulting from the sin of polygamy. True repentance is never easy because it requires undoing the sinful conditions of one's sinful life. The prodigal son got up out of the country of riotous living and returned humbly and broken-heartedly to his father's house (Luke 15:17-20). In like manner a polygamist must penitently forsake the conditions of his sin and return to God's love. When he does this, God will surely assist him in putting away his adulterous wives in a fair and honorable way. Furthermore, he will either care for his children himself or will render a father's rightful support of them in their mother's care.

What about the money spent for many wives?

Jesus said, "*For what is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*" (Matthew 16:26). He also said to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all physical necessities would be added unto us (Matthew 6:33).

Should a polygamist be baptized before he puts away his sinful wives?

A polygamist or any other sinner should not be baptized before he repents. But any sinner who repents may certainly be baptized (Acts 2:38). A polygamist must be thoroughly taught the meaning of repentance. He must understand that true repentance precedes true baptism for the remission of sins. He must understand that real repentance includes fruits worthy of repentance (Luke 3:8). He must know that the remission of his sins depends upon true repentance. He must know that real repentance requires him to stop living as a husband with all wives but the true one. He must be preparing and beginning to put away the other wives honorably. He must be convinced of the great temptation which each former wife will be as long as she remains in his compound. He must understand that baptism is a burial of an old man which has died to the practice of sin (Romans 6:1-18). He must be taught that when he is raised from his watery grave of baptism that he must walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4). When these matters are truly understood, accepted, and put into practice, a person thus taught will no longer be a polygamist. He will be a penitent believer in Jesus Christ who has turned away from polygamy and all other sins. He will then, and only then, be a proper subject for baptism. But on the other hand, if a polygamist does not understand the meaning of true repentance and true baptism, his baptism will not bring remission of sins. Or if a polygamist refuses to truly repent of his

many wives, he might be dipped in the water, but without repentance there can be no remission of sins (Acts 2:38). A murderer might persuade a preacher to immerse him in the water, but if he had not repented of his murdering, his dipping would not truly be baptism. A thief might deceive a preacher into baptizing him, but unless he had repented of his stealing, his baptism would be worthless. Any polygamist who repents may be baptized, but without repentance, the baptism of a polygamist would be unscriptural and vain.

Should a polygamist be a leader in the church?

1 Timothy 3:2 requires that each of the bishops (or elders) in each congregation must be “the husband of one wife.” Elders are examples to all the flock or congregation (1 Peter 5:3). A corrupt member (especially a leader) may corrupt the whole church (1 Corinthians 6:1,6). A polygamist must not be asked to lead prayer, as “holy hands” must be lifted up in prayer (1 Timothy 2:8). They must not be asked to serve as treasurer or to do any other work, as this may make them think that they have approval. A polygamist can no more serve as a leader in the church than can a murderer or a thief.

What can be done when a polygamist in the church refuses to repent?

A member in Corinth had taken his father’s wife, thus becoming guilty of fornication (1 Corinthians 5:1). This man was to be disfellowshipped by the church in hopes of bringing him to repentance (1 Corinthians 5:4,5). A poly-

amist in the church today is actually guilty of the same sin of fornication or adultery as the man in Corinth. He should be withdrawn from in the same manner.

Why did Old Testament men have several wives?

God made one wife, Eve, for Adam (Genesis 2:22). God's plan since creation has been that one male and one female, "the twain" (or two), become "one flesh" (Matthew 19:4-6). From the beginning, God never intended for men to put away their wives or to marry additional wives. Men began these practices because they rejected God's plan out of the hardness of their hearts (Matthew 19:8). During the Old Testament God allowed many practices of the Jews which He never planned nor approved. One such thing was a king, but He allowed a king in order to let them see for themselves the foolishness of departing from His way (1 Samuel 8). In like manner, additional wives were allowed to the Israelites because of the hardness of their hearts, but not because such was God's plan or God's will. Since Christians are under a far better covenant containing better commandments through Christ (Hebrews 8:6-8), God's original plan of one wife for one husband is enforced.

If polygamy was good for Abraham, why is it not good for us today?

Polygamy was never good for Abraham or any other Old Testament polygamist. Hagar caused jealousy, strife, and trouble until she was expelled from Abraham's house (Genesis 16:4; 21:9-11). Likewise, the wives of Solomon

caused great difficulties and turned his heart away from the Lord (1 Kings 11:3,4). Polygamy in the Old Testament strongly shows us the wisdom of God's plan for one wife and the foolishness of man's way of additional wives. Since God made man, He knows the best plan for man's marriage and home.

Chapter 4

The Problem of Covetousness

What is covetousness?

Jesus said in Luke 12:15, *“Take heed and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”* This is a good explanation of covetousness by telling the parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:16-20). Jesus concluded by saying, *“So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God”* (Luke 12:21). Covetousness is lust or evil desire for money or material things.

Is covetousness serious?

There is more New Testament teaching against the sin of covetousness than against any other sin. Covetousness is called idolatry (Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5). Jesus said that a man cannot serve God and mammon (or material gain) (Matthew 6:24). No covetous man shall inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:10). The church is commanded to withdraw fellowship from a covetous member (1 Corinthians 5:11). No sin is more serious than this one.

Is coveting the same as stealing?

No, for in Luke 12 where Jesus warned so severely against covetousness, He did so in reply to one of His listeners' request about an inheritance (Luke 12:13-15). There is no indication that the one requesting his part of the inheritance was being dishonest. But because Jesus knew the man's heart, He could see too great a desire for money. This is what covetousness is, not necessarily dishonesty in seeking money. A man can be covetous while seeking only honest gain.

Why is covetousness serious?

Because Jesus warned that unless a man forsakes all that he has, he cannot be His disciple (Luke 14:33). In order to be a follower of Jesus, a man must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Christ (Luke 9:23). Jesus also asked, "*For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*" (Mark 8:36). The Christian life is a life of sacrifice. A covetous man is the most unlike Christ possible.

Should Christians give a tithe?

The tithe (or ten percent) of one's income was an Old Testament command for Jews. Abraham gave to Melchizedek a tenth of the spoils of his victory (Genesis 14:20). The law given to the Israelites through Moses required a tenth (Leviticus 27:30,32). But the tithe is never commanded of Christians after the end of the Old Covenant.

There is no example or command of tithing after the church was established.

How are Christians to know how much they should give?

The New Testament requires every member of the church to give every Lord's Day "*as God hath prospered him*" (1 Corinthians 16:2). Christians are stewards of great and rich blessings from God (1 Peter 4:10). They know that all they have, and they themselves, are not their own, but are owned or possessed by the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:19,20; Romans 16:2). They, then, give back with gratitude in proportion to their prosperity with which they are blessed.

Does the New Covenant require less than the Old?

Jesus is the mediator of a better covenant established upon better promises (Hebrews 8:6-8). The Law was merely a shadow of good things to come in our present age under Christ (Hebrews 10:1). All other requirements of Christ are stricter and higher than the Old Testament commandments (see Matthew 5:21,22,27,28). Surely, then, a Christian cannot give less than did a Jew. Because we live under a better covenant, in a better age, with greater promises, we must certainly expect and want to give more than ten percent.

Is ten percent giving bound on us today?

No Old Testament command is bound upon Christians, as all those ordinances have been nailed to the cross of Christ (Colossians 2:14). We are no longer under the Old Jewish Law (Galatians 3:24,25). But as Christ requires

more in every other New Testament commandment than God did in the Old Testament, the same is true of contributions under the Gospel age. The Old Testament commandments were merely shadows of the better commandments under Christ (Colossians 2:14-17). A Christian who gives no more (or even less) than did the Jews does not understand nor appreciate Christianity.

What is the exact proportion of a Christian's income which he must give?

Jesus said that we should lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven because "*where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*" (Matthew 6:21). Where we put much money, we put much interest. If we want more interest in the Lord's work, more money should be invested. Our heart and treasure abide together. Where our heart is, there will our treasure be also. If we want our heart to be given more and more to Christ, we must give more and more money to His work. We prove the sincerity of our love by our giving (2 Corinthians 8:8). We show the exact proportion of our love by the proportion of our giving. The exact amount of our giving is therefore the exact amount of our love. The percentage or proportion which we should give is according to the percentage of our love for Christ. We must contribute as God has prospered us.

Does a shilling show the same amount of love for every giver?

Jesus looks at what remains after a person gives. This

determines the real value of his gift. Mark 12:41-44 records Jesus' teaching as He watched Jewish givers contributing into the treasury. Many rich people cast in large gifts, but a poor widow cast in a half-penny. Jesus said that she gave more than all the rest because she gave of her want and contributed all that she had, even all her living (verses 43,44). Likewise today Jesus is watching every giver who gives into the church treasury. He is not watching the amount put in, but rather, the amount left over after the giving. We must give as God has prospered us and not as others may give. A gift which another person gives might be sufficient for him but quite insufficient for us, depending upon what we save for ourselves.

How much should a gospel preacher contribute?

The young evangelist Timothy was told to let no man despise his youth but to be an example to the believers (1 Timothy 4:12). As a public teacher and example, a preacher must give faithfully and Scripturally to the Lord. Unless an evangelist is a good example before the church, the members will despise him as a hypocrite. The Bible says that a man is inexcusable who judges another and yet does the same thing being condemned (Romans 2:1). God's judgment will be upon such a one who does the things he is preaching against. He will not escape (Romans 2:2,3). Paul asks, "*Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?*" (Romans 2:21). A preacher preaching against covetousness must not be covetous. He who condemns insufficient giving must not practice such. How can the

congregations learn to give when their preachers rob God before them every Sunday (Malachi 3:8)?

What is assessing?

Assessing is taxing each church member a required amount of contribution. It is a denominational method of securing church money in the way that money is secured by the government by its taxes or “rates.”

Is assessing allowed under the New Testament?

There is no assessing of church funds in the New Testament. Denominational churches authorize assessing in their catechisms, but the New Testament does not. To authorize a practice which is not Scripturally authorized is to go beyond the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9). Assessing in the church is an addition by men to the Word of God (Revelation 22:18,19).

Why is assessing omitted from the New Testament?

God’s wisdom has given Christians the best way to do everything. God’s plan for anything is better than the plans of men. The foolishness of God is wiser than men (1 Corinthians 1:25). The forcing of men to pay money into the contribution does not build them up spiritually. Forcing a person to be baptized against his will is of no benefit to him. Forcing a man to take communion when he does not wish to from within himself brings no spiritual blessing. Likewise assessing money forces contributing and makes such collection of money of no benefit to the one assessed.

Is assessing good if a person volunteers a certain amount he asks the church to assess him regular?

This is a way by which some members try to bring assessing into the church. It is really half free-will and half assessment or force. It is a combination of the Scriptural plan with an unscriptural one. If God's commandment of free-will giving is the best method, then why should it be compromised or substituted either in part or the whole?

What is the New Testament method of financing the church?

1 Corinthians 16:1,2 commands free-will giving by each Christian every first day. This "laying by in store" is to be done "as God has prospered him." Giving is part of a Christian's worship each Sunday. The first Christians continued steadfastly in the "fellowship" along with the other parts of their worship (Acts 2:42). "Fellowship" means "taking part together." By his giving into the treasury of the church a member has fellowship in the work of the church. In 2 Corinthians 8:1-3 Paul commends the giving of the churches of Macedonia. In verse four this giving is called "fellowship of the ministering to the saints." Christ's plan for financing the church is that each member contributes each Lord's day as God has prospered him. This is part of his steadfast fellowship in the work and worship of the church.

Must Christian giving always be free-will?

The Macedonian churches were “willing of themselves” in their giving (2 Corinthians 8:3). These Christians “first gave their own selves to the Lord” (verse 5). Just as a person must freely give himself to the Lord, he must also freely give his money. No man can be forced to give himself and no man can be forced to give his money. The way of Christianity is for each person to freely give himself and his possessions to the Lord.

Is it important when a Christian gives his contribution?

Giving is a command for Christians to perform “upon the first day of the week” (1 Corinthians 16:2). As part of the fellowship in the Lord’s work this giving must be steadfast or regular every first day (Acts 2:42). A member’s worship is incomplete if he does not give each Sunday as he has been prospered.

Will the New Testament plan of giving completely finance the church?

The scriptures thoroughly furnish the man of God unto every good work (2 Timothy 3:16,17). The reason churches do not have enough money is that they do not follow Christ’s plan properly. All members do not give as they are prospered. As a result they want to bring in another plan of finance. But the fault is not in Christ’s plan of finance, but rather is in the improper use made of the plan. It is like a church having an excellent plan or blue-print for a nice

building. But instead of following the plan carefully and fully, the members do “bush work” in erecting the building. Then when the building is completed, it does not look like the nice plan, and the members complain. They say, “Let us get a better plan.” But the fault is not in the plan but in the members’ misuse of the plan. Likewise, Christ’s plan for church finance is the best plan, but members often do not follow it properly and fully. They should not exchange Christ’s superior plan for an inferior plan of men. They should instead change their poor use of the best plan into a proper use.

Is it good to have special contribution days for special offerings?

Those people who have been members of denominational churches will remember many special offering days. In fact, the regular Sunday offerings were usually small because the people were keeping back most of their amounts for assessments, harvest taxes, and special offerings. When such people become members of the church of Christ they often continue the same old financial practices. They may give pennies every Sunday, waiting for a special collection to give more. Every Sunday is a special day of giving (1 Corinthians 16:2). Every Christian must give as he is prospered every week, not just for a special occasion. Special collections are steps in the wrong direction.

Should envelopes be used for contributions?

The answer to this question depends upon the reason

envelopes are used. If the purpose is to require each member's name on an envelope so that assessing can be practiced and checked, such is wrong because assessing is wrong. If the reason is to hide a small contribution which the giver is ashamed for others to see, he is forgetting that God sees all things (Jeremiah 32:19). But if envelopes are useful to help members to give with purpose and planning (2 Corinthians 9:7), they are right and good. Proper giving must be planned ahead of time, and necessary arrangements must be made by each giver to truly give as he has been prospered. Too often a person merely gives what he happens to find in his pocket after reaching the church building.

What does it mean to purpose in one's heart?

2 Corinthians 9:7 says that every man is to give according as he *"purposeth in his heart; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver."* To purpose in one's heart is to decide and plan one's giving from one's own inner self. Much study, prayer, and thought must be given to prepare one for proper giving. No church officer can tell a member how much to give; it is a decision which he *"purposeth in his heart."* This verse also means that Scriptural giving is considered and meditated upon before Sunday. To *"purpose"* is to decide one's intentions beforehand. The way one gives cannot be accidental or haphazard. It must be with planning, preparation, and prayer.

Why is it wrong to give grudgingly or of necessity?

2 Corinthians 8:12 says about giving, *"For if there be*

first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.” God and Christ are much more interested in a willing heart than a large gift (see Mark 12:41-44). If a man bestows all his goods to feed the poor, and yet has not love, it profits him nothing (1 Corinthians 13:3). This shows that the attitude or spirit a Christian has in giving is very important. God loveth a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7). All worship (including giving) must be *“in spirit and in truth”* in order to be true worship. The Macedonian Christians were liberal in giving and yet were in *“a great trial of affliction.”* Even while in *“deep poverty”* they had abundance of joy (2 Corinthians 8:2). To give grudgingly or of necessity (whether assessed or not assessed) is not giving with a Christian spirit and motive.

What about burial fees?

The responsibility for a person’s feeding, housing, clothing, etc., is his own and his family’s. The same is true of one’s burial expenses. A sensible person will make financial preparations for his own and the burial expenses of his family. If he wishes to assess himself or to join others who are assessing themselves, it is his own personal choice as to how he will set aside the necessary money. But he must not bring assessment into the church for burial expenses or for any other expenses. He must not confuse or combine his giving to the Lord with his personal burial obligations. We must provide physically for ourselves and our families (1 Timothy 5:8) so that the church will not be

burdened with our personal needs and expenses (1 Timothy 5:16). But on the other hand, if a member should happen to die in poverty without chance of making his personal arrangement, the church could assist his family from the treasury if it seemed necessary and in order as a matter of helping a poor brother (Romans 15:26).

Should a church have a treasurer?

Laying by in store (1 Corinthians 16:2) requires a treasury, just as assembling ourselves together (Hebrews 10:25) requires a place of assembly. Each congregation should decide upon the best method of keeping its money and of keeping records of its income and payments. It is a good plan to select two or three men to bear these responsibilities together, so that one man will not be too greatly tempted. One can count the money, one can keep records, and one keep the box. Whatever method is decided upon, the men must be very careful to provide things honest in the sight of the Lord and in the sight of men (2 Corinthians 8:21). When the apostle Paul carried money for churches, he took faithful men with him so as not to be blamed for being dishonest (2 Corinthians 8:19,20). If a church has elders and deacons, these men should select one or more of themselves to care for the treasury. But if a church has no officers, it must be clearly understood that there is no church office in the Bible known as “treasurer.” Those keeping the money are not officers because they keep the money. They have no positions in the church. And to prove this it may be necessary to allow men to take turns, one by one, as keepers of

the money. These men must not love to have pre-eminence (3 John 9). They must remember that the keeper of the money for the disciples of Christ was the one who betrayed Christ for thirty pieces of silver (John 12:4-6; Matthew 26:14,15).

Why is it spiritually dangerous to love money?

Money is a master which multitudes worship and serve (Matthew 6:24). Covetousness makes one an idolater (Ephesians 5:5). Money is called “filthy lucre” or filthy gain (1 Timothy 3:3,8; Titus 1:7,11). The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some coveting after money have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows (1 Timothy 6:10). They that seek to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition (1 Timothy 6:9). Trusting in riches makes men high-minded and proud (1 Timothy 6:17). Money turned the rich young ruler away from Christ (Mark 10:17-22). It sent the rich man to torments in flames (Luke 16:19-31). The deceitfulness of riches crowds the Word of God out of one’s heart (Matthew 13:22). The love of money caused Annanias and Sapphira to lie to the Holy Spirit and be killed (Acts 5:1-11). It caused Simon the sorcerer to be in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity (Acts 8:18-23). It caused the church at Laodocia to be lukewarm and in danger of being spewed out of the mouth of Jesus (Revelation 3:14-18). It is spiritually dangerous to love money because it makes a man a fool (Luke 12:13-21). What shall it profit

a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul (Matthew 16:26)?

Can a member dictate the way his contribution should be spent?

Money put into the treasury of a church is money given to the Lord. It ceases to belong to any individual. It belongs to the church. Therefore, no member can say that he will direct the way that his gift will be spent. However, as a member of the congregation each giver has an equal voice in how the church's funds should be spent. If the church treasury money is being misused, he has the right to express his opinion together with every other member so that the whole church will direct the money into a good use.

Can one church help another church financially?

The churches of the region of Macedonia helped financially to relieve the suffering of poor saints among the churches of Judea (2 Corinthians 8:1,2; 9:12; Romans 15:25,26). The brethren in Antioch sent relief unto the brethren in Judea when a famine caused the churches there to be in want (Acts 11:27-29). It is, therefore, scriptural for congregations to help financially when sister congregations are in need.

Can churches pay a preacher when he is preaching for another church?

In 2 Corinthians 11:8 the apostle Paul said that he

robbed other churches, taking wages of them to do service at Corinth. The church at Philippi sent once and again to help Paul preach in the city of Thessalonica (Philippians 4:15,16). These examples show us that sister congregations can assist another congregation to have a gospel preacher.

If churches can help a weak church financially, is it good to have a gospel meeting treasury for churches in an area to contribute to so as to help a weak church?

Gospel meeting organizations are always dangerous and often sinful. When groups of churches in an area meet regularly and select officers, make decisions, and collect money, they are corrupting the simple scriptural organization of independent churches of Christ. There must be no church officers except those in every congregation (Acts 14:23). Each church makes its own decisions and is ruled only by its own officers (Acts 20:28). There must be no treasury except the treasury of each local church (1 Corinthians 16:2). To change this simple and complete plan of organization is to make the government of the church like the denominations. We must abide in the doctrine of Christ and not go beyond it (2 John 9). We must not add to nor take from the Word of God (Revelation 22:18,19).

Did not Paul assess the churches to help the weak?

The Bible says, *“It pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem”* (Romans 15:26). The offering was not assessing but rather free-will giving. The Macedonian

churches were “*willing of themselves*” to help their weak brethren (2 Corinthians 8:3). These churches begged Paul to receive their gift and transport it to the needy (2 Corinthians 8:4). “*Every man according to his ability determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea*” (Acts 11:29). The contributing brethren were the ones who first determined to send, and then actually did the sending. They merely used Barnabas and Paul as their means of transport (Acts 11:30). The money was not sent to some general gospel meeting treasury for the churches, but rather to the “*elders*” (Acts 11:30). Weak churches can be assisted financially without changing the Bible plan of independent, autonomous congregations, and without assessments of any kind.

Chapter 5

Problems of Morality

What is morality?

Morality refers to man's conduct or standards and practices of daily living.

Is the Christian life a high standard?

Jesus said, *“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect”* (Matthew 5:48). Only God is perfect. He has the highest and holiest standard of all. But Christians seek to be like God. They constantly strive for His high ideals and principles. Christianity has the highest moral standard of any religion.

Must a Christian live a perfect and sinless Life?

No one is without sin. *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”* (1 John 1:8). Christians, therefore, cannot expect to be sinlessly perfect, for there is none righteous, no not one (Romans 3:10).

How can we be saved if we cannot be perfect?

1 John 1:7 says, *“But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the*

blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” Man cannot be righteous in his own deeds; he cannot be saved by his own goodness. But by walking in the light of God’s Word, a Christian can be cleansed by the blood of Christ from all sin. Because a Christian trusts in Christ’s blood, he partakes of Christ’s righteousness. His sin is forgiven by the wonderful sacrifice of Jesus. He is saved by God’s goodness through faith. He cannot be saved by trusting in his own works or by boasting of the righteousness of his own deeds (Ephesians 2:8,9). Imperfect man can be saved by faith in the cleansing blood of Christ as he walks in the light of God’s Word.

How is moral living connected with salvation by faith in Christ’s blood?

Sinful man can only be saved by faith in Christ who justifieth the ungodly and counts man’s faith for righteousness (Romans 4:5). But faith comes from the Word of God (Romans 10:17). By obeying Christ in following His commandments do we prove or show our faith (James 2:17-26). Faith which does not obey the Word of God is not saving faith; it is a dead faith (verse 26). Christians walk in the light of God’s Word which shows their living faith in Christ, whereby He cleanses them by His blood. In this way moral living, or living by the great moral standard of God’s Word, is related to a Christian’s faith which is his means of salvation in Christ’s blood.

If a man refuses to keep Christ's commandments, does he really love the Lord?

Jesus said, *"If ye love me, keep my commandments"* (John 14:15). 1 John 2:3-6 says, *"And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him. He that sayeth he abideth in Him ought himself also to walk, even as He walked."* By a Christ-like walk, Christians show that they know Christ and are in Christ. Only by abiding in Him by keeping His commandments do we actually love the Lord.

What are Christ's commandments on marriage?

Christian marriage is on a high moral standard. There are many commandments and principles in the New Testament to be followed. Jesus taught one wife for one man, as God planned in the beginning (Matthew 19:3-9). The apostles also taught every man to have one wife and every woman one husband (1 Corinthians 7:2). A Christian husband must love his wife as his own body (Ephesians 5:15,28,29), and honor her as a joint-heir in the grace of life (1 Peter 3:7). A Christian wife must be in subjection to her husband as the church is to Christ (Ephesians 5:22,24,33). A Christian home patterned after the Bible plan is a beautiful thing.

What reason allows divorce of husband and wife?

The sin of fornication is the only scriptural reason for divorce (Matthew 19:9). Even in the case of this sin an innocent partner is not forced to divorce the guilty partner. The guilty one may repent and be forgiven so as not to break up the home. The “innocent” partner may not be altogether blameless for his partner’s unfaithfulness. If he has treated her in such way as to make her seek another man, he is not innocent. But if one partner commits fornication for no reason but his own unfaithfulness, the other partner is allowed a divorce.

Can an innocent partner, whose unfaithful partner has been divorced, remarry?

Matthew 19:9 says that a man who divorces his wife, except for the reason of fornication, and marries another, commits adultery. It seems, on the other hand, that if he divorces her because of her fornication and marries another, that he does not commit adultery. In such case he must be entirely innocent of the reason for the divorce. He must have tried every way possible to prevent her unfaithfulness. He must have carefully examined before God his own faithfulness to his wife so as to be sure that he in no way caused her to be unfaithful.

How may divorce be avoided?

Prevention is better than cure. The only way to avoid a broken marriage is to plan well for a good one. Since mar-

riage is one of life's most serious decisions, it must be given careful planning and long prayer. A hastily chosen partner is a poorly chosen one. A proper sense of values must govern the choice of a life partner. A mate should be selected who will help one live better the Christian life. A wife's true beauty is not outward but inward (1 Peter 3:1-4). A godly woman adorns herself with modesty and good works (1 Timothy 2:9-11). A married couple must plan to center their lives around God's Word. They must work and worship together in their Christian home. Their prayers must never be hindered (1 Peter 3:7). A marriage built upon knowing and doing the Word of God is like a house built upon a rock. But marriage built upon disobedience of God's principles will fall, and great will be the fall of it (Matthew 7:24-27).

What is lust?

Lust is the fleshly desire and intention to commit an unlawful sexual act. Jesus said that a man who looks with lust upon a woman has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5:28). This is a stricter commandment than the Old Law gave (Matthew 5:27). This shows how high the Christian standard is in sexual matters. Christians have crucified the flesh with the lusts thereof (Galatians 5:24). Full-grown lust brings forth sin (James 1:15). By guarding the source of adultery a Christian is able to overcome all unlawful outward acts.

Does it matter who one's associates are?

1 Corinthians 15:33 says, *“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.”* The Revised Version says, *“Evil companionships corrupt good morals.”* Evil companions will corrupt a Christian's morals, and good companions will help one's morals. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 teaches strongly against evil association: *“Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”*

Is it important how a Christian uses his time?

Ephesians 5:16 says, *“Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”* “Redeeming” means “buying back.” Satan is bidding for a Christian's time, and Christ is bidding for it also. We must yield our time to the Lord for His service. Time is precious to a Christian. An hour can be used to save a soul, or a wasted hour can mean that a soul will be lost. Wasting time is a sinful habit, and giving too much time to

matters of less importance causes harmful neglect. Christians must redeem the time because the days are evil. There will come a day when time will be no more (see Romans 13:11,12).

Does the Bible prohibit drunkenness?

God's Word condemns drunkenness and everything which leads to drunkenness. A drunkard is to be disfellowshipped by the church (1 Corinthians 5:11). Drunkards shall not inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9,10). Drunkenness is one of the works of the flesh which shall keep those who do such things from inheriting the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:21). See also Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-35.

Can a Christian drink without becoming drunken?

Drunkenness begins with mild drinking. Strong drink has a way of making the drinker want more. It often brings the drinker under its power (Proverbs 23:35). Therefore, the only certain way to avoid drunkenness is to avoid strong drink completely. This is the safe and sure way (2 Peter 1:10). By abstaining from the very appearance of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22) a Christian will not cause a weaker person to stumble by his example (1 Corinthians 8:13). In this way a Christian's light can shine so as to glorify God (Matthew 5:16). Let us abhor that which is evil and cleave to that which is good (Romans 12:9).

Is taking dope or selling dope sinful?

Smugglers of drugs are everywhere. Men are becom-

ing rich by selling illegal dope to unsuspecting users. Wine (or drugs) for medicine is scriptural (1 Timothy 5:23). But such things taken to make one “happy” or “carefree” are illegal and sinful. Christians must obey government rulers which condemn dope peddling (Romans 13:1,2). We must not defile our bodies which are the temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16,17; 6:19). Dope-taking is the same type sin as drunkenness. Galatians 5:21 condemns “*drunkenness, revelings, and such like.*” Dope addiction surely comes under “such like” sins as drunkenness.

What is reveling?

Galatians 5:21 lists revelings as one of the works of the flesh which keep men from inheriting the kingdom of God. Reveling is riotous merrymaking, carousing, or drunken feasting. Gentiles (or heathen) walk in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, banquetings, abominable idolatries, and run in excess of rioting (1 Peter 4:3,4). Instead of this kind of high living, Christians walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness (playing with sex), not in strife and envying (Romans 13:13). The sins of the night are not for God’s people who walk in the light of Christ (John 3:19-21). The prodigal son left his land of “riotous living” and returned to his father’s love (Luke 15:13-20). Likewise must we.

What is modest dress?

It is decency in one’s clothing. Women are commanded

to adorn themselves in modest apparel (1 Timothy 2:9). They are also to dress with “shamefacedness” (a shrinking back from all that might cause shame) and “sobriety” (soberness, sensibleness). Christian women must not expose their nakedness, either partially or wholly. To do so they might cause men to lust after them and commit adultery in their hearts (Matthew 5:28). This sin would be partly their fault, and they would have to share the guilt. Modest apparel is the prevention which can often prevent lust and open adultery. Christian women must not dress like worldly women around them. They must by their modest example show the truth to others.

Is it important how a Christian uses his tongue?

Jesus said that one’s words show what is in one’s heart (Matthew 12:34,35). Men shall give an account in the day of Judgment of every idle word which they speak (verse 36). *“For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned”* (verse 37).

Why is the tongue so important?

Because it can be used to praise God and save men by teaching them the Gospel, or it can be used to curse God and defile men and spread false teaching (James 3:1-12). It is very easy to sin with one’s tongue (verse 2). Though the tongue is small it can do great damage (verses 3-8). *“It is a fire, a world of iniquity, it defileth the whole body, it setteth on fire the course of nature, it is set on fire of Hell”* (verse 6).

What are some of the sins of the tongue?

1. cursing (James 3:9,10). 2. boasting (verse 5). 3. swearing (Matthew 5:33-37). 4. back-biting (2 Corinthians 12:20). 5. whispering (Romans 1:29; Proverbs 16:28). 6. blaspheming (James 2:7; Romans 2:24). 7. false teaching (2 Peter 2:1). 8. all evil speakings (1 Peter 2:1). The sins of the tongue are poisons which cause many other sins (James 3:6-8).

What is honesty?

Honesty is uprightness of character. An honest person is truthful, responsible, trustworthy, and honorable in his actions, words, and character. An honest person refuses to lie, bribe, steal, or deceive in any way.

Must a Christian be honest?

2 Corinthians 8:21 says, *“Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.”* Romans 12:17 says *“Provide things honest in the sight of all men.”*

Did the Jews have to be honest in business?

God commanded the Jews to deal honestly in business and forbade unjust weights and measures (Deuteronomy 25:13-16). A false balance was an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight was His delight (Proverbs 11:1). David said in Psalm 101:7, *“He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my*

sight.”

Which scriptures teach Christians to be honest?

Romans 13:13 teaches Christians to walk honestly as in the day. 2 Corinthians 4:2 forbids walking in craftiness. Philippians 4:8 says to think on whatsoever things are honest. 1 Timothy 2:2 shows that we should lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. There are countless other verses on Christian honesty.

Should a Christian work honestly?

1 Thessalonians 4:11,12 says, “*Study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.*” A laborer or worker of any kind must give an honest day’s work for a day’s pay.

Does the Bible forbid eye-service?

Yes, in Ephesians 6:5,6, which says that servants must not give eye-service as men pleasers, but rather work as unto Christ, doing the will of God from the heart (see also Colossians 3:22,23).

Should Christian employers deal honestly with employees?

Ephesians 6:9 commands masters to deal fairly with servants, knowing that God is the master of all. Jesus taught that the laborer is worthy of his hire (Luke 10:7). See also

Jeremiah 22:13 and James 5:4.

Is gambling or playing pool un-Christian?

Christians are commanded to do their own business and work with their hands so as to walk honestly toward those that are without (1 Thessalonians 4:11,12). Gambling is trying to get money without honest work, and it will not influence outsiders to be saved. We must provide for honest things in the sight of God and men (2 Corinthians 8:21). But God has said that man must earn his bread by the sweat of his face, or by his own labor (Genesis 3:19). Jesus said we must do to others as we would have others do to us (Matthew 7:12). A gambling man cannot take another man's money by playing chance, because he would certainly not wish the man to take his money. Honest work, not gambling, is the way a Christian earns his livelihood.

Is all lying sinful?

Ephesians 4:25 commands us to put away lying and to speak truth to our neighbor. Christians must not lie since they have put off their old man with his deeds (Colossians 3:9). Revelation 21:8 says that "all liars" shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. "All liars" means so-called "little" lies and "innocent" lies or lies for a seemingly good purpose.

Is a half-lie still a lie?

When Abraham told Abimelech that Sarah was his sister, he was telling a half-truth, for she was a half-sister to

him. But Sarah was also Abraham's wife, and he was hiding the truth that she was his wife by saying that she was his sister (Genesis 20:2,11,12). Whenever a part-truth is used to deceive others into thinking that the whole truth has been told, it is really a lie.

Is lying often practiced in buying and selling?

"It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth" (Proverbs 20:14).

Is it dishonest to fail to keep one's promise?

God has given Christians many great and precious promises (2 Peter 1:4). He will keep these promises because God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). But church members often make promises carelessly which they do not keep. Even congregations will make promises to pay their preacher which they do not intend to fulfill. As children of God we must strive to keep every promise and to fulfill our spoken or written word faithfully.

Must a Christian pay his debts?

Romans 13:8 says, "*Owe no man anything,*" meaning that Christians must not owe without paying their honest debts as promised.

What is a bribe?

A bribe is a gift given to corrupt the conduct or pervert the judgment of a person who is in a position of trust.

Give some present-day examples of bribery.

- (1) A policeman who takes money from a driver so as not to report him.
- (2) A clerk who takes money to recommend a boy for employment.
- (3) A nurse who demands a “dash” from a patient before attending him. (4) Chiefs and elders who receive gifts to influence their judgment in court. (5) A headmaster who accepts a “dash” to admit a boy to his school.
- (6) A produce examiner who gives a false certificate for money paid him.

Is paying a bribe wrong?

Christians must “abhor” (strongly hate) that which is evil and cleave to that which is good (Romans 12:9). They must abstain from all appearance of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22). By partaking of the sin of bribery a bribe-payer becomes guilty of the sin himself.

Must one be honest in small things?

“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much” (Luke 16:10). Also see Matthew 25:23.

How can one be sure of being honest at all times?

By studying and knowing from God’s Word what honesty is. Bible truth renounces the hidden things of dishon-

esty (2 Corinthians 4:2). By exercising oneself so as to have a conscience void of offense (Acts 24:16), or exercising one's senses to discern good and evil (Hebrews 5:14). Then by prayer that in all things one may be willing to live honestly (Hebrews 13:18). Study, pray, and listen to conscience. The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6:10).

Does honesty bring happiness?

“When a man’s ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right” (Proverbs 16:7,8). Jesus said that those who seek first God’s kingdom and righteousness have all necessary things added unto them (Matthew 6:33).

Chapter 6

Problems About Worship

What is worship?

Worship is an act of devotion paid either to a creature or the Creator. Worship is an outward expression of an inward sense of praise and inward feeling of need. All worship is not true, for the true God must be worshiped in the true way for one's worship to be acceptable.

What makes one's worship acceptable?

The first worship recorded in the Bible was that of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4). Abel offered acceptable worship by faith (Hebrews 11:4). But Cain's worship was rejected by God. Since faith comes from hearing God's Word (Romans 10:17), we know that Cain and Abel heard God's commandment as to how to offer sacrifice. Abel obeyed that command by faith and was accepted; Cain chose his own method of worship and was rejected. Acceptable worship is that which is according to God's Word. Unacceptable worship is following one's own wishes or opinions in worship.

What is vain worship?

Jesus said teaching for doctrine the commandments of men makes worship "vain" (Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:7).

Worship that is “vain” is empty, worthless, or useless. Following the catechisms, prayer books, and other commandments of men in worship makes worship vain.

What is ignorant worship?

Acts 17:23 shows that the educated and polished people of Athens worshiped in ignorance. They did not know the true God nor the true way to worship Him. They were ignorant of God’s Word. But ignorance is no excuse. Verse 30 shows that these Athenians were commanded to repent of their ignorance. Idol worshippers or other ignorant worshippers today must be taught the Word of God and repent.

Is a Christian allowed to worship family or compound Ju-Ju in private as long as he worships scripturally in public?

Jesus said, *“It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve”* (Matthew 4:10). No man can serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways (James 1:8). Friendship with the world is enmity with God (James 4:4). Christians can have no agreement with idols, but must come out from among them and be separate (2 Corinthians 6:16,17). We cannot partake of sacrifice to devils and still have fellowship with God (1 Corinthians 10:20,21). We must have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but must reprove them (Ephesians 5:11). See also Psalm 135:15-18; Isaiah 44:14-20; Acts 17:22-33; Romans 1:22-25; 1 John 5:21.

Can a Christian participate in religious feasts, festivals, and other services of denominational churches?

2 John 9-11 says that those who go beyond and abide not in the doctrine of Christ do not have God. Christians, therefore, must not have fellowship with them nor give approval lest they become partakers in their evil deeds. Romans 16:17 says to mark them who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the apostles' doctrine and avoid them. Honorable activities in a village which are not religious or connected with any church are good. But a Christian cannot have fellowship in an unscriptural religious activity or church function. The above Bible reasons can be courteously given as an explanation.

What is true worship?

Jesus explained that true worshippers worship God "*in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:23,24). Worship "*in spirit*" is spiritual worship or worship from one's spirit or heart. Worship "*in truth*" is worship within the teachings of God's Word of Truth. True worship is from the worshipper's spirit and directed from the Word of God. Unless both of these elements are found in worship, that worship is not true worship. For instance, a shouting, dancing, clapping worshipper might be worshipping from his spirit, but he is not worshipping "*in truth.*" His efforts are not true worship. On the other hand, a worshipper might know the truth about worship and yet not put his heart into it. He would not be worshipping "*in spirit.*" True worshippers worship God accord-

ing to both basic requirements of Jesus — “in spirit and in truth.”

How do church members often fail to worship “in spirit”?

Worship “in spirit” is worship with one’s spirit, or worship from the heart. Since God is a spiritual being, we cannot have contact with Him unless we enter into a spiritual relationship with Him. At every worship service we must bring our spirits into communication with God. This is not easy, for all physical and earthly things must drop from our attention. Our heart must go out to God. When we draw nigh to God, He draws nigh to us (James 4:8). Since God gives us breath and life and all things, and since in Him we live and move and have our being, He is not very far from any one of us (Acts 17:24-28). Unless our worship is a deeply spiritual experience, it is not true spiritual worship. Unless it comes truly from our heart, it is not acceptable to God.

What are the parts of scriptural worship?

Acts 2:42 describes the first worship of the church: *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”* In other New Testament verses the parts of Christian worship are described as: (1) preaching, (2) singing, (3) communing, (4) praying, and (5) giving.

How do Christian worshippers participate in the preaching “in spirit”?

As all true worship must be “in spirit and in truth,” every part of Christian worship must be done “in spirit” or from one’s heart. Preaching the Word of God must be done “in spirit.” The preacher must preach the truth “in love” (Ephesians 4:15). If he speaks with the tongues of men and angels and have not love, he is like sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal (1 Corinthians 13:1). Listening to the preaching must also be done “in spirit” or in a spiritual manner. Jesus said, “*Take heed therefore how ye hear*” (Luke 8:18). We must give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard (Hebrews 2:1). A spirit of reverence must prevail during the preaching of God’s Word (1 Thessalonians 2:13). The preacher is preaching from the words of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:13). Spiritual worship cannot be practiced by a person who is talking, laughing, or sleeping during preaching.

How is singing to be done “in spirit”?

1 Corinthians 14:15 says singing must be done with the spirit and with the understanding also. It must not be a formality or an empty ritual. It must come from the heart. Ephesians 5:18,19 says to be filled with the Spirit, to sing spiritual songs, and to make melody in one’s heart to the Lord. Colossians 3:16 says to sing with grace in one’s heart to the Lord. Christians must sing meaningfully in praise and devotion to God. Thoughtless or meaningless singing

is vain. Our heart and understanding must be in each song, and we must live the truths we sing.

Explain communing “in spirit.”

1 Corinthians 11:27 says, *“Whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup unworthily (in an unworthy manner) shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.”* Verse 29 says, *“For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily (in an unworthy manner), eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.”* These verses have nothing to do with whether we are worthy or “feel worthy” to eat and drink. They are talking about a worthy or proper manner in partaking. They stress the kind of attitude or spirit in one’s heart during communion.

How does one pray “in spirit”?

1 Corinthians 14:15 says to pray with the spirit and with the understanding also. Prayers must be sincere, not formal. The thoughts must come from a real sense of longing and need in one’s heart. They must not come from a prayer book or memorized and meaningless phrases. Neither must the one leading prayer try to use big words or vain repetitions (Matthew 6:7,8).

Is giving to be done “in spirit” also?

As giving is a part of Christian worship, it must be done “in spirit and in truth.” Scriptural giving is done every first day out of gratitude for how God has prospered us (1 Corinthians 16:2). We prove the sincerity of our love by our

giving (2 Corinthians 8:8). A Christian's giving must not be done grudgingly or of necessity. This means that giving must be counted a privilege or joy rather than a duty or chore. It must first be purposed in one's heart; it is a heart-felt gift. It must be done cheerfully and gladly (2 Corinthians 9:7). It is more blessed (more joyful) to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). If we give all our goods to feed the poor, and even give our body to be burned, and have not love, it profits us nothing (1 Corinthians 13:3). Giving is a heart-searching spiritual experience. It is done cheerfully and joyfully with thankfulness in one's heart. It is done "in spirit" or sincerely with one's heart.

Is Christian worship to be both congregational and in private?

Christians must not forsake assembling themselves together (Hebrews 10:25). But Christians also need worship in private as well. The early Christians ceased not to teach and preach Jesus daily in the temple and in every house (Acts 5:42). Husbands and wives have the privilege of praying together in the home (1 Peter 3:7). Parents must train their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). Congregational worship cannot replace private worship, and private worship cannot replace public worship. We must meditate upon God's Word privately as well as publicly (1 Timothy 4:15).

How must preaching in worship be "in truth"?

As each part of worship must be "in spirit," each must

also be “in truth.” Preaching must be within God’s Word of Truth (2 Timothy 2:15; John 17:17). It must abide in the doctrine of Christ and not go beyond (2 John 9; Revelation 22:18,19). Early Christian worshippers continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine (Acts 2:42). Preaching from a prayer book or catechism is not “in truth.” Preaching one’s opinion does not enable the hearers to worship “in truth.” Preaching the truth enables worship “in truth.”

How must one’s singing be “in truth”?

Colossians 3:16 says, *“Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”* This verse shows that singing must come from the word of Christ dwelling in our heart. Our songs must teach and admonish other Christians. All songs, therefore, must be Scriptural songs which teach Scriptural truths. Many denominational hymns do not and must not be sung. Neither can one remain in the truth of God’s Word and use instruments, drums, and dancing in worship. These practices are outside or beyond God’s Word of Truth. We must sing with the spirit and with the understanding also (1 Corinthians 14:15).

How is communion to be done “in truth”?

Scriptural communion is done steadfastly every Lord’s Day (Acts 2:42;20:7). Outside the truth are denominational plans of monthly, quarterly, or annual communion services. Within the truth of God’s Word communion is a remem-

brance (1 Corinthians 11:24,25). Outside the truth is the Catholic doctrine of a miracle to change the bread into Jesus' actual body and the wine into real blood. Catholic communion in one kind (only the bread for "laymen") is outside the truth. Communion fees are outside the truth. Only by abiding in Bible teaching can communion be "in truth."

How does one worship in prayer "in truth"?

Praying for unscriptural things is not "in truth." Some pray for forgiveness and salvation without meeting the conditions in God's Word. Praying "in truth" is praying as the Bible instructs us to pray: praying with faith (James 1:6,7), without selfishness (James 4:3), with holy hands, and without wrath and doubting (1 Timothy 2:8), with the spirit and the understanding also (1 Corinthians 14:15). Praying "in truth" is praying according to God's Word of truth.

Must giving also be "in truth"?

Giving by Bible instruction is giving "in truth." Outside the Bible are assessments, harvest festivals, bazaars, class fees, etc. Please note the previous chapter on covetousness, as true giving must be done within the truth of these Bible teachings to be done "in truth."

How is Christian worship done "steadfastly"?

Acts 2:42 says the early Christians worshiped "steadfastly." This means "steadily or without being moved away." Hebrews 10:25 commands regular assembling

together and forbids forsaking church services “*as the manner of some is.*” Some members are habitually regular in attendance, while the manner of others is to be irregular and unfaithful. God excuses absence when attendance is impossible, but man’s many excuses God will not accept. Worship that is not steadfast is not Scriptural worship.

Should feasting be practiced in worship?

1 Corinthians 11:20-22 shows that the members in Corinth had changed the worship into a drunken feast. Paul then says, “*What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?*” (verse 22). Feasting has no place in worship. The Lord’s Supper is altogether different from a social feast. Entertainment and worship cannot be mixed.

Can Christians enjoy eating together apart from the worship?

The first Christians broke bread from house to house and ate their meat with gladness and singleness of heart (Acts 2:46). This was not communion, however, for there is no “meat” in communion. They were enjoying common meals together. Jude 12 mentions “feasts of charity” which Christians must have practiced. Food and fellowship shared among Christians in proper circumstances is upbuilding. But these things must be kept separate from the worship of the church.

What does the word “communion” mean?

Communion is the close association of spirits. Our spir-

its commune with Christ around the Lord's table. The Bible says that the cup of blessing which we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ, and the bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16). Communion with Christ is close fellowship with Christ, for the words "communion" and "fellowship" are used interchangeably in 2 Corinthians 6:14. Jesus wants to enter our hearts and sup with us, just as dear friends or relatives enjoy close fellowship around a friendly table (Revelation 3:20). To truly have "communion" in our worship at the Lord's supper we must, therefore, experience a close and dear association with Christ. Without true spiritual fellowship we have not "communed" with Christ.

What are the Bible names for communion?

They are: "the Lord's supper" (1 Corinthians 11:20), "the Lord's table" (1 Corinthians 10:21), "the breaking of bread" (Acts 2:42; 20:7), and "the communion" (1 Corinthians 10:16). Each name has a meaning: "the Lord's table" shows that the remembrance feast is the Lord's; He began it, authorizes it, and keeps it Himself with us. It is not a human supper but a divine one since it belongs to Christ; it is His. "The breaking of bread" is a way of speaking of the taking of the bread to mean the entire communion. The breaking of bread by friends together stresses the spiritual fellowship enjoyed with our fellow-Christians in a spiritual feast. The meaning of "communion" has been already explained above to mean a close association of our spirits with Christ.

When did Jesus say communion should be taken?

Jesus did not Himself teach how often to keep His communion feast. He left many things to be taught by the apostles after He returned to heaven and sent the Holy Spirit. He promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would guide them “into all truth”(John 16:13). Whatever His apostles bound on earth would be bound in heaven, and whatever they loosed on earth would be loosed in heaven (Matthew 16:19). We, therefore, look at the teaching and example of the apostles as to when to observe communion in the church.

When did the inspired apostles observe communion?

We read of the beginning of the church when the Holy Spirit was sent upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. In Acts 2:42 we learn that the apostles and early Christians kept the “breaking of bread” as a part of their worship “steadfastly” or regularly. In Acts 20:7 we learn that the day of this steadfast or regular worship was “the first day of the week.” Upon the first day of the week the apostles and early Christians assembled steadfastly or regularly to break bread.

How often should communion be taken?

The early church had communion as a steadfast or regular part of their worship (Acts 2:42). They broke bread “*upon the first day of the week*” (Acts 20:7). These verses taken together show that communion was taken weekly or

regularly on every first day (Sunday) of every week. The exact same words, “*upon the first day of the week,*” are used to command the time of Christian giving (1 Corinthians 16:2) as to show the example of Christian communion (Acts 20:7). Almost all professed Christians make a regular weekly contribution. But they should likewise observe regular weekly communion for the same reason every first day. 1 Corinthians 11:20-30 shows that the Christians at Corinth took communion as a regular part of their coming together for worship. Prayer books and catechisms written by men teach communion monthly, quarterly, or annually; but the teaching and example of the apostles is for communion every first day of the week.

Must communion be only at night?

Whatever the apostles bound about communion is binding for Christians today, but whatever they loosed (did not bind) is not bound upon Christians today (Matthew 16:19). When Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper, He did so on a Thursday night while He and the apostles were keeping a Jewish Passover supper (Matthew 26:17-30). The apostle Paul had communion in an upper chamber which was three floors high (Acts 20:7-9). But the Bible does not bind the keeping of communion in an upstairs room, and it does not bind the keeping of the supper at night. These things are “loosed,” that is, they are never bound in any of the teachings of the apostles. The thing “bound” is that communion be on the first day. The hour or part of the day is not bound. A “supper” is not always at night. It is anytime that people

“sup” or eat and drink (Revelation 3:20). Let no man bind what the apostles did not bind.

Must a clergyman administer communion?

Nowhere does the Bible speak of “clergymen” or “laymen.” These are names men have invented, and they teach ideas that the Bible does not teach. We must speak as the Bible speaks (1 Peter 4:11). When “disciples” (or Christians) came together in Troas to break bread, Paul preached to them (Acts 20:7). Ordinary members can meet and remember Christ in communion without even a preacher present. The Bible never speaks of anyone who had been given special authority or a special license to officiate at the Lord’s Supper. This is the doctrine of men (Matthew 15:9) which robs the communion of its simple meaningfulness for the humblest Christian. The important matter is the one who partakes, not the one who serves the Lord’s Supper.

Is a communion fee scriptural?

A communion fee is another doctrine of men. It is something which catechisms bind, but which the apostles did not bind. Never does the Scripture speak of a fee charged to allow a person to commune with Christ. It is a money scheme which is an addition to the Bible plan of giving (1 Corinthians 16:2; Revelation 22:18,19). Every man must examine himself before communion (1 Corinthians 11:28). No man has the right to charge a fee or refuse communion to a Christian.

Should a Christian commune if he feels unworthy?

Many members omit communion because they feel unworthy. These people misunderstand 1 Corinthians 11:27 which says we must not take communion “unworthily.” The American Standard Version says “in an unworthy manner.” The meaning is that the manner of communing must be a proper manner. This is explained in the whole passage where the proper or worthy manner is: **1.** to show forth (or remember) the Lord’s death till He come (1 Corinthians 11:25,26), **2.** to examine oneself (verse 18), and **3.** to discern or see the Lord’s body (verse 29). To fail to partake in this manner is to partake in an unworthy manner. No one is ever worthy of communion. If Christians were sinless, there would be no need of a saviour or of remembering His death. It is because we are unworthy that we feel the need for the blood of Christ which is given to save sinners (Matthew 26:28).

Must only one cup be used for communion?

In Matthew 26:27 Jesus took “the cup” and gave thanks and gave it to His disciples saying that they should all drink of it. The cup here means the contents or fruit of the vine within the cup (verses 28,29). To say that Jesus bound one cup is to bind where the Bible has not bound. If all must drink the cup itself, instead of its contents, then the cup would have to be broken and its pieces taken by all, which is foolishness. Furthermore, if only one cup is bound upon Christians, then different congregations all over the world

would have to all use one large cup, transporting it from church to church all over the world each Lord's Day. The number of cups is like the time on the Lord's Day for communion, it is left to the convenience of each congregation to decide. Having many cups is more sanitary and would prevent one member from spreading disease to other members. But Scripturally, one cup or many cups is right. Neither is wrong.

Does having no wine excuse a congregation from communion?

Jesus prepared ahead for the first Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:19). Likewise, Christians must prepare ahead of time for communion. Neglecting to have the bread or wine is no excuse. These must be prepared ahead. Failing to obey is disobedience. Neglect of necessary commandments is sin. By not receiving the spiritual food which communion brings many members in Corinth were weak and sickly, and some even slept (spiritually) (1 Corinthians 11:30). Christians sorely need the strength which fellowship with Christ in communion brings. Failing to provide the necessary materials is inexcusable neglect.

Chapter 7

Woman's Place in the Church

Is a woman's soul as valuable as a man's?

“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:26-29). Concerning salvation in Christ, it makes no difference whether a person is Jew or Greek, bond or free, male or female. Philippians 4:3 speaks of women whose names are in the book of life.

In what way is woman the weaker vessel?

1 Peter 3:7 calls woman “the weaker vessel,” but says that a husband should “honor” her as the weaker vessel. Being a weaker vessel is not a dishonorable or shameful position. A wife is an “heir” with the husband of the grace of life. Often she is stronger spiritually than the husband (1 Peter 3:1). A woman who has a meek and quiet spirit has beauty that is in the sight of God “of great price” (1 Peter

3:4). She is a weaker vessel physically.

Is man the head of the woman?

A wife is to submit unto her husband as head over her (Ephesians 5:22,23). But this does not mean that she is to have a shameful position. Woman was created to be a helpmeet (suitable helper) for man (Genesis 2:18,21-24). It is God's plan that man be over woman and that God be over Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3). But woman does not have a dishonorable place any more than does Christ. She must fill her God-given place as her husband's helper.

Should a husband mistreat or abuse his wife?

The same Scripture which teaches wives to be subject to their husbands also teaches husbands to love their wives (Ephesians 5:22-33). Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it (verse 25). They must love their wives as their own bodies and nourish and cherish them as they do themselves (verses 28,29,33). Being head of the wife does not mean that a husband is master of a slave. He is to love, cherish, and honor the wife as his own flesh.

Should a husband force a wife to be baptized?

Baptism is a command of Christ, not a husband's command (Mark 16:16). We must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). Only when a person has personal faith and repentance in his own heart does baptism bring remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). A husband has no right to

force his wife to be baptized, nor to forbid her being baptized, assembling, or giving, etc.

Can a woman be a public leader in the church?

She cannot, as clearly stated in 1 Corinthians 14:34,35. When the whole church has come together (verse 23), a woman must keep silent in the church (assembly). Never in the Bible were there women evangelists, elders, or deacons. No woman led the prayers, led singing, or took any public lead in the worship of the church. They tried to publicly lead in the church in Corinth but were rebuked in the above verses.

Why cannot a woman lead publicly in the church?

1 Timothy 2:11,12 explains that the woman must learn in silence with all subjection. A woman leading in public worship is not in subjection. She must not teach in public because this would be seizing (usurping) authority over the man (verse 12). A leader of public worship is exercising authority over the audience. This is what women must not do.

Can women participate in public worship?

Christian worship is for all members of the church, but women must follow instead of leading. They engage in every part of the service, but not as leaders. Women sing, and even teach and admonish by singing (Colossians 3:16). They may confess their faith publicly (Matthew 10:32). They may answer a question (or ask one) in the presence of

men (Acts 5:8). But in all these things they participate instead of leading.

Can a woman teach in private?

Titus 2:3-5 commands older women to teach younger women. This is to be in the home or in a separate women's class. Priscilla even taught a preacher, Apollos, the way of God more perfectly (Acts 18:26). But she did this together with her husband, Aquila, and in private, not in public. Women labored with Paul in the Gospel (Philippians 4:3), but their part was not public leadership.

Is a woman's part important in the church?

Any God-given work is important. A wife can help qualify or disqualify her husband as an elder or deacon (1 Timothy 3:11,12). A preacher's wife can greatly help or hinder his work. A wife can often convert her unbelieving husband by her Godly life (1 Peter 3:1,2). A mother's work is to help teach and train her children (1 Timothy 5:14). Think of how much good was done and how many souls were saved by the grandmother and mother of the preacher Timothy (2 Timothy 1:5). No person can have a greater influence over a child than a Christian mother. Women have an important work in being good examples before their children and in being "keepers at home" (Titus 2:5). Read Proverbs 31:10-31 for a description of a virtuous woman.

Chapter 8

Problems About Customs and Traditions

What are customs and traditions?

Customs are the usual manner of doing things or the habitual practices of a people. Traditions are beliefs and practices handed down from generation to generation. Traditions are customs so long continued as to be respected as laws.

How are customs and traditions dangerous?

Jesus condemned the worship of the Pharisees and Scribes because they followed customs and traditions in worship (Mark 7:7). He said that they laid aside the commandment of God in holding the tradition of men (verse 8). They rejected the commandment of God that they might keep their own tradition (verse 9). Whenever people hold customs and traditions as sacred in religion, they make void the Word of God as did the Jews (verse 13). Or whenever people keep a tribal or village custom which violates the Word of God, their tradition causes them to sin.

Do men's customs have any authority in religion?

One of the greatest mistakes in religion is to think that customs and traditions have authority in religious matters. The Jews in Jesus' day had many traditional practices which they kept as if they were God's law. When Jesus and his disciples did not do these things, the Scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus why His disciples broke the tradition of their elders (Matthew 15:2). Jesus then asked, "*Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?*" (verse 3). He showed them that they had kept practices handed down by tradition as if they were binding. They taught the commandments of men "for doctrine," that is, they taught traditions as if they were authoritative. This made their worship vain or worthless (verse 9). These men were blind leaders leading blind followers into the ditch (verse 14). This is strong language to show us that men's customs and traditions must not be followed as authority in religion. Just because a thing has been practiced by many people for many generations does not mean that it is from God.

What must be done if a village or tribal custom causes a commandment of God to be violated?

Jesus and His apostles often had to teach contrary to accepted and respected customs. Jesus plainly told the Samaritan woman that the worship which her fathers practiced was ignorant and false (John 4:20,22,23). The apostles were continually accused and persecuted because they stood for God's truth against conflicting customs and traditions (Acts 6:14; 21:21). Saul of Tarsus was very zealous

for the traditions of his Jewish fathers (Galatians 1:14). But by holding to these customs of the Jews' religion he was persecuting and wasting the church of God (verse 13). Christians must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). When a conflict comes, tradition must be violated rather than violating God's Word. We must always be ready to examine by the Bible practices and beliefs which we have held strongly for years. We must be open-minded about customs of our ancestors and our people. Let no tradition be considered sacred or binding religiously, and let no other custom cause God's Word to be violated.

What are some Nigerian customs and traditions about birth?

Many pagan customs have been kept by some present-day Nigerian parents and even by some brethren. Female circumcision causes great trouble after the child grows to be a mother. Children are often named during a religious naming ceremony. Sacrifices are often offered to the god of the land or the god of yams for bringing the child. Some parents believe that a boy is a re-incarnated spirit and consult a ju-ju priest as to where it came from. Any custom which is done as a religious practice is wrong, for all religious practices must come from the Bible. Any custom which is bad for health and may endanger life (such as female circumcision) must be rejected, since the Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16,17). All tribal and ancestral customs should be examined or proved (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Hold fast that which is good and

abstain from every appearance of evil (verse 22).

Should a Christian mother forsake assembling for worship for a long period after the birth of a baby?

This is a denominational custom which violates Bible teaching. Hebrews 10:25 forbids forsaking the assembling of Christians for worship. But often Nigerian mothers forsake church worship for many weeks after delivery, even though their strength has returned. Christian worship must be steadfast (Acts 2:42). Another common traditional practice is to refuse to attend worship after delivery until the husband buys the wife new clothes. Jesus asked, *“Why do ye transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?”* (Matthew 15:3). *“Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition”* (verse 6).

What are common Nigerian wedding customs which violate scripture?

The fattening room celebration with naked dancing is a sinful heathen custom. Taking an intended girl to a man for “trial” is a practice which usually leads to fornication. Wedding celebrations are often lustful rather than spiritual and wholesome.

Is requiring a bride-price a good practice?

The custom of requiring a dowry is very old. It was practiced in Old Testament days (Genesis 34:12) and spoken of in the Law of Moses for the Jews (Exodus 22:17). But the bride price is a social custom which often results in

abuse and sin. It is God's will that to avoid fornication every man have his own wife and every wife her own husband (1 Corinthians 7:2). In many instances unreasonable bride prices which young men cannot afford greatly tempt them to fornication. This does not excuse any fornication, but Christian parents should be reasonable and fair if they charge any bride price at all, so as not to contribute to the spread of fornication. I Corinthians 7:9 says it is better for a person to marry than to burn in lust. Another evil which the dowry causes is that a good Christian boy will often be rejected by the parents because he is poor, while a wealthier young man is accepted who is not a Christian or not good in character. In this, parents will reap what they sow (Galatians 6:7,8). The more civilized countries of the world have dropped the practice of the dowry. Christian parents who are truly interested in their children's souls will not put money above character in approving their daughter's marriage (Matthew 6:33). They will consider the girl's spiritual welfare as the most important matter. And in dealing with a prospective son-in-law they will treat him as they would want to be treated if they were in his place (Matthew 7:12). Christian parents are asked to search their hearts and to examine carefully their motives as to the practice of requiring a dowry. If their abuse of the custom causes sin, then they are also at fault.

What customs are often practiced when a Nigerian dies?

Sacrifices, food, and cloth are often given in behalf of the spirit of a dead man. People may fear the spirit and offer

it gifts for many days. After three days it is a custom to “wake” the spirit into heaven. An operation is sometimes performed to cut out the portion which caused disease so that the re-incarnated body will be well. Second-burial celebrations are common traditions. Mourning ceremonies and practices claim to appease the spirit of the dead. The wife of a dead husband may suffer many traditional practices, thinking that the spirit’s anger will be quieted. Most pagan burial customs show a belief in re-incarnation of the soul.

What happens to the soul when a person dies?

A person’s soul departs from the body at death (Genesis 35:18,19). The body returns to the dust, and the spirit (soul) returns to God who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7). When Jesus died (gave up the ghost), His spirit went into the hands of God (Luke 23:46). The body which is buried no longer houses the soul of the departed person. After death it is too late to attend to a person’s soul.

Does burial affect a departed soul?

Jesus told of the death of a very poor, sick beggar named Lazarus, and the death of a very rich man who in life had been clothed in “purple and fine linen and had fared sumptuously every day” (Luke 16:19-23). The rich man was buried (verse 22), and we can imagine a great and expensive burial with feasting and celebrations by many prominent guests. But Jesus did not say Lazarus was buried. Before he died no one fed him or took care of him.

The dogs had licked his sores. It is likely then that no one took care of him in death or buried him. But if he was buried, surely no expensive or well-attended ceremony was held. His body may have been dragged to a rubbish heap and burned, or, at best, he may have been dropped roughly into a beggar's grave. But look at his soul! The Bible says, "*And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried: And in Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments*" (Luke 16:22,23). Surely the fine burial in no way helped the soul of the rich man. And the lack of a fine burial in no way affected the soul of Lazarus. Neither today does a person's burial or lack of burial affect at all the condition of his soul.

Is a burial or funeral relatively unimportant?

A man thinking of following Jesus one day wished to first go and bury his father (Matthew 8:21). Jesus answered, "*Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead*" (verse 22). Jesus was saying that burying the dead is not as important as following Him. The dead who could bury their dead were likely worldly people who are dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). But the far more important matter is to follow Christ. Likewise today should heathen burials be left for heathen people, and followers of Christ should follow Christ.

Is the type burial a Christian has important to His soul?

The only important burial to a Christian's soul is his

burial with Christ in baptism (Romans 6:4, Colossians 2:12). A proper burial in baptism is much more important than a proper physical burial. If a person properly buried his old life of sin at baptism, and if he is truly living in newness of life afterward, his physical burial is of no importance to his eternal welfare.

What type physical burial should Christians practice?

The most meaningful acts which a Christian can do for another person should be done before the person's death. Jesus commended a woman for her love toward Him in anointing Him while He was alive (Matthew 26:12,13). But it is not wrong to prepare a body properly for burial as Jesus' body was prepared (John 19:39-42). Washing and perfuming a body and wrapping it in clean clothes is honorable. But none of these acts is done to affect the departed one's soul. Devout men carried Stephen and buried him (Acts 8:2). Dorcas was washed and laid in an upper chamber after her death (Acts 9:37). Surely today Christians may be buried in a reasonable and sensible way without unscriptural heathen or denominational practices.

Should Christians comfort those who mourn?

Romans 12:15 says, "*Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*" At the time of death, or at any other time of sadness, Christians should seek to comfort those who weep. But the death of a faithful Christian is not as sorrowful as the death of others. The Bible says not to sorrow for those who sleep (die) as others do who have no

hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13). This is because we believe that those who die in Christ, God will bring with Him (verse 14). We are told to comfort one another with these words (verse 18). Revelation 14:13 says that the dead who die in the Lord are blessed (happy). They rest from their labors, and their works follow them. Christians do not fear the grave (1 Corinthians 15:55).

Is a special church service appropriate when a Christian is buried?

A worship service at the burial of a Christian is in order for several reasons: (1) It is a fitting time to comfort the bereaved family with readings from God's Word. (2) It is an appropriate time to preach the Gospel to non-Christians who may attend. (3) It is also a good time to exhort all Christians to be ready for death. What the Bible teaches about death and the hereafter will be most impressive when death is seen in the midst of all. But brethren must be careful not to return to former heathen or denominational burial practices on such an occasion. Witchcraft, divination, masquerading, and dancing have no place.

Should visitors at the time of a death expect to be fed and entertained?

Many Jews came to the house of Martha and Mary to comfort them when their brother Lazarus died (John 11:19). When Jesus came He also wept and groaned in His spirit out of sympathy for His close friends who sorrowed (verses 33,35,38). This should be the purpose of visiting those who

sorrow. Instead of wanting to be fed and entertained at a death, Christian people will try to help and comfort the sorrowing family. They will bring food to the bereaved, rather than expecting the family to bring food to them. Every means should be sought to relieve the financial burden of such a family rather than increasing their burden. True Christians will bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2). Let members of the Lord's church show others the true spirit of Christianity at the time of death.

Should relatives be taxed to provide expensive burials and grave stones?

This is another wasteful and unnecessary tradition. The greatest monuments to departed Christians are the good works which they have done. The works of Christians who die will follow after them (Revelation 14:13). Children of Christian parents are also their monuments. These are the true remembrances of a person's life after he has gone. Costly physical monuments can be very deceptive of a person's real character. They can also be misleading about how relatives appreciated the deceased since payment for the effigy is often forced. A simple and inexpensive grave marker is in order if desired. But most other traditional practices have come from paganism and superstition. Surely every Christian knows that he cannot build a house for a departed spirit.

Does a spirit ever return to earth after death?

At death the body goes back to dust and the spirit goes back to God who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Abraham told the rich man that Lazarus could not be sent back to earth to warn the rich man's brothers (Luke 16:26-31). Those on earth had the Scriptures, which is the way God speaks to men today (verses 29-31). Reincarnation and the returning of departed spirits is pagan superstition. It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment (Hebrews 9:27).

Can an occultist bring a curse upon a person by magic?

Sorcerers (occultists) shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone (Revelation 21:8). To Barjesus, (or Elymas) the sorcerer, the apostle Paul said, "*O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord*" (Acts 13:10). Sorcerers are deceivers who trick ignorant people by superstition (Acts 8:9-11). Many magicians in Ephesus believed the Gospel and burned their expensive magical books (Acts 19:18-20). Sorcerers will not enter into the eternal city or partake of the tree of eternal life (Revelation 22:14,15).

Are prayer houses scriptural?

Most prayer houses are wrong for several reasons: (1) They indicate that the Lord's church is not sufficient to carry on all religious needs and practices. But Christians glorify God "in the church," not in some other organization (Ephesians 3:21). (2) Prayer houses usually conduct prayer for miracles to heal the sick. But the Bible plainly teaches

that miracles were meant to cease (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). Prayer houses are usually money-making schemes. The owner collects much money from deceiving the people. Jesus grew very angry at those who wished to change religion into money making (Matthew 21:12,13). Christians must not operate or participate in prayer house activities. Instead, brethren in the church can pray for one another according to Bible teachings about prayer (James 5:13-16). But these prayers will not be for miracles or done for money.

Are some native medical customs wrong?

Mothers often paint their children to drive away an evil spirit which they think brings fever. Sometimes one will allow his body to be cut to let out a disease-causing spirit. Any such native practices based upon evil spirits are wrong. Medical customs which are supposed to drive out evil spirits are really practices of false religion. Belief in these practices is superstition and ignorance. Christians must have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them (Ephesians 5:11). Many native medicines and treatments go back to pagan beliefs about evil spirits, curses, and hexes. Furthermore, many traditional medicines and “cures” are harmful to the body. Injections given by untrained and unauthorized persons cause many deaths. A Christian’s body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and whoever destroys that body, him will God destroy (1 Corinthians 3:16,17).

Is love of prominence commonly practiced in Nigeria?

Many Nigerian customs and traditions center around man's love of prominence. The sin of pride is everywhere, but it is often allowed and even approved by customary practices. Village chiefs and elders often love prominence. Religious leaders usually seek the praise of men. Because pride is practiced so commonly, it spoils many church members. The first member of a congregation thinks he is a bigger man than others. Members try to rule the church like politicians because they seek praise for themselves.

What does God think of man's pride?

Proverbs 16:18 says, *"Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."* Proverbs 26:12 says, *"Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him."* Psalms 12:3 says, *"The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things."* Imagine how foolish man's arrogance appears to God who is all-wise and all-powerful! If haughty men could see themselves as God sees them, they would know their true insignificance.

What are Jesus' teachings against loving prominence?

Luke 14:11 says, *"For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."* Romans 12:16 says, *"Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits."* 2

Timothy 3:2 says that evil men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, etc. James 4:6 says that God resisteth the proud but giveth grace to the humble. 1 Corinthians 13:4 teaches us that Christian love “*vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.*” Philemon 2:3 says, “*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves.*” 1 John 2:16 shows that “pride of life” is worldliness, and that the love of God is not in such a one. 3 John 9 speaks of Diotrephes “who loveth to have the pre-eminence” among the brethren. Many Nigerian brethren love prominence like Diotrephes. Many congregations are troubled by men of this character. Such men damn their own souls and the souls of others.

How does pride enter a person’s heart?

1 Timothy 3:6 forbids a novice becoming an elder. The reason is then given: “*lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil*” The devil is the source of pride. He tries to use church members and leaders to spoil the congregations. Whoever lifts himself up with pride is being used by the devil.

Chapter 9

Problems of Denominational Beliefs and Practices

Why do denominational traditions often enter the church?

Traditions are difficult to drop. Old practices continued in for many years are not easily or quickly forgotten. Members may not have fully come out of denominationalism, and denominationalism may not have fully come out of them. When the Israelites came out of Egypt, Egypt did not fully come out of them. They remembered the idolatry and fornication practiced there, and they brought these things into their midst. They even murmured to go back to the “flesh pots” of Egypt, finding it hard to forget their former practices. The Bible shows that the Israelites’ experience is written for us today (1 Corinthians 10:11). Just as they brought former practices with them out of Egypt, likewise members bring former practices with them out of denominational churches. Just as the Israelites murmured to go back and enjoy the life in Egypt, so also do members today wish to return to their former religious customs.

What does the word “church” mean?

It means a “called out group of people.” The Israelites

were called the “church in the wilderness” because they had been called out of Egypt (Acts 7:38). This called out group serves as an example of the true meaning of the word “church.” The Lord has called Christians out of the world into His kingdom or church (Colossians 1:13). They, therefore, must fully come out from among men and be separate (2 Corinthians 6:17).

Are Christians warned against going back into the world?

The example of Israel teaches those who think they stand to take heed lest they fall (1 Corinthians 10:12). Christians must not be conformed to the world but must be transformed (Romans 12:2). They must not allow the world to change them, but instead they must change the world. Pure religion includes keeping oneself unspotted from the world (James 1:27). We are called a peculiar people or a people for God’s own possession (1 Peter 2:9). If after escaping the pollution of the world, we are again entangled therein and overcome, our latter condition is worse than the beginning (2 Peter 2:20-22). Hebrews 3:12 says, *“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”*

What denominational beliefs often corrupt baptism?

Some churches sprinkle subjects, whereas New Testament baptism was immersion (Matthew 3:16; Acts 8:38). True baptism is a “burial” (Romans 6:3,4; Colossians 2:12). Some churches practice infant sprinkling

instead of baptism for those who believe (Mark 16:16), and who repent (Acts 8:37), and who confess their faith in Christ (Acts 8:37). Some denominations baptize for a wrong purpose, saying that baptism is not for remission of sins. But the Bible shows that Scriptural baptism is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) or for salvation from past sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21). We are baptized into Christ to put on Christ (Acts 2:41,47). Other unscriptural practices include baptismal fees and baptism only by the “clergy.” Never was a fee charged for baptism in the Bible, and the Bible never mentions the “clergy”. A “certain disciple” baptized Saul (Acts 9:10).

Should a person ever delay his baptism?

Because of the above denominational misunderstandings about baptism, many who wish to be members of the Lord’s church delay their baptism. While in a denomination they were encouraged to postpone their baptism, and they continue to do so after learning the truth. In the Scriptures baptism was immediate as soon as one believed in Christ and repented of sin. The Jews on Pentecost were baptized the same day that they heard the first Gospel sermon (Acts 2:41). The man from Ethiopia stopped his chariot as soon as water was seen (Acts 8:36). The Philippian jailer was baptized “the same hour of the night” (Acts 16:33) which was past midnight (verse 25). Saul of Tarsus was told, “*Why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord*” (Acts 22:16). After a person believes on Jesus Christ and is convicted and

willing to repent of his sins, it is unscriptural and dangerous to delay baptism even one hour. A person who wishes baptism does not have to wait for a “day of baptisms.” He does not have to wait for others to be baptized with him. No preacher should ever tell someone to delay his baptism. The remission of one’s sins is too important for that.

When does a person become a “member” of the Lord’s church?

Acts 2:47 shows that the Lord adds to the church those who are saved when they are baptized. Before baptism a person is not saved and not a member of the church. Even many Gospel preachers will say that a person is a “member” who has not been added to the church by baptism. This is a denominational belief being carried over into the church. Before becoming a true member of the Lord’s church a person is an unforgiven sinner (Acts 2:38; 22:16). Baptism is part of the new birth which adds one to God’s family or kingdom (John 3:3,5). One who has not been born of water and the Spirit is not a child of God. He is still in darkness in the devil’s family (Colossians 1:13). No non-member should be allowed any leadership in the church or any voice in the church’s decisions. Let us speak as God’s Word speaks (1 Peter 4:11).

Should baptismal certificates be awarded after baptism?

This is another practice which some want to borrow from the denominations. No certificates are spoken of in the New Testament except the living certificate of one’s

example (2 Corinthians 3:3). The only true recommendation a Christian has is his good character and good life. Any other recommendation paper can often be misused. A baptized person may apostatize but still use his baptismal card to get employment, etc. But the epistle of one's life which is "known and read of all men" cannot be deceitfully used. Weak members wish a baptismal certificate to use somewhat as a ticket to get them into heaven. But the Lord knows them that are His (2 Timothy 2:19). The Children of God are "manifested" (or seen) in the kind of lives they live (1 John 3:10).

Is special white dress appropriate after baptism?

Another denominational tradition is the wearing of white robes after baptism. Matthew 23:5 condemns those who change the appearance of their garments in order to be seen of men. The wearing of white cloth outwardly in no way helps the appearance of a person's inner man. Luke 16:19 describes a rich man clothed in purple and fine linen on earth, but who was lost in the next life. 1 Peter 3:3,4 shows that Christians do not depend upon beautiful outward appearances. That which is in the sight of God of great price is the adorning of the character or the hidden man of the heart. We must clothe ourselves in good works (1 Timothy 2:9,10). The fine linen which will have meaning in heaven is the "righteousness of the saints" (Revelation 19:8). Outward adorning does not affect the soul, but inward adorning does. Outward adorning can be deceitful, but inward adorning cannot.

Is special dress for the “clergy” good?

The division between “clergymen” and “laymen” is a denominational idea which the Bible does not support. There are no special licenses in the Lord’s church for preaching, baptizing, or conducting worship. All Christians must teach the Gospel (Matthew 28:19). Faithful men teach others who then are able to teach others also (2 Timothy 2:2). Every member has an important work in the Lord’s body or church (1 Corinthians 12:12,14-18). Jesus was speaking of religious leaders when He condemned the wearing of special robes to be seen of men (Matthew 23:5-12). Even Bible school students sometimes wear their blazers as if they gave them religious authority, distinction, and importance. Jesus said, *“He that is greatest among you shall be your servant”* (verse 11). *“Whosoever exalts himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted”* (verse 12).

Was anyone re-baptized in the Bible?

In Acts 19:3 the apostle Paul asked twelve men at Ephesus, *“Unto what then were ye baptized?”* They answered, *“Unto John’s baptism.”* When Paul explained that John’s baptism was no longer in effect, they were then baptized again (verses 4,5). This shows us that just any immersion will not do. These men had been immersed under John’s baptism, but they needed baptism again. Their first baptism was not Scriptural since John’s temporary teaching and baptism had been replaced by Christ’s bap-

tism. The purpose of their first baptism was not the purpose of Christ's baptism. They had never been baptized into Christ, to put on Christ (Galatians 3:27). The teaching which they received about baptism was not correct, so they had to be taught correctly and then baptized correctly. The same is true today. Many have been mis-taught and mis-baptized and must follow the example of the men at Ephesus and be taught correctly and baptized correctly. There is no dishonor in being re-taught and re-baptized. To fail to do so because of pride may cause one to be lost. Some people today say that they will not be re-baptized because they were immersed twenty or thirty years ago. But this is not what the men at Ephesus said. They wanted to have Scriptural baptism immediately after they learned of their error.

How do some denominations immerse incorrectly?

Just because a person is immersed does not mean that he is correctly baptized. One cannot be taught wrong and baptized right. Correct teaching must go before correct baptism (Matthew 28:19). Jesus said, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mark 16:16). But many denominations twist this and teach, "He that believeth and is saved shall be baptized." 2 Peter 3:16 says that some "wrest" (or twist) the Scriptures to their own destruction. Persons taught this doctrine believe that remission of sins comes before baptism. But the Bible says that true baptism is "for" the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). False baptism comes after remission, but true baptism comes before remission of sins.

Many churches teach salvation by Holy Spirit baptism. They teach that the Holy Spirit saves one from sin before water baptism. This is another way of teaching that water baptism is not for the remission of sins. A person believing such false doctrine may have been immersed, but he has not been Scripturally baptized.

Is Holy Spirit baptism performed today?

Some denominations teach both Holy Spirit baptism and water baptism today. But Ephesians 4:5 says there is “one baptism.” Holy Spirit baptism was a special miraculous gift given to the apostles on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) and to the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:44,45). In the days before the New Testament was completed, the Holy Spirit was given miraculously to guide men (John 16:13). But when the perfect revelation of the Holy Spirit (the Bible) was completed, the partial or miraculous gifts ceased (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). The Holy Spirit instructs men today only through the Bible, which is the “sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:17). Holy Spirit baptism was necessary to begin the church, but it was temporary and ceased with all other miracles.

How can one be sure about his baptism?

Not by tradition, for men’s traditions often make void the commandments of God (Matthew 15:3,6). Not by following the practice of the greatest number of people, for multitudes shall be lost, while only a few will be saved (Matthew 7:13,14). The only sure way of obeying any com-

mandment of God is to follow the Word of God exactly. The testimony of God is sure (Psalm 19:7). When we hear and obey the Word of God, we are building our house on a rock (Matthew 7:24-27). But when we depend upon any other thing, what we have built will fall (verses 26,27). We may do many mighty works in Christ's name, but He won't know us (verses 21-23). We must build our baptism on God's Word and it will stand. But if we build it upon tradition or opinion, it will fall. Twelve men in Ephesus rejected their former baptism and submitted to true baptism when they heard the Word of God from the Apostle Paul (Acts 19:1-5). Scriptural baptism is a burial in water (Colossians 2:12) for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) or to be saved from past sins (Mark 16:16). Without this kind of baptism a person has not had Bible baptism.

Must one be re-baptized who was already zealous and faithful in a former church?

Saul of Tarsus was formerly very zealous in the Jews' religion (Galatians 1:13,14). He could have boasted of a long and faithful career in the traditions of his fathers. But these things which seemed gain to Paul he counted loss for Christ (Philippians 3:4-7). He counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord (verse 8). He had verily thought with himself that he should do many things contrary to the name of Christ (Acts 26:9). But when he learned that he had been in error all those years, he was baptized immediately to wash away his sins (Acts 22:16).

Is it possible that one could have been Scripturally baptized by a denominational preacher?

It is very unlikely but still a possibility. If a person had read his Bible for himself and had not followed any false teaching, he may have had a proper understanding of baptism. He could therefore know the meaning and purpose of baptism, although the preacher taught another doctrine. The important thing about a person's baptism is what is in his own heart. His personal faith and repentance are what matters. What a preacher believes or teaches does not matter unless it causes the subject himself to be mistaught. This is why a person must make his own decision to be re-baptized. Unless he himself believes that re-baptism is necessary, it would do no good for him to agree only because the church wished him to. Every person who has been immersed in the past and who considers re-baptism, must open-mindedly study the Word of God and answer for himself before God whether he has already been baptized exactly as God's Word directs. If he sees for himself that he has not, he should obey God's command before it is too late.

What is the gift of the Holy Spirit which comes after baptism?

Acts 2:38 says that those who repent and are baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of sins also receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (or Holy Ghost). This promise is for all whom God shall call (verse 39), which includes Christians today. Galatians 4:6 says that God sends forth

the Spirit of His Son into the hearts of those who are His sons or children. Acts 5:32 says that God gives the Holy Spirit to those that obey Him. These and other verses clearly tell us that the Holy Spirit is given to those who become Christians. But the gift of the Holy Spirit is not a miraculous gift, for the giving of miracle-working gifts of the Spirit was done by the laying on of the apostles' hands (Acts 8:18; 2 Timothy 1:6). When the last apostle died, miraculous gifts could no longer be given. The gift of the Spirit to every Christian is not a feeling or emotion in one's heart. Pagans feel happy and saved in their heathen practices, but emotional feelings are not the Spirit of God. The gift of the Holy Spirit is simply God's Spirit dwelling in a Christian. Christ dwells in our hearts by faith (Ephesians 3:17). God also makes His abode in a Christian (John 14:23). There is no mysterious feeling or sensation. But we are merely assured that God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit live within us as we abide within them and their teachings.

How does a Christian know that he is truly God's child?

Romans 8:16 says, "*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*" The only way that the Holy Spirit witnesses or speaks today is in the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16,17). The words of the Scripture are the words of His testimony (1 Corinthians 2:13). The Spirit tells us in the Bible what to do to become and remain a true child of God. Our spirit (or mind) bears record of whether we have exactly obeyed the Spirit's words to become a child of God, and whether we are living as a child of God.

In this way the Holy Spirit bears witness (in the Word), and our spirit bears witness (as to whether we have obeyed the Word). Thus God’s Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16). 1 John 2:3 puts it this way: *“Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.”* But he that says he knows God and keeps not His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him (verse 4).

Did the early Christians observe special religious days like Easter and Christmas?

Denominational churches have many special days, but the Lord’s church has only one. The first day of the week is the only special religious day for Christians. On this day (Sunday) Christ was raised from the dead (Mark 16:9), the church was established (Acts 2; Leviticus 23:15,16), and early Christians worshiped (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). But never did the early church observe Christmas, Easter, or any other special day. (The word “Easter” in Acts 12:4 should be translated “Passover” as in the revised versions. The feasts of the Jews were kept in New Testament days by the Jews, but not by Christian.) The observing of special religious days other than every first day of the week is from man’s tradition and not from God.

If Christmas and Easter are not in the Bible, where did they come from?

The keeping of December 25 as Christmas was begun by the Catholic Church hundreds of years after the days of

the New Testament church. This date was borrowed from a pagan feast which had formerly been held at that time. The heathen holiday was merely changed into “Christ-mass,” later known as “Christmas.” The name “Easter” comes from the pagan goddess of spring, “Easter.” It was also transferred from pagan custom to denominational practice. Since Christians follow the Word of God rather than heathen traditions or denominational errors, they do not keep these religious days.

Doesn't the Bible tell of the birth and resurrection of Jesus?

The Bible tells of the birth and resurrection of Christ, but it does not tell when these events happened. Jesus' birth and resurrection are Bible facts, but when they happened are men's opinions. God's Word condemns the keeping of special days and seasons. Galatians 4:10,11 warns, *“Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.”* The first day of the week is the only special day of worship God authorizes. All other special religious days of worship are vain because they are based upon the traditions and commandments of men (Matthew 15:9).

In what ways does denominational organization often try to enter the church?

(1) Most denominational churches have earthly headquarters. The officers at such centers control and oversee the congregations. Because many members of the church

are accustomed to such a plan, they wish to make the Bible Training College the headquarters of the church of Christ. Weak members want American brethren to be their bishops, select their preachers, settle their quarrels, and manage their affairs. (2) Congregations often wish to be organized together. This also comes from the denominational plans of districts, synods, or dioceses. Brethren use “Gospel meetings” and other meetings to organize themselves together. They may even have officers, a treasury, and may pass decisions for all the member churches. (3) Combined services is another practice borrowed from the denominations. This custom disrupts the local church assembly and usually causes or allows many members to forsake worship. (4) Dividing the congregation into committees is another practice brought into the church from outside. Committee members (especially committee “heads”) think of themselves as officers and assume great authority. (5) Politics is often brought into the church. Men try to grab authority by political means. Political methods and schemes are used to gain authority over others.

Why do members want denominational schemes in the church?

The Israelites in Canaan were not satisfied to have God’s plan of rule in which He Himself was their only King. Instead they asked Samuel to make a king over them so that they could be like the heathen nations around them (1 Samuel 8:5). This is the very reason that members today want denominational plans instead of God’s plan. They

want to be like the churches around them. They are not satisfied with God's plan of rule. When the people rejected God's plan and asked for a king, God told them that in rejecting His plan they had rejected Him (1 Samuel 8:7). Likewise today when members reject God's plan for the organization of the church, they are really rejecting Him. Denominational schemes are brought into the church because weak members are not content with God's plan. They want to be like the peoples round about them. See Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 6:17; James 1:27; and 1 Peter 2:9.

What is the headquarters of the Lord's church?

A "headquarters" is "the quarters of a head." Jesus is the only head of His church (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 4:5). Jesus is in heaven (Hebrews 12:2). Therefore, heaven is the only headquarters of Christ's church. No school, hospital, or compound is headquarters. The church has no headquarters on earth. Each congregation is free and independent under Christ, the head.

What are the dangers in gospel meetings?

The greatest danger in gospel meetings is that the freedom and independence of local congregations is often gradually lost. Men seek to be rulers and use gospel meetings to have authority over the churches. This is the very way in which denominational organization began. The organization of the local church is thought not good enough. So, a larger group of several churches bands together. Officers

are chosen, a financial plan is begun, and decisions are passed which have authority over the member churches. God's plan of organization does not tie congregations together into a larger, earthly organization. In the New Testament there were elders in the local churches (Acts 14:23), but no elders over all the churches. Local congregations each had a treasury (1 Corinthians 16:1,2), but there was no treasury for many churches. Gospel meetings are steps toward denominational organization and toward the corruption of the New Testament plan of autonomous churches.

What can replace the fellowship and teaching at gospel meetings?

Because gospel meetings have an inborn danger of changing the organization of the church into districts and synods such as denominational churches have, many churches are now seeing this danger and replacing gospel meetings with congregational lectureships. These do not have the dangers of officers, treasuries, business meetings, and authoritative decisions which gospel meetings have. They have all of the good and none of the bad of gospel meetings. They use no organization of men, but only God's organization, the local church. It is encouraging to see brethren turning away from a dangerous practice to one that is beyond question.

What are the drawbacks to combined services?

The major danger of gospel meetings is also true of

combined services. Brethren are not satisfied with the local congregation and want something bigger in which they can have more authority and prominence. An additional disadvantage is that the Lord's Day worship is forsaken in the local churches, and the work of the church in many villages is cancelled on the day when all local members should be active. Combined services may build the attendance in one assembly, but they destroy the assemblies of many other churches. This tends to weaken the dis-assembled churches and slow their work.

How do committees often hinder the local church?

Another effort to gain prominence is in church committees. By being in a committee or being head of a committee, men seek authority and the praise of others. They consider themselves officers in the church. They make decisions which other members are forced to follow. Politically-minded men use committees to gain control for themselves over church affairs.

If a church has no elders, how can its decisions be made and its work carried on?

A church with no Scriptural officers must allow every man equal authority. Each must count others better than himself (Philippians 2:3). Business meetings or general meetings of the congregation are where the work of the church is discussed and decisions made. If every member truly loves the Lord and the Lord's work, jealousy and strife will not be allowed to enter. The congregation can run its

own business without depending upon a larger body to make its decisions or without organizing itself in unscriptural ways.

What does “undenominational” mean?

“Undenominational” means “not denominational in concept” or “not sectarian in nature.” To be “sectarian” is to have a narrow denominational view of the church. It is to think that the church is a sect like many other sects. It is to look upon the church of Christ as another denomination. Many members think that the church is just another denomination, or they may think that it is a better denomination than others. To be undenominational or non-denominational in one’s viewpoint of the Lord’s church is very important. Unless one has an understanding of the New Testament church as altogether different from denominations in its nature, one has a denominational view.

What is the name of the Lord’s church?

Whether one has a denominational or undenominational idea of the church is often indicated by his use of the term “Church of Christ.” The Lord’s church has no single name in the Bible. It is called “the church” (Colossians 1:18), “church of God” (1 Corinthians 1:2), “church of the living God” (1 Timothy 3:15), “churches of the saints” (1 Corinthians 14:33), “churches of Christ” (Romans 16:16), etc. We should acknowledge and wear all Bible names for the church. To wear only one is a narrow, unscriptural idea. We should think of the church as we think of God in the

Bible. God has many names, and we do not limit Him with only one. A god with only one name is not the God of the Bible. Likewise, a church with only one name is not the church of the Bible. We must have an understanding of the true nature of the undenominational church as it is in the Bible. Unless we do, we cannot teach others of undenominational Christianity.

Is Christianity the same as the church?

In the New Testament the church and Christians were the same (Acts 2:47; 8:1,3). True Christians and the true church are the same today. Although denominational bodies may call themselves “Christianity,” they are not true Christianity. True followers of Jesus Christ are not those who call themselves followers, but those who obey (Matthew 7:21,22). So when we speak of “undenominational Christianity” we are speaking of Christians (or church members) who obey Christ as the first Christians did in the New Testament. Christianity has always been the same as the church. If changes are made so that a body is not truly the church, then that body is not true Christianity. If corruptions have altered a group of people so that they are not truly Christians, then they are not the church. The Lord’s Church is Christianity, and it must not be misunderstood to be anything denominational or sectarian.

What does “restoring the church” mean?

Jesus built His church on Pentecost Day of Acts 2, when 3,000 souls were made members by obeying the gospel

(Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:38,41,47). But soon thereafter false teachers led away followers out of this church and began groups that were not the Lord's church (Acts 20:28,29). This is how denominationalism began. It is like a builder building a nice house according to a good plan and then leaving for a far journey. But afterwards enemies steal away the parts of the house and build houses of their own. The servants of the owner discover the condition and set about to restore the house as it was. They first find the builder's plan. Then they follow the same plan in every way exactly as it was followed the first time, being very careful not to change a thing. The result will be the first house "restored." The enemies may still live in their different houses, but the original house has been reproduced. Therefore, if the New Testament plan for the church is exactly and carefully followed today, the original church which Christ built will be restored or reproduced today. This is the plea of churches of Christ — to restore original Christianity, to reproduce the true church which the Lord built, and to exactly re-establish the undenominational church of the Lord Jesus Christ today. To "restore" is not to build another house, but to rebuild, reproduce or re-establish the original or first one.

What are some indications that members do not have an undenominational view of the church?

Often members will speak of "our church". But the

church is not ours, it is Christ's (Matthew 16:18). A preacher will sometimes call the congregation "my church." They are not his, but the Lord's (1 Corinthians 3:23). Members will be asked their beliefs. They will often reply, "These are the beliefs of the Church of Christ. These are doctrines of the Church of Christ." This sounds like the person has agreed to an unwritten creed which the Church of Christ requires. What should have been said was, "I can tell you the doctrine of the Lord" (Acts 13:12). Or, "I can show you the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42). The Lord's church has no listed set of beliefs like a denominational catechism. The doctrine we believe is not our own, but the Lord's. Another hint that one does not have an undemoninational understanding of the church is to hear a member frequently speak of "Church of Christ people" or "Church of Christ members" rather than "Christians" or "members of the church." We must never allow ourselves to make God's idea of the church like ours. We must make our idea like God's. Some preachers think that true worship must be the exact custom or order of things which they have always been accustomed to. If the Lord's Supper were served first, they would feel that it was unscriptural! If a prayer were said before the first song, they would complain! Some preachers even repeat a denominational ritual or prayer at the end of the service. Most members think they have to kneel and pray before they begin to worship. All these things indicate a narrow and denominational outlook. They show a sectarian spirit and attitude. Let us keep our mind clearly on the Bible concept of Christianity. Let us never

allow our thinking to become like the denominations around us. Let us keep an open mind to correct denominational tendencies. Let us understand the Lord's church so that others may understand also.

Chapter 10

Problems About Preacher Support

Does a preacher have a right to financial support?

2 Corinthians 11:8 says Paul took wages of other churches to serve the church at Corinth. 1 Timothy 5:18 teaches that the laborer is worthy of his hire. The Lord has ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 9:14).

Whose responsibility is it to support a preacher?

The general responsibility is for those who are taught to support their teacher (Galatians 6:6). This means that primarily a church where a preacher works is to pay him. But often in the planting of a new church, a strong church will help a weak church to pay its preacher. Romans 15:1 says that they who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please themselves. In this way strong Christians are sending the Gospel into other parts of the world (Mark 16:15). The church is the pillar (support) and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). But it is God's will that the weak church not remain weak. It must grow strong so as to send the Gospel to plant other congregations.

Romans 10:15 asks how a preacher can preach except he be sent.

How soon should a new church be able to help a preacher go to another work?

Philippians 4:15 says that “in the beginning of the Gospel” the church at Philippi sent to Paul when he was in Thessalonica. This shows that a church should not be a receiving church very long before it is able to be a sending church. A church must soon grow to support its own preacher and also grow to support other preachers.

From what source does a preacher’s support come?

The only source of finances in the Lord’s church is the regular first-day contribution (1 Corinthians 16:1,2). As part of the Sunday worship, each member gives as God has prospered him. He sacrifices cheerfully so as to be able to support the preaching of the Gospel. Christ’s plan of supporting the work of the church must be respected. No assessing, harvest fees, or bazaars must ever be used to support a preacher or to do any other part of the Lord’s work.

How much support should a preacher receive?

Matthew 7:12 says to do unto others as you would have others do unto you. A congregation must support its preacher with a fair and reasonable amount. He is worthy of his hire as is any other laborer (1 Timothy 5:18). If he gives full time to the Gospel, he should live of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 9:14). If he sows spiritual things unto the

church, he should be supported with physical things (1 Corinthians 9:11). Those who are taught should communicate unto their teacher in all good things (Galatians 6:6). A preacher should be given at least the same support as an average man's income in the congregation.

Should a preacher refuse to preach if there is no support?

The apostle Paul worked with his hands at tent-making so as to be able to plant the church in Corinth (Acts 19:3). Paul shows that he had the right in Corinth to ask for support, but he did not make this demand so as not to hinder the Gospel (1 Corinthians 9:6-19). Preachers often have to suffer in a new work because the brethren have not become strong. But they should have the same spirit of sacrifice and love of the Gospel which Paul had. Jesus promised that those who seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness will have all necessary physical things added unto them (Matthew 6:33).

What can a preacher do to encourage the church to support him?

His hard work and sacrifice are the most effective things possible. A church will do more in supporting a preacher who is zealous and unselfish than for any other reason. Elders (or preachers) who labor well in the word and doctrine are worthy of double honor (including support), according to 1 Timothy 5:17. But on the other hand, if the preacher is covetous, selfish, and always demanding his

money, he discourages the church's support. Most congregations will be ashamed to deny a hard-working evangelist an honorable wage.

What is the purpose of American aid to a new church?

Strong brethren in America are willing to help newly-planted churches in Nigeria (Romans 15:1). This help is sent to enable the weak church to become strong so as to support its own work and help other weaker churches. The purpose of American aid is to encourage Nigerian churches to grow to self-support.

Is American aid permanent?

No, it is temporary. American aid is given during the beginning period of a church. The Bible teaches Christians to bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2). Every Christian is to do his own work so as not to have to depend upon another (verse 4). Those who are taught in the Word of God are the rightful ones to support the one who teaches there (verse 6). This is the permanent plan of preacher support. Each independent congregation is to support its own preacher. Any outside help must only be temporary. American aid is not meant to be permanent.

How long should temporary aid continue?

A father temporarily helps his baby learn to walk. But in doing so, he begins to put the child on its own feet to get experience. The baby can never learn unless it takes steps for itself. In the same way American brethren wish to teach

new Nigerian churches to do their own work. To do so, they require them to begin to take steps for themselves. A church will never learn self-support if it does not get practice. It must begin immediately to do all that it possibly can. Then it must increase its ability step by step until it is able to walk by itself.

What about churches which do not try to do their part?

There are churches which do not want to learn to walk for themselves. When American brethren learn the true nature of these churches, they do not plan to continue to help them. The Lord helps those who help themselves. When churches do not try to do their part, it indicates that they do not understand the purpose of temporary aid. Such churches disqualify themselves from any help. They are like beggars on the streets of a township. Many beggars grow so accustomed to begging that they do not try to learn any business. In fact, they like begging. Many churches like to be begging churches. They do not really try to do their own work. If a person refuses to provide for his own needs, when he could do so if he really tried, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel (1 Timothy 5:8). The same is true of a congregation which does not wish to provide for itself but wishes others to continually do its part.

Isn't it unkind for American aid to be cut off from a church?

The Bible teaches that if any man will not work, neither let him eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10). The apostle Paul was a

zealous worker who served as a good example to the churches where he preached (2 Thessalonians 3:7-9). He commanded that disorderly members who would not work be disfellowshipped (2 Thessalonians 3:6,10-15). Likewise today, when a brother or a congregation will not work hard to do its part, it is a disorderly church. Money must not be continually wasted on such a church. It should, instead, be used to help some other church which will try to help itself.

How long should a church expect to receive outside help?

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 13:11, *“When I was a child I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”* Churches must grow up and put away childish things. It is no shame to be a baby for a while, but it is very shameful to continue to act like a baby even after one is older. Members who at first are expected to be babes in Christ are not expected to remain babes continually (1 Corinthians 3:1,2). *“When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat”* (Hebrews 5:12). *“Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men”* (1 Corinthians 14:20).

What are some of the reasons preachers change churches?

At the beginning of each year many preachers begin to

search for new churches. This is not a good sign either for the preachers or for the churches. If we look at some of the reasons for these changes perhaps it will help to stop a bad practice (1) One reason preachers change churches is the poor cooperation and support which some congregations give. Many churches will make good promises and agreements for supporting their preachers and then not even try to fulfill them. When a preacher struggles for several years with such poor encouragement, he finally is forced by necessity to move. (2) Another reason for changing churches is some self-appointed “bishop” or “head” of the congregation. Some man will claim that he brought the white men or that he was the first member or that he gives the largest contribution. He calls the congregation “his church” and seeks to have all the prominence. Many congregations will not assist the preacher in rebuking or in disfellowshipping such a brother. When all efforts have failed and such a brother continues to oppose the work of the preacher, the evangelist may find it necessary to leave. (3) A third reason is often covetousness on the part of the preacher. He may hear of a place which gives more support or which provides more physical benefits. Some have even moved to a distant place so as to take a job so as to get gain. The primary consideration with some preachers is the financial promise for themselves. (4) A fourth reason may be the matter of the agreement for American aid. Preachers will remain at a place until American aid finishes or diminishes and then leave. The next place he is searching for is not the church where he can do the most good, but he is looking for the

church with the most American aid for the longest period of time. It is much easier for these preachers to find a new place than to build up the present church to self support. (5) Some preachers leave a congregation and look for another because of sin which they want to leave hidden behind. They may have been guilty of fornication or other ungodliness and may wish to run away before these sins are detected. They are seeking a church as far away from the former one as possible.

Are there good reasons for preachers to change churches?

Other preachers change churches because they believe that their usefulness has diminished at a congregation. They may have worked zealously for several years and done much good, but due to the fact that their teaching gets only small response, they want to work where their talents can be used to produce more fruit. They are not seeking an easier place nor a place with better support. They only want to work where they can be the most useful. They may even move to a more difficult place which will require greater sacrifices, but they want to be where the Lord can use them best.

How can changes be made for good reasons?

Congregations and preachers should pray long and earnestly before making any change. If not, preachers may be like Jonah in running away from the place where God wants them to be. Or churches may select a rogue who will

cause great harm to the brethren. Decisions and agreements between churches and preachers are very important. They must be made with good motives and with wisdom from God.

What question should preachers always ask themselves before a change?

If Jesus Christ were in your place as a preacher, would He make the change which you plan to make? Would He be looking for the easiest place with the best support? Or would He be found working where He could give the most humble and useful service? Jesus forgot His hunger when He found a woman at the well who needed His teaching and who would hear Him (John 4). He said the foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, but He had no place to lay His head (Matthew 8:20). Would Jesus change preaching places for the reason that you are?

What question should churches always ask themselves before a change?

On the other hand, if the congregation where you are a member should be changing preachers, would you likely invite a preacher like Jesus? He had no earthly prominence. He could not be bribed or favoured so as to smile at your ungodliness. He would preach the whole truth and rebuke sin even in the leaders of the church and the village. He could see through all hypocrisy and pretense and know your hearts and the motives of everything you did. Would you want Jesus to be your preacher?

How much time should a preacher give to his work?

One of the reasons it is difficult to persuade congregations to support their preachers is that many preachers do not give sufficient time to their work. Because an evangelist does not have specific hours like other workers he often makes poor use of his time. He can actually spend most of his time with personal matters and have very little time remaining for the Lord's work. All of us have personal responsibilities such as bathing, preparing our dress, buying food, and many other matters. But secular workers who have daily hours for their jobs also have these personal duties. They know that time is required for these things, but they do not let them interfere with their work. They arrange and plan their personal activities so that their work will not be hindered. Every employer expects his workers to manage their own personal responsibilities so that a full day of work can be given. In like manner, evangelists must use their time well for their work. The work of preaching the Gospel is very much more important than any secular job. It requires more of a person's time and requires better use of one's time. Unless a preacher keeps all hindrances of a personal nature from crowding out his work he will not be an effective worker. Of all people he must arrange his time and his duties well. If he fails to do so he cannot expect good results from his efforts.

How can a preacher give full time to his work?

The Bible says we must lay aside every weight and the sin which does so easily beset us so as to run the race that

is set before us (Hebrews 12:1). The ancient Greeks in preparation for their races would practice with weights tied to their feet. When the time came for the actual race the weights would be taken off. If the weights were not taken off the runner would run very poorly. In this way must a Christian discard all hindrances to his service to God. Unless he lays aside all weights and sins his Christian race will be poorly run. Suppose at a large celebration a great race is to be run. All the runners have been training for many months. The time for the beginning of the race draws near. All the participants are ready at the starting line; all, that is, except one. He is the runner representing the churches of Christ. The game-master sends messengers to find the runner who is delaying the race. When they find him he is ironing the clothes which he hopes to wear as the winner at the reception following the race! It is good, of course, for the runner to want to have a good personal appearance, but he has let personal hindrances keep him from running the race. An evangelist being supported to give his full time to preaching the Gospel should not use the majority of his time on himself. The most of his time must be for reaching the lost and building up the church. The church is not supporting him to occupy his time with personal responsibilities. How can he be a proper example to the weaker members if he constantly spends his time for personal use?

Why is a preacher's time especially valuable?

The apostle Paul urges us to be "*redeeming the time,*

because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:16). “Redeeming” means “buying back.” This shows that a Christian’s time is very valuable. The devil is bidding for our time, and the Lord is bidding. We will decide to whom we will sell our time. We must “redeem” or “buy back” the time from the devil’s use and put it into the Lord’s service. This is especially true of preachers. The devil can keep them from putting their time into the Lord’s work merely by keeping them occupied with small personal duties. Congregations usually watch well the way a preacher spends his time. If he keeps his private affairs from dominating his time, the members see this. Since such a preacher puts much of his time into visiting, teaching, studying, and working, the congregation grows. Most churches will grow if the preacher occupies his time usefully in the work of the Lord. Few will grow if he does not.

Will churches usually support a hard-working preacher?

Most brethren in the churches are willing to support an active preacher. They like his work. They believe a labourer is worthy of his hire. They will be led by his example to join in his zealous activity. They will pay him because the church receives much benefit from his continuous work. They do not want him to leave. But failure to support a preacher well and allowing him to leave is often a sign of inactivity on his part. A young preacher being supported for full-time preaching recently said that he did not live in the village where he preached, he lived at his home. He cycled to the congregation on Sundays for services and perhaps on

one or two other days a week. Yet he called this “full-time preaching of the Gospel.” An evangelist cannot do full-time preaching without living among his members and among the people he is trying to convert. He cannot build up a congregation with two or three days a week. He cannot preach the Gospel effectively with a divided interest. Young preachers should not be offended by these answers. These admonitions are written by brethren with temptations like your own. The writer knows the many insignificant distractions that can hinder a preacher’s work. He has seen in his own life the results in congregational growth which come from effective work and ineffective work. The Lord has blessed us to see these drawbacks to successful preaching and has enabled us to pass this instruction and advice on to you. All that is written is written out of love for you and your work. We want you to be strong, faithful, and zealous preachers. We want you to take heed to yourselves and to your teaching so as to be able to save yourselves and those who hear you (1 Timothy 4:16).

When is it wrong for a preacher to hold a job?

The apostle Paul did secular work so that he might preach (Acts 18:3,4; 20:34; 1 Corinthians 9:11-15). Some preachers today do the reverse, they preach so that they may do secular work. Making tents for Paul was only a means of enabling him to preach the Gospel. The opposite is true of some present-day preachers. They preach only as a means of enabling them to find secular work. There is certainly nothing wrong in a preacher doing secular work.

Christians can work at any honorable labour. Sometimes it is necessary to work with our hands in order to continue preaching the Gospel. But it is wrong for a preacher to do secular work while claiming to be preaching the Gospel full-time. If an evangelist is being supported to spend all his time working with a congregation, and has entered into an agreement with a church to do so, he is bound by honor and honesty to do full-time preaching. He is practicing deceit to do otherwise.

Can a preacher choose to be a part-time preacher?

If a preacher wishes to be a part-time preacher and makes such an agreement with the church or with whoever may be helping to support him, there is no dishonesty. This type of arrangement may be necessary until a congregation can be strong enough to help more. But in such case the evangelist is not receiving full-time support for doing part-time work.

How do some preachers misunderstand preaching?

The major mistake most often made by preachers, especially young ones, is their idea of the work of a preacher. Paul labored night and day with tears (Acts 20:31). He taught publicly and from house to house (Acts 20:20). He suffered all things, not receiving his rightful support, so that he might not hinder the Gospel (1 Corinthians 9:12). How different was his attitude toward preaching from that of some preachers now. There are preachers among churches of Christ who have entered preaching because they think of

it as easy money. Their idea of a preacher is of one who does most of his work on Sunday with only a few duties at other times. Such preachers can see no reason why they should not take a secular job while receiving full-time support for preaching. They have plenty of time for other work because they do not spend much time at the work of preaching.

Why do preachers sometimes leave preaching?

Other preachers leave preaching and begin secular work. They are unwilling to suffer as a Gospel preacher must suffer. They are tempted by the higher salaries and greater worldly prestige of many secular jobs. They forget that the Lord has given them more talents because of their training and experience and will therefore require more of them in the Judgment. By leaving preaching they may be burying their talents instead of using them to bring forth an increase for the Lord (see Matthew 25:14-30).

Is preaching a greater work than other work?

Preaching the Gospel is the greatest work on earth. A Gospel minister is doing a far greater work than a government minister. The earthly salary is low, but the eternal reward is worth more than all our labour and suffering. The work of a zealous preacher requires more time than that of any other work. He must do his work more carefully and more thoroughly than the most skillful doctor or government official. His responsibilities are heavier than those of any other type of worker.

Do some preachers need to choose another work?

A preacher is not worthy of his work if he makes preaching take second place to any other thing. The work of preaching must always be primary and every other thing secondary to it. Jesus said a man cannot serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). James said a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways (James 1:8). Some brethren need to reconsider whether they really want the life and work of a preacher. Perhaps they have entered into preaching merely because there was no other means of being trained or no other source of employment. Such men may continue to pose as preachers, but they can never truly be Gospel preachers with such an attitude. They need dedication to their Lord and to His work. They need to decide whether they are willing to pay the price of being an evangelist of Christ.

How long should a preacher plan to remain at a church?

The apostle Paul worked at Corinth a little over eighteen months (Acts 18:11,18), and at Ephesus up to three years (Acts 19:10; 20:31). In order to support himself at Corinth he worked as a tentmaker. There is some evidence that he did the same at Ephesus. In considering Paul's work at these and other places, we can see three principles that helped to decide how long he should remain at a given work. These were: (1) the work that needed to be done, (2) the response of the people to his work, (3) whether greater or more necessary work could be done elsewhere.

What is included in considering the work that needs to be done?

The Apostle's labors with the churches of Christ at Corinth and Ephesus included some that preachers today cannot do, such as imparting the Holy Spirit through laying on of hands, and performing other miracles. But it also included the ordinary hard work required in public, congregational, and private teaching. As a result of his own labors, and the labors of those whom he taught, Christ's cause prospered. It is said in Acts 19:10 that "*all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.*" Making disciples of non-Christians, baptizing them into Christ, and teaching them to observe all that Christ commanded (Matthew 28:19,20) is a very large work, even when limited to a congregation, the village in which it meets, and the immediate area. The work that needs to be done can keep a preacher busily employed for a very long time.

How should the people's response affect his choice to stay?

A second factor to consider is the response of the people to a preacher's work. As long as local conditions permitted a fruitful work, Paul was willing to remain. The wrath of the Jews of Corinth brought an end to his most effective work there, and a similar prejudice later erupted at Ephesus. Anyone who has studied Paul's life knows that he had boundless courage. He did not leave these places for the sake of personal safety, but for the good of the cause of

Christ. In so doing, he was acting in accord with the Lord's teachings (Matthew 10:23). Why should a preacher leave a congregation as long as the church and the village are receptive to his good words and works?

When should a preacher move because a greater work can be done elsewhere?

Paul left one work in order to undertake a greater or more necessary one. Like Mary, he chose the good part (Luke 10:42), that is, the more necessary of two good and necessary courses of action. For example, although he might have labored with brethren at many places, enjoying their esteem and support, he instead hurried to Jerusalem with the money which Gentile Christians had sent to their needy Jewish brethren. Paul's visit to Jerusalem involved him in much suffering, including imprisonment at Caesarea, a hazardous voyage to Rome on which he endured shipwreck, and another two-year imprisonment at Rome itself. Yet by it he relieved the suffering of many, drew Jewish and Gentile Christians together with cords of love, and preached the gospel at Rome. A preacher today should be willing to remain with his present work unless he has opportunity to enter another which is clearly more necessary, and which will definitely permit him to render greater service in the kingdom.

How long should a church want a preacher to stay?

On the other hand, a church should support a preacher as long as his preaching is true to the Gospel, his life

upright, and his work promoting Christ's cause. The churches at Corinth and Ephesus would have been glad for Paul to remain with them longer than he did. They did not mind that his preaching was "not with enticing words of men's wisdom." The faithful never seemed to mind any fleshly infirmity he had (Galatians 4:13,14). Those who loved God gladly endured when he reproved, rebuked, and exhorted without fear or favor. They did not urge him to move on when he refused to spoil the pure religion with pagan and ungodly customs and influences which festered in the Roman Empire.

Are frequent changes good for churches and preachers?

Both churches and preachers are injured by frequent moves. Often a preacher is just about ready and able to do his best work when he is asked to leave. If a preacher wishes to move too often, this may be taken as a sign of his inability to get along with others. Or it may indicate his inability to give sound instruction over a long period and upon many needed subjects. Such a reputation will hurt the preacher, and cause him to have fewer opportunities for serving Christ. Likewise, churches which change preachers often will come to be thought of as undesirable. The better preachers, who are in demand everywhere, will avoid such churches, and the churches will then suffer from lack of good teachers.

What Kind of Churches Are the Strongest Churches?

Some of the best churches are those whose preachers

have been with them a long time. I know of outstanding churches in America who have been working with the same preacher for ten, fifteen, or twenty years. Both the churches and the preachers are much farther along in their development as a result of their long partnership. The same is true in Nigeria. As a rule the weakest churches are those who have no preacher, or who change preachers every year. I know of a congregation whose preacher has completed four years with them, and they want him to stay. This is a very encouraging sign which speaks well both for that church and their preacher. Churches are looking for preachers who are able Bible scholars, who work hard, and who are upright in life. Such a good man in partnership with a good church will glorify Christ and save many souls.

Chapter 11

Problems About Disfellowship

What Is Fellowship?

Fellowship is “taking part together.” Christians have fellowship with God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and with one another (1 John 1:3; Philippians 2:1). They share the world’s greatest associates in the world’s greatest work. But some so-called Christians “say” that they have fellowship with God, but “walk in darkness,” and “lie” and “do not the truth” (1 John 1:6). Real fellowship is much more than just claiming to have fellowship. It is walking in the light of Bible Truth, as God is in the truth, so that Christ’s blood can cleanse us from all sin (1 John 1:7). Many think that they have Christ’s fellowship, but Jesus says He never knew them (Matthew 7:21-23).

What Breaks Fellowship Between God and Man?

Genesis 3:8 shows that sin broke the fellowship between God and Adam and Eve. Isaiah 59:2 says that Israel’s sins had separated between them and God and had hid God’s face from them that He would not hear. God cannot have fellowship with sinners. Sinful men must be cleansed in Christ’s blood so as to again have God’s fellow-

ship (Ephesians 1:7). Cleansing through Christ depends upon repentance or turning away from sin (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38). Those who refuse to repent cannot come to God through Christ. And those who go back into sin and refuse to repent, cannot continue fellowship with God. Sin breaks God's fellowship with man.

Can Broken Fellowship Be Restored?

Simon the sorcerer was baptized into Christ, but soon thereafter fell into sin. He was instructed to repent and pray for forgiveness (Acts 8:13, 18-24). 1 John 1:9 promises that when Christians confess their sins to God, He is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse of all unrighteousness. An erring Christian may come back into God's fellowship by repentance, confession, and prayer.

What Is the Purpose of Disfellowship?

When erring Christians refuse to repent, God commands His people to disfellowship them so as to bring them to repentance. An adulterer in the church in Corinth was to be delivered to Satan in hopes that he would repent and be saved before it was too late (1 Corinthians 5:5). Because ungodly members who continue in their sin may think that they have fellowship with God, faithful Christians are to break fellowship with them to remind them that neither God nor God's people can fellowship sin.

Is a church free to choose whether to disfellowship a member or not to disfellowship him?

Christians are commanded in the name of the Lord

Jesus Christ (by His authority) to withdraw themselves from every brother that walks disorderly and not according to the teachings of the apostles (2 Thessalonians 3:6). Christ's commandments must be obeyed. Paul rebuked the church at Corinth for not putting away an adulterous member (1 Corinthians 5:1,2). Instead of mourning over the man, they were "puffed up," refusing to disfellowship him.

Why is it sinful for a church to refuse to disfellowship a disorderly member?

It is sinful to refuse to keep any commandment of Christ (1 John 3:4). The command to disfellowship an ungodly member is clearly and strongly stated (2 Thessalonians 2:6). If a church fails to obey this command, a little leaven will leaven the whole lump (1 Corinthians 5:6,7). The sinful member must be purged out lest his sin spread to other members.

Must the whole church act together?

1 Corinthians 5:4 says that action must be taken "when ye are gathered together." Disfellowship cannot be done privately or secretly. The whole church must act together or its action will fail and the church will be divided. This means that much teaching must prepare a church for disfellowship. Every member must know the purpose, reason, and method of disfellowship. Many classes and sermons must be used to be sure of full understanding in the congregation. The whole church must understand and act together.

Should personal grievances or offenses between members cause disfellowship to be necessary?

Jesus said in Matthew 18:15 that private faults between brethren should be settled between the two alone. Disfellowship need not be necessary for personal matters. If private settlement fails, taking witnesses should be tried (Matthew 18:16). Every possible effort should be used to avoid disfellowship. Only when all private and group pleadings fail should the matter be brought before the church (Matthew 18:17). Breaking fellowship is always to be a last resort. It is an action which is necessary because all other efforts have failed. It is like a doctor being forced to cut off a patient's leg to save his life. The doctor will try all possible ways to save the leg without cutting it off, but when all other treatments fail and the patient is going to die, then the leg is cut off as a last resort. Bringing a member to repentance without disfellowship is so much better than by disfellowship.

What are the methods to be used by the church to try to regain a sinful brother without disfellowship?

Galatians 6:1 says that brethren who are spiritual should restore a brother overtaken in a fault. They should do so in a spirit of meekness, considering themselves lest they also be tempted. The major thing is that the church truly be interested in its fallen brother. All members in the church are members of Christ's body and are members of one another (1 Corinthians 12:12,20; Romans 12:5). All Christians should have the same care for one another (1

Corinthians 12:25). If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it (1 Corinthians 12:26). It is like the human body made up of many parts. Each organ is important, and the body is concerned when any part is wounded or diseased. The other parts of the body will dress and nourish the weak part so as to restore it. They do this in gentleness with great care. The hands which dress a wound must be clean, and the members which restore a brother must consider themselves. Many methods may be used such as visits, prayers, public and private teaching. But in all efforts the love and interest of the whole church toward regaining and restoring the overtaken brother is most important. And their spirit of meekness and self-examination will do much to make the members successful in their efforts.

Is it a great thing to restore an erring brother before disfellowship is necessary?

James 5:19,20 says that anyone converting an erring brother has converted a sinner from the error of his way, has saved a soul from death (hell), and has hidden a multitude of sins. A member who again becomes entangled in the world is in a worse condition than before. He is like a washed pig which returns to wallowing in the mud, or like a dog returning to eat his vomit (2 Peter 2:20-22). Faithful members must remember the value of one erring soul (Matthew 16:26) and strive with great urgency to save it from hell.

How long should the church wait before disfellowship is begun?

The Bible gives no time limit before disfellowship. But sin must be rebuked as soon as it is discovered in the church. Unless we take heed quickly to sin and error, it will lead to departure (Hebrews 3:12). We are commanded to exhort one another daily lest any be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:13). The longer sin goes uncorrected, the more difficult it is to correct it. If a member has had time to be taught of his sin and yet continually refuses to repent, disfellowship must be begun. Titus 3:10 says a factious man is to be rejected *“after the first and second admonition.”* To wait longer is to bring more reproach from non-members and to tempt more who are members.

What are the steps of actual disfellowship?

In all steps, the church must act together upon the teachings of the Bible. First, there must be public and private teaching against the sin and about the necessity and meaning of disfellowship. All members pray and plead with the guilty one and fully understand the steps to be taken if he will not repent. Second, the disorderly member is publicly warned that if he does not repent within a reasonable time, disfellowship will be necessary. Third, if all efforts to avoid disfellowship fail, announcement must be publicly made that disfellowship has taken place. Writing a letter with the above Scriptures and with the charges of his sin is also advisable. The person is then considered outside the fellowship of the church.

What if the member still attends the services?

No one can act as a policeman and forbid a person from attending the church service. But the person must understand that he has no fellowship with God or God's people, and that until he repents his worship is vain (Isaiah 59:1; 1 John 1:6). He must never be used to lead prayer, lead singing, teach, or any other duty. Nothing is done that could make him think that he has approval while still in his sin.

How should members treat a person disfellowshipped?

2 Thessalonians 3:14,15 says to note the man and to have no company with him that he may be ashamed. Yet he should not be counted as an enemy but admonished as a brother. To have no company with him means to refuse to eat with him or do any other thing that might suggest approval of his life (1 Corinthians 5:11). Hospitality must be refused lest it be misunderstood as bidding him Godspeed (2 John 9-11). Kindness mixed with firmness must be shown him by every member of the church. He must always know that the church prays for his repentance, but the church cannot fellowship him in his sin.

What should the church do when he does repent?

The disfellowshipped member at Corinth repented of his sin because of the shame and sorrow of being cut off from the fellowship of the church (2 Corinthians 2:6). Paul then commanded the church to forgive him and comfort him lest he be overcome with too great sorrow (verse 7). The church was then to confirm their love to him (verse 8).

What type of sins require disfellowship?

All sin is sin, but some sins show a more wicked heart than others. A Christian must have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but must reprove them (Ephesians 5:11). Sinning willfully (deliberately) shows a very corrupt condition of heart (Hebrews 10:26-31). Continuing in sin or sinning until death has no chance of forgiveness (1 John 5:16). Therefore, any member's sin which is open and seen by others, which he refuses to repent of even after seeing the truth about it, is worthy of disfellowship (2 Thessalonians 3:6,14). Certain such open and deliberate sins are listed in 1 Corinthians 5:11 as requiring withdrawal of fellowship: (1) a fornicator (including polygamists (Romans 7:3; 1 Corinthians 7:2), (2) a covetous man (see Chapter 4), (3) an idolater (ju-ju is idolatry), (4) a railer (a slanderer, a man with a foul tongue), (5) a drunkard, (6) an extortioner (a swindler, a cheat, one with the heart of a thief). Titus 3:10 also lists "a heretic" to be rejected. The Revised Version says, "a factious man."

Should false teachers be withdrawn from?

Romans 16:17 says to mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the apostles' doctrine and avoid them. Division-causers often arise in the church bringing false teaching (Acts 20:29,30). 2 John 9-11 shows that anyone going beyond the doctrine of Christ, instead of abiding only within the Scriptures, is without God. He must not be received nor approved lest we become partakers in his evil deeds. Teachers of false doctrines who cause division in the church must be disfellowshipped.

Won't disfellowship weaken the church?

When sin entered the Jerusalem church, stronger discipline than disfellowship was used. Because the apostles could know their hearts, Annanias and Sapphira were slain before the congregation (Acts 5:1-10). The result was that fear came upon all the church and upon as many as heard these things (verse 11). Believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women (verse 14). Keeping the church pure makes it strong. Outsiders are attracted to a congregation where sin is not tolerated. When Christ's commandments are obeyed, His church grows. Disfellowship done Scripturally by the whole congregation is effective.

Chapter 12

Conclusion: What Would Jesus Do?

The New Testament is not just a lawbook. It is written not only as the letter of God's will but as the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:6). It does not mention every detailed way in which a man can obey or disobey God. Many instances and circumstances of righteousness or unrighteousness will not have specific mention in God's Word. This is because Christianity is a religion of principles as well as commands. It is a religion of love as well as law. The Christian is one whose heart and life have been changed, not just one who outwardly keeps a noble set of rules.

It is true that every requirement of God is found in the Bible. It is true that the inspired Scriptures thoroughly furnish the man of God unto every good work (2 Timothy 3:16,17). But this is done by pointing men to Jesus Christ as the perfect revelation of God's will to man. God has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Christ who called us by His own grace and virtue (2 Peter 1:3). God formerly spoke in many different ways, but now speaks only in His Son (Hebrews 1:1,2). To know God's will, therefore, we must know Christ.

It is life eternal to know God and Him whom God did send, His Son Jesus (John 17:3). We must count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord (Philippines 3:8,1). God's love is revealed in Christ (Romans 8:38,39). Salvation is found in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 2:10). Redemption is in Christ (Romans 3:24). Every spiritual blessing is in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). Everything in Christianity is revealed and centered in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

If God had written a Bible which had listed every possible method of sin, or if He had described in full detail every righteous thought, word, or action, the Bible would not be useable. It would be so big and complicated that we could never find our information. Instead, the Bible describes the teachings and example of God living in the flesh as Jesus Christ His Son. Not even all details of the things which Jesus did are recorded in the Bible, but a sufficient and accurate testimony of Himself is recorded so that we may believe that He is the Son of God, and believing, might have life through His name (John 20:30,31; 21:25).

The Bible is even written in such a way that those who wish to may misunderstand it. The unlearned and unsteadfast may wrest or twist the Scriptures to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:16). Those who do not love the truth will find a strong delusion that they might believe a lie and be damned (2 Thessalonians 2:11,12). Without an open mind and careful study we cannot rightly divide the Word of Truth (2 Timothy 2:15). These warnings show the impor-

tance of truly knowing and imitating Christ, as well as reading His Book.

Jesus left us an example that we should follow His steps (1 Peter 2:21). We must imitate Paul and others as they imitated Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). We must follow the spirit of Christ as well as the letter of His commands (Romans 8:14; Romans 2:29; 7:6). In this way we will be following the real meaning of God's will rather than mere outward observations. We will serve and obey God from the heart, not just by legal restrictions and binding requirements.

The conclusion then is this: We must search the Scriptures to find Christ (John 5:39). When we know Christ, we know God's full and complete revelation of Himself and His will. We may not always find a verse which tells us in detail what to do on every occasion, but we can ask, "What would Jesus do?" This is following the example of Christ. This is imitating Christ. This is being led by the Spirit of Christ. The answer to every question or problem which the Christian or the church may face is answered in asking, "What would Jesus do?" Jesus left us an example that we should follow His steps (1 Peter 2:21).

"The Churches of Christ Salute You"

Churches of Christ today are pleading with the world to forsake all the vain teachings of men (Matthew 15:9), and to take the Scriptures as their only guide (2 Timothy 3:16,17), to believe in Christ and His Word, to genuinely repent of sin, and to be baptized into Christ to put on Christ

(Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:26,27). This adds men to the church today just as it did in the first century (Acts 2:47, 1 Corinthians 12:13). By true Christian worship (John 4:23,24) and being faithful until death (Revelation 2:10), God's people can live with Him forever.