



MAP ♦ P.O. Box 128 ♦ 575 U.S. Highway 250 ♦ Savannah, OH 44874 ♦ (419) 962-1515 ♦ July 2015

A Safe Place to Cry and Laugh

—Joy Knepp

Well, it's been awhile since I wrote, but that does NOT mean that God hasn't been teaching and revealing things to me! I'm gonna tell you about the biggest thing that has happened to me this year. It might not sound big to you, but to me it was HUGE. Thank You, Jesus! :)

This year started off VERY rocky for us in more than one way, but in the middle of all the chaos God gave me a golden nugget. You know, I've always desired to be a good wife, but felt like I failed miserably in many different ways; however, Psalm 37:4 says, "*Delight thyself in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of thine heart.*"

I believe God always knows the desires of my heart and He gives me wisdom in little doses as I can handle it. I also believe that sometimes God has to shake my world (sometimes in a not-so-pleasant way!), so I'm willing to listen to what He wants to tell me, which is exactly what happened at the beginning of this year.

My husband and I had hit some rocks in our marriage and weren't sure how to fix things and move forward. I was bent out

of shape and not at all in a praying mood. I did a lot of "groaning in my spirit," though. One day, God so tenderly and mercifully planted a beautiful thing into my mind, and our marriage has soared to heights we had never known! Ladies, let me tell you, God has given us a huge, important job when He created us to be a man's helpmeet!

Anyway, the words that God put in my mind were, "Joy, have you ever TRUELY been your husband's safe place?" At first it was a little like gears grinding inside of me, because don't we all want to think, "It's his fault; he should come apologize to me first"?

However, the words, "safe place" kept playing over and over in my mind like a broken record, so I finally grabbed my Bible (in a rather heated manner), and started looking for the verse that had those words in it. Now, I had read that verse many times, but it had never soaked in like it did that day.

The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. —Proverbs 31:11

Think about the safest place you can

imagine. I don't know where that is for you all because we're all different, but for myself, I think about a beautiful room where I can cry if I'm sad and laugh when I'm happy and I don't have to worry that someone will say I'm crazy or weird. I can say anything that's on my mind.

Anytime the world is going crazy around me and things feel out of control in my life, I can go into that room and be safe in whatever mood I'm in. I can always totally relax and let the cares roll off me in that room.

What if, one day, I'd be sad and upset and I would want to go into my beautiful, safe room to get sweet relief, only to discover that the door is locked? I would probably go around looking for other doors or a window because I know what's inside of that room and I need that feeling so I can cope with life and whatever situation I'm in. I would probably bang on the door and walls and shout things that I really didn't mean, out of desperation.

How long would I try to get in before I'd

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give up? How would I feel when I'd finally give up? I would probably feel rejected, unloved, unwanted, worthless, ugly, etc. Would I try to convince myself that I don't need a safe place, or would I be tempted to go look for another safe place?

Well, it was a bitter pill for me, but that's exactly how my husband feels when I am not his safe place. When I told him what God had revealed to me, he cried and said

that is exactly how he feels but had no idea how to tell me, and he was afraid to try to tell me for fear of what I would say. Our marriage hasn't been the same since that and we both love the change!

Is the door to my husband's safe place always open, or does he sometimes have to look to another place? I praise God that He shook me up and challenged me with this, even if it took something painful to

wake me up!

I will pray for all of you reading this, because I believe God wants amazing things for our marriages!

Love you all,

Joy

This article first appeared in the September 2011 issue of the Amish Voice.

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The Storm

—Author Unknown



Years ago, I was gripped as I listened to a minister who for several years had faithfully served the church. His work had taken him all over this country. As he concluded his message, he told of one of the most frightening yet thought-provoking experiences of his life.

He had been on a long flight from one place to another. The first warning of the approaching problems came when the sign on the airplane flashed on: **Fasten your seat belts**. Then, after a while, a calm voice said, "We shall not be serving the beverages at this time as we are expecting a little turbulence. Please be sure your seat belt is fastened."

As he looked around the aircraft, it became obvious that many of the passengers were becoming apprehensive. Later, the voice of the announcer said, "We are so sorry that we are unable to serve the meal at this time. The turbulence is still ahead of us."

Then the storm broke. The threatening cracks of thunder could be heard even above the roar of the engines. Lightning lit up the darkening skies, and within moments that great plane was like a cork tossed around on a heavenly ocean. One moment the airplane was lifted on terrific currents of air; the next, it dropped as if it were about to crash.

The minister confessed that he shared the discomfort and fear of those around him. He said, "As I looked around the plane, I could see that nearly all the passengers were upset and alarmed. Some were praying. The future seemed gloomy, and many were wondering if they would make it through the storm."

Then, I suddenly saw a little girl. Apparently the storm meant nothing to her. She had tucked her feet beneath her as she sat on her seat; she was reading a book, and everything within her small world was calm and orderly. Sometimes she closed her eyes, and then she would read again; then she would straighten her legs, but worry and fear were not in her world. When the plane was being rocked by the terrible storm, when it tilted this way and that, as it rose and fell with frightening severity, when all the adults were scared half to death, that marvelous child was completely composed and unafraid." The minister could hardly believe his eyes.

It was not surprising therefore, that when the plane finally reached its destination and all the passengers were hurrying to disembark, our minister lingered to speak to the girl whom he had watched for such a long time. Having commented about the storm and behavior of the plane, he asked why she had not been afraid.

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The sweet child replied, "Sir, my Dad is the pilot, and he is taking me home."

There are many kinds of storms that rock our world -- physical, mental, financial, domestic, and many other storms can easily and quickly darken our skies and throw our mind into apparently uncontrollable movement. We have all known such times, and let us be honest and confess, that it is much easier to be at rest when our feet are on the ground than

when we are being tossed about a darkened sky.

While we are going through those times, let us also remember: our Father is the Pilot. He is in control and He is taking us home.

John 14:1-6 says: *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? ⁶ Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

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My Prayer

—Norma Miller



If some small act of mine has caused
A soul to hurt, or break, or pause;
If some small careless move of mine
Removed the eye of one from thine;
Dear Father, forgive.
If some small reckless shake of head

Caused grief, or pain, or even dread;
If some small, thoughtless word
Was cause for one small soul to hurt;
Dear Father, forgive.

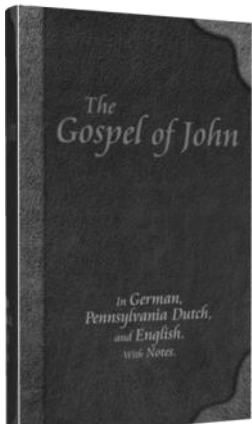
If some small selfish move of mine
Caused someone else's heart to pine
And my obsession of myself
Gave pause to someone else's health;
Dear Father, forgive.

For in this life, one thing I care.
To offer rest and not despair.
To bless the ones I meet each day
To know that I sent love their way;
To know that just one soul was blessed
Was offered peace and not distress;

To know that through my restless heart
One soul found light in place of dark;
That on the day of bitt' rest storm
Was found a calm, and rest, and warm;
And when the day was dark and bleak,
Someone was moved Your heart to seek...

Would make it worth the sweat and tears
And toil and sadness of the years.
To know that love was found in me,
Would bring me joy eternally.

Today, My Father, this I plea;
Take up residence in me.
Fill My heart with Your embrace
So I spread love, and joy, and grace.



The Gospel of John in three languages, plus notes

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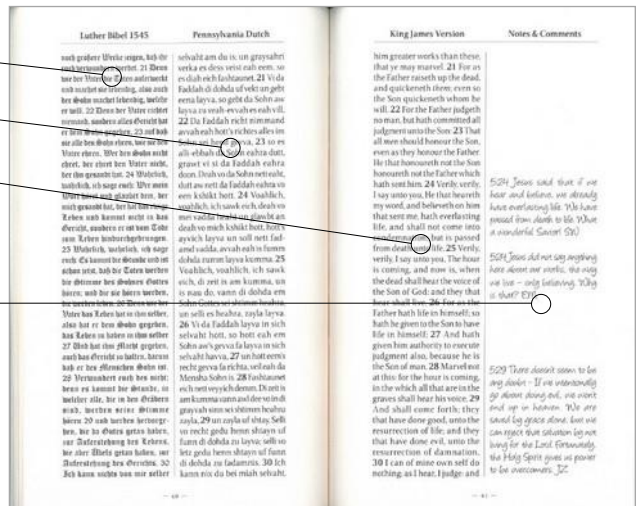
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Prophecy, Part 3

Part 3

AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS

As the world continues to turn its back on God, we want to take a look at what the future holds according to the One who is the Beginning and the End—God! We hope you

enjoy and benefit from this series, courtesy of Middletown Bible Church. Follow along, fill in the blanks, and look up! May we all be ready for the return of Jesus Christ!

You will need a Bible for this lesson.

The True and the False

There are two kinds of prophets: true prophets (God's prophets) and false prophets. False prophets are those who pretend they have God's message, but they really do not. They pretend they are speaking for God, but they really are not. God has not even sent them!

How could a person tell a true prophet from a false prophet? God has given us two tests so that we can know the difference:

Test Number One: It Must Come To Pass

This test is found in Deuteronomy 18:21-22. If a prophet says that something is going to happen, then it must come to pass! The prophet must be 100% accurate. He must never be wrong. His prediction must come true.

For example, suppose a prophet were to make this prediction: "Thus saith the Lord; Don't worry because the enemy

will not invade the land. There will be peace in this land for many months." Then, two weeks after the prophet says this, the enemy comes and invades the land. Is this prophet a true prophet? _____

Did God really give him this message? How do you know? Does God ever make a mistake about what is going to happen in the future? _____ If a prophet is a true prophet, then his word *shall come to* _____ (Jeremiah 28:9).

God is never wrong! When He tells us what will happen in the future, we know it really will happen. If the Bible says it will happen, then we can count on it!

Elijah was a true prophet. One day he told wicked King Ahab that Jezebel (Ahab's wicked wife) would be eaten by dogs (I Kings 21:23). Did this happen just like the prophet said (see 2 Kings 9:30-36)? _____ God's prophets always speak the truth!

The prophet Micah said that Christ would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Did this come to pass (Luke 2:4)? _____

The prophet Daniel said that the Messiah (Christ) would be "CUT OFF" (Daniel 9:26). This means that He would die by a violent death. Did this really happen (John 19:16-10)? _____

God's prophets are never wrong!

What was the punishment for a false prophet (Deuteronomy 18:20)? _____

To pretend to speak God's message when one is not really speaking God's message is very serious! To cause people to think that they are hearing God's message when they really are not could be compared with a doctor giving a person medicine which he promises will cure him, when in reality it will actually kill him!

Test Number Two: It Must Be God's Message

The second test of a prophet is found in Deuteronomy 13:1-5. What happens if a prophet predicts something and it **does** come to pass?

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Does this mean that he must be a true prophet? For example, suppose the prophet says, "Thus saith the Lord; the enemy is coming to invade us, but we will be ready to meet this army and we will defeat them." Suppose also that the enemy does come and the enemy is defeated. Does this mean that this prophet must be a true prophet?

Sometimes what a false prophet says will happen actually comes to pass (Deuteronomy 13:1-2). God allows it to happen; but look at what the false prophet is saying: "Let us go after _____ gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them" (Deut. 13:2).

Is this the right kind of message? Would God ever tell His people to go after other gods? This message is contrary to God's Word and contrary to God's Ten Commandments (see Deut. 5:7-9). It is a false message. This prophet is trying to turn the people "away from the _____ your God" (Deut. 13:5).

Would a true prophet ever give this kind of a message? Why not? The sign or prediction must be tested by God's Word. It must not go against or disagree with what God has said. It must agree with what God has said and build upon it. How was the false prophet punished (Deut. 13:5)?

Suppose there were a man living today who claimed to be God's prophet. One day he says: "On August 28 there will be a great earthquake in California." Suppose that this happens just as he predicted, and then the prophet says: "This proves that I am a great prophet of God. Now I want everybody to follow me. Don't believe the

Bible because the Bible is filled with stories that are not really true. I'll show you the true way to live." Is this man a true prophet? Why or why not?

Are There Prophets Today?



We do not need prophets today because we have God's Word—the Bible. In the Bible, God has told us all that we need to know about the future. If you want God to speak to you today, you do not have to look for someone like Isaiah or Jeremiah or Daniel. Today, God's message is found in the Bible, and the Bible is God's complete and finished message. Does God want anything to be added to His Word (Revelation 22:18)? _____

Does God want anything to be taken away or subtracted from His Word (Revelation 22:19)? _____

The Bible contains everything we need, and nothing is missing or lacking. Nothing needs to be added.

If we want to learn about the future, we do not have to find someone with a crystal ball or someone who claims to be able to predict what will happen. The Bible has all of the answers. God warns us about trying to get the answers in the wrong way (see Deut. 18:9-14.). If we want to hear God's message today, we can open up the Bible and read it!

This does not mean that the Bible answers every question we can think of

about the future. Here are some questions the Bible does not answer:

What year and day will Christ return? (see Matthew 24:36).

Who will be elected as the next President?

Will I be alive 10 years from now?

Can you think of any other questions about the future which the Bible does not answer? God does tell us all we need to know about the future, and the answers are found in the Bible. We can trust God because He knows **everything** about the future. What we do not know, He does know!

We do not know what the future holds, but we know Who holds the future!

If we leave God's Word out (neglect and forget the Bible), then we leave God out. God is the only One with all the answers and all the wisdom. So if we leave God out, we will be in the dark. If a cook refuses to look at the cookbook, how can he or she follow the recipe? The cook must look at the book where the recipe is found.

Why Is Prophecy Important?

Why does God tell us about the future? Let's look at ten reasons:

1. Prophecy warns unbelievers. The future for unbelievers is not a happy one. Death and judgment await them. The wicked are warned about the future again and again (see Proverbs 14:12; 2 Thess. 1:8-9).

2. Prophecy comforts believers because their future is bright and happy (1 Thess. 4:13-18). The Bible gives strength to live by and comfort to die by. A believer can bravely face death because he knows what God has said about the future (Philippians 1:21-23; 2 Cor. 5:8).

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3. Prophecy proves that God's Word is true. No prophecy in the Bible has ever failed. Everything that God has said about the future has come to pass or will come to pass. As we see prophecy being fulfilled, we are reminded that God's Word "is T _____" (John 17:17) and that God "cannot _____" (Titus 1:2).

4. Prophecy gives us a true picture of the world's problems. As we look at our world, we see wars and crime and sin and sickness and all kinds of problems. Without the Bible, these things would trouble and disturb us. God's Word helps us to understand why these things are so, and how they will come to an end.

5. Prophecy helps us to know what to expect. A person would be upset and troubled by wars if he thought there should not be any wars in the world. But Jesus told us to expect wars (Matthew 24:6-7). The believer is not shocked by reports of wars; he expects them. Knowing what to expect also keeps us awake (Romans 13:11). If your family knew that a thief would try to enter the house at 3:00 a.m.,

would they sleep that night? God has told us about the future so that we can be spiritually awake and ready (1 Thessalonians 5:4-8; Matthew 24:43).

6. Prophecy increases our understanding of the Bible. A large part of the Bible is prophetic (tells us about what will happen in the future). If a person does not understand prophecy, then he will not understand the Bible. Just as a person would not be very educated if he did not understand arithmetic and grammar, so a person is not very sharp spiritually if he does not understand prophecy.

7. Prophecy helps us to know God's will. If I never learn what the Bible says about the future, then I will not know what God's purpose is for my world and for my life.

8. Prophecy helps the believer to walk with God. You cannot walk with God unless you know which way God is moving. In Genesis 18, we read that Abraham needed to know that God was going to judge Sodom. Does God want to

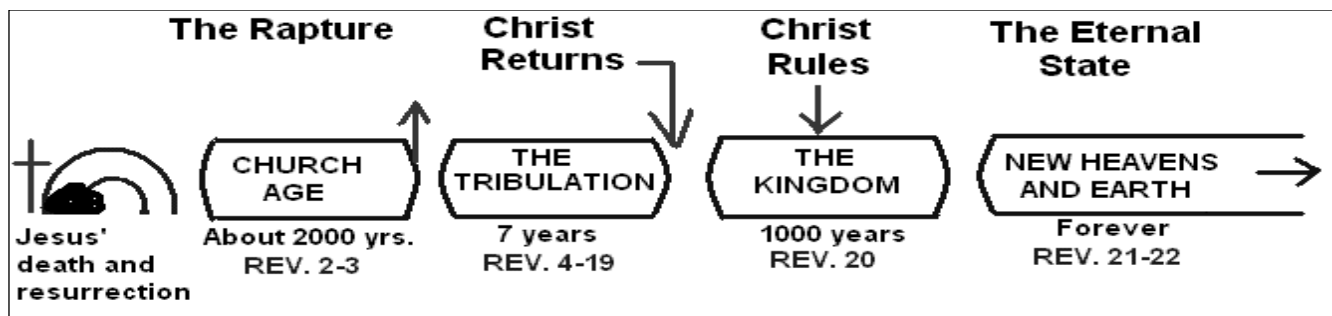
hide from us what He is going to do (Gen. 18:17)? _____

9. Prophecy stirs and stimulates us to live a holy and righteous life (Hosea 14:9). The better we understand the future, the better we will walk with God today. If I really believe that Christ could come at any time, should this make a difference in how I live (Titus 2:11-14)? _____

10. Prophecy helps us to help others. Our unsaved friends do not understand what is going on in the world, and to them the future is dark and unknown. We have the answers that they need! We can say, "Let me show you what God says about that." The Jewish people have faced great persecution and horrible terrorist attacks. We can befriend the Jews and help them to understand that God has a wonderful plan and a wonderful future for the nation of Israel (Isaiah 2, Isaiah 11, Jeremiah 31, etc.). The better we know the Bible, the better we will be able to help others.

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Things To Come: Jesus once said that the Holy Spirit would come and would show them His followers *things to* _____ (John 16: 13). The Spirit of God wants to show and teach us about future things and about events that are going to come to pass. As we study the Bible with the help of these notes we want to pray and ask the Spirit of Truth to teach us all that we need to know about the future. Here are some of the major events we will be studying:



We will also be learning about different persons: the Lord Jesus Christ, believers, unbelievers, the angels, the devil, the demons, the man of sin (antichrist), the false prophet, etc. As we walk down the road of time, we need to understand what lies ahead. May God help us to understand the important prophecies found in His Word so that we will not be in the dark (2 Peter 1:19).

We don't know what the future holds, but we know WHO holds the future!

In the next issue, we will look at what to expect in the days ahead.

END

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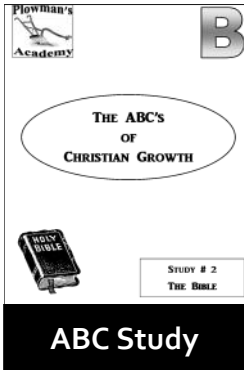
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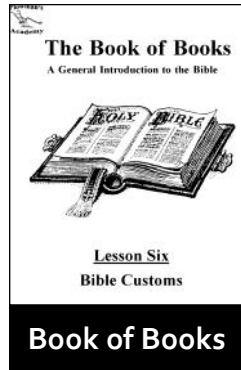


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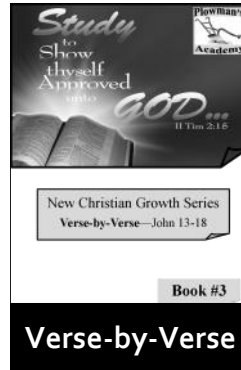
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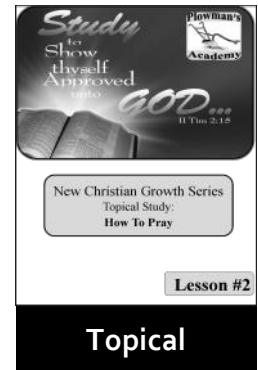
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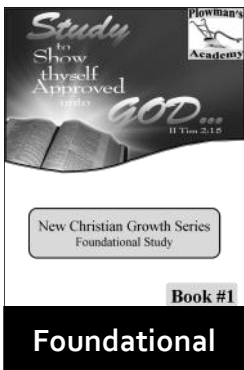
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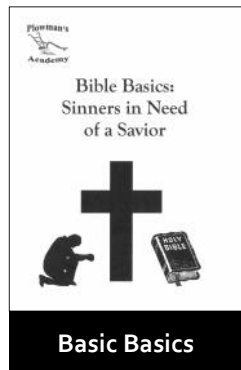
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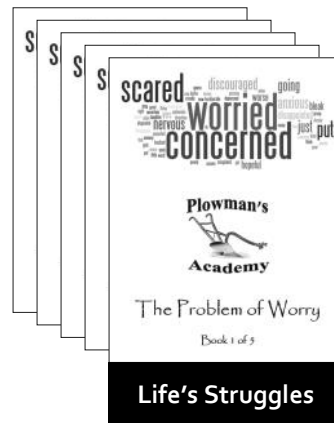
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7

Life's Struggles
Five Lessons

1. *Fear*
2. *Pride*
3. *Doubt*
4. *Anger*
5. *Worry*

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Date of Birth: _____

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got most of my training for ministry. What I didn't do is spend four years sitting in a college class room, but rather, I sat under 15 years of great Bible teaching.

During those 15 years of church life, the Lord showed me where I was gifted, and soon I began to realize something. Every time I found myself teaching, preaching, mentoring and discipling someone, I felt good about myself. The more I understood my God-given gifts, the more I found myself wanting to be involved in my church and the community; and let me just point out, that hardly ever did I look for or expect the church to serve me; rather, I looked for ways that I could serve the church and our community. Listen! I believe that Jesus set the example by coming to our world and serving us. His whole duty and calling was to sacrifice and give His life for us. Can we do any less?

With those things said, I now have a few questions for you to consider before we get into the heart of our study.

- ◆ Have you figured out what your God-given gifts are? If so, are you operating in those gifts? Does the church you belong to allow you to operate in your God-given gifts?
- ◆ Are you serving in your local church and community? If so, are you doing so because you have to, or because you want to?

- ◆ When you compare the church you attend with what the scriptures teach about the local church, are you on track? Are you mostly inward focused, or do you also reach out to our lost and dying world?

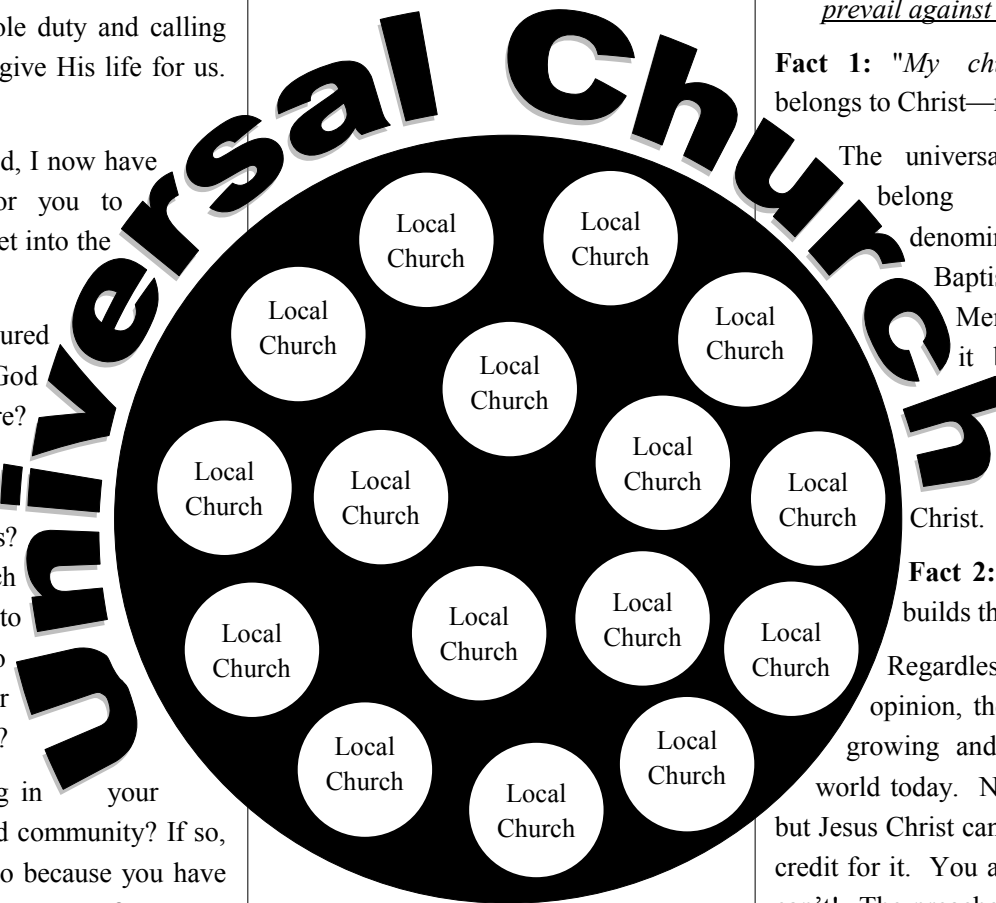
Jesus said:

Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.
Mark 16:15

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations... Matthew 28:19

...ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the utmost part of the earth. Acts 1:8

A local church that focuses only on self is outside God's will. It is also a dead church.



Universal and Local Church

I believe the Bible teaches of a:

- (1) Universal church, and a
- (2) Local church

First, let me explain what I mean by *universal church* and then we'll conclude our study by looking at the *local church*.

Note: By the way, *universal* simply means *worldwide*.

Universal Church

A. The Universal Church Was Founded by Jesus Christ

Matthew 16:18 says: *And I (Jesus) say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock ⁽¹⁾ I will build ⁽²⁾ my church; and ⁽³⁾ the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

Fact 1: "My church." The church belongs to Christ—not man.

The universal church does not belong to a certain denomination, such as Baptist, Amish, Methodist, Mennonite, etc. Nor does it belong to a certain culture or minister. The *universal church* belongs to Jesus Christ.

Fact 2: "I will build." Christ builds the church.

Regardless of anyone's opinion, the *universal church* is growing and thriving in our world today. No one but Jesus Christ can take credit for it. You and I can't! The preachers can't!

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Consider Acts 2:47. It says that the early church was *“Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”*

- ◆ Who did the adding? Jesus did!
- ◆ Who does the adding today? Jesus does!

Fact 3: "The gates of hell shall not prevail." Christ Himself protects the church.

Ever since the church began in the book of Acts, Satan and his people have tried their best to get rid of her; but notice, Jesus promised that nothing, including the gates of hell, will overcome and conquer His church. No one is capable of bringing her down!

If you belong to the *universal church of God*, you are part of Christ's valued possession. Consider the price that Jesus paid for His church.

To the elders of the church, God says: *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with his own blood.* —Acts 20:28

How valuable is the universal church to Jesus Christ?

Oh, she is precious to Him! He is madly in love with her and considers us His

beautiful bride! One day, the bride (that's us) will go to meet the Groom (that's Him). When that happens, we will see and experience the wedding of all weddings. Read Ephesians 5:25-27 and Revelation 19:6-9.

At times, I can hardly wait for these things to take place, and they will!

Holy Ghost fell on them (Gentiles), as on us (Jews) at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

—Acts 11:15-16

Just like the church had a beginning in Acts chapter 2, so the church will have an ending in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17. The Apostle Paul writes:

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we (universal church) ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

In Case You Missed It...

On Sunday evening, May 3rd, we did a one hour discussion on **The Church**. If you were unable to join us for that *Amish Voice Conference* call, you can still dial in and listen to the recording.

Dial (641) 715-3800, Enter Code: 89752

Further Instructions: Any time during a message, you can press the # key and it will take you back to the opening announcement at the very beginning.

- 1) Press 2 to reverse 30 seconds
- 2) Press 3 to skip forward 30 seconds
- 3) Press 8 to pause, and 8 again to resume
- 4) At the end of the recording after you hear the tone, you may leave a message, thoughts, or questions. Press the # key and then 1 to save the message.

B. The Universal Church was Activated by the Holy Spirit

Before Jesus went back to heaven, He gave his disciples some last minute instructions. He told them to go to the upper room in Jerusalem and wait on the Holy Spirit. They followed His advice, and in Acts chapter 2, we read about the powerful event. The Holy Spirit came upon the 120 men and women who were gathered there waiting, and the church was born. In Acts 11:15-16, Peter recalls those early days of ministry. He says:

And as I (Peter) began to speak, the

The Local Church

The *universal church* is invisible and scattered throughout the world. The *local church* is visible and located in your neighborhood and in mine.

Consider, for instance, the following assemblies which were established as local churches:

- ◆ *unto the church of God which is at Corinth... —1 Cor 1:2*
- ◆ *to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi. —Phil 1:1*

Continued next page

◆ *To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse. — Col 1:2*

◆ *Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem... —Acts 11:22*

As you continue this study, notice how the Lord directed the apostle Paul in organizing and bringing structure to the local churches. Paul writes:

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: —Titus 1:5

...to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons. Phil 1:1

And from Mil-ee-tus he (Paul) sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. Acts 20:17

Today, we have tons of people separating themselves from the structured and organized church movement that began with the early church and was, I believe, founded by God Himself. Those who do so create their own little island and set of beliefs. They are often bitter, rebellious, and spend much of their time and energy mocking the *local church*. Let me tell you, that those who do so are outside the will of God, and they will bear the consequences.

Those who belong to the local church are:

1. Ones who have been saved:

And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God,

and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. —Acts 2:46-47

2. Ones who have been baptized:

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. —Acts 2:41

Four times in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 we read:

- ◆ *when you come together in the church*
- ◆ *when you come together therefore in one place...*

Why did they come together?

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. —1 Cor 11:26

Conclusion:

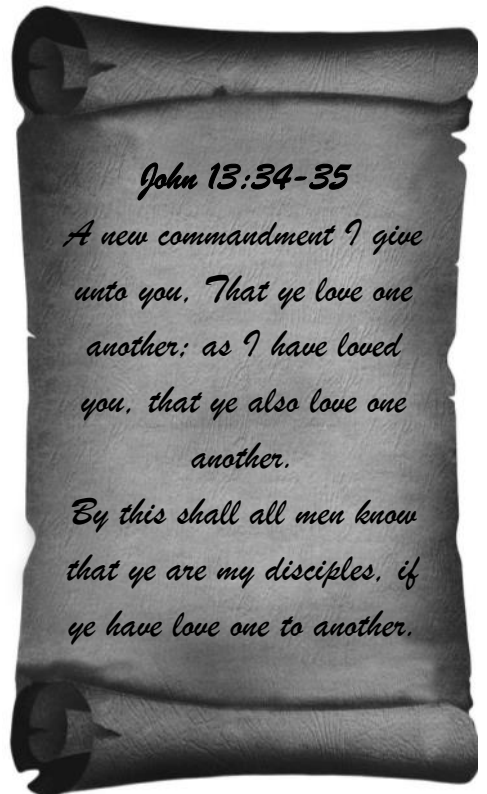
In my 30 years of belonging to a local church, I've seen what 200 people can do when they pull their finances and prayer support together. Each year, the church family that I belong to raises upwards of \$125,000 for missions and helps 40 plus missionaries in various parts of the world. It feels great and it feels so right to be part of a body working together for the same purpose.

At times, members of our church family have gone through spats, but then we re-focus, forgive and move on. Other times, members have fallen into deep dark sins and we've had to stop what we were doing and make things right. God always blesses, and many times, lives have been restored.

Just like any family, we have stood

together in tears and in joy. There have been times that I wanted to run away, but then the Lord reminded me that families are families. If we stick together, we are so much stronger and mightier.

It pains my heart to see hurting individuals and families who live on their own little island and point fingers at the local church. To them, we may appear as a system; however, I see us as an army of believers working shoulder to shoulder for the sake of Jesus Christ and spreading the gospel to our generation.



If we are going to win this world over:

- ◆ We must stand in unison, just like any army, and march together.
- ◆ We must lay our petty differences aside and join forces with God.
- ◆ We must show the unbelieving world that we care about each other and about them.

God bless you, fellow believer! —Joe Keim

END

This article was taken from Got Questions?



Islam is a religious system begun in the seventh century by Muhammad. Muslims follow the teachings of the Qur'an and strive to keep the Five Pillars.

The History of Islam

In the seventh century, Muhammad claimed that the angel Gabriel visited him. During these angelic visitations, which continued for about 23 years until Muhammad's death, the angel purportedly revealed to Muhammad the words of Allah (the

Arabic word for "God" used by Muslims). These dictated revelations compose the Qur'an, Islam's holy book. Islam means "submission," deriving from a root word that means "peace." The word *Muslim* means "one who submits to Allah."

The Doctrine of Islam

Muslims summarize their doctrine in six articles of faith:

1. Belief in one Allah: Muslims believe Allah is one, eternal, creator, and sovereign.
2. Belief in the angels.
3. Belief in the prophets: The prophets include the biblical prophets, but end with Muhammad as Allah's final prophet.
4. Belief in the revelations of Allah: Muslims accept certain portions of the Bible, such as the Torah (5-books of Moses) and the Gospels. They believe the Qur'an is the preexistent, perfect word of Allah.

Continued next page

Call in, Listen, and Participate!

Join us for a live conference call on the first Sunday of every month at 8:00 p.m. EST. We now have a new phone number.

Simply dial (302) 202-1110, and then enter the conference code 409703. Join us in discussion or just listen to the call!

Some of our future Conference Calls will be taken from topics in the Plowman Academy's ABC study.

Upcoming conference calls:

August 02: A Study about God: Is there a God? What is God like?

September 06: The Holy Spirit: Who is the Holy



Spirit? What does He do?

Also, you can call in and listen to some of our **past conference calls** on topics like:

- ◆ A Biblical Church
- ◆ The Family
- ◆ Satan: The Enemy
- ◆ The Importance of the Bible
- ◆ The End Times
- ◆ The Importance of Time Alone With God

The recordings are about an hour long. To listen to our past recordings, dial: **(641) 715-3800** and enter **pin # 89752**.

Leave us a message and tell us what you think!

- 5. Belief in the last day of judgment and the hereafter: Everyone will be resurrected for judgment into either paradise or hell.
- 6. Belief in predestination: Muslims believe Allah has decreed everything that will happen. Muslims testify to Allah's sovereignty with their frequent phrase, *inshallah*, meaning, "if God wills."

The Five Pillars of Islam

These five tenets compose the framework of obedience for Muslims:

- 1. The testimony of faith (*shahada*): "*la ilaha illa allah. Muhammad rasul Allah.*" This means, "There is no deity but Allah. Muhammad is the messenger of Allah." A person can convert to Islam by stating this creed. The *shahada* shows that a Muslim believes in Allah alone as deity and believes that Muhammad reveals Allah.
- 2. Prayer (*salat*): Five ritual prayers must be performed every day.
- 3. Giving (*zakah*): This almsgiving is a certain percentage given once a year.
- 4. Fasting (*sawm*): Muslims fast during Ramadan in the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. They must not eat or drink from dawn until sunset.
- 5. Pilgrimage (*hajj*): If physically and financially possible, a Muslim must make the pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia at least once. The *hajj* is performed in the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar.

A Muslim's entrance into paradise hinges on obedience to these Five Pillars. Still, Allah may reject them. Even Muhammad was not sure whether Allah would admit him to paradise (Surah 46:9; Hadith 5.266).

An Evaluation of Islam

Compared to Christianity, Islam has some similarities, but significant differences. Like Christianity, Islam believes there is

only one God. However, Muslims reject the Trinity—that God has revealed Himself as one in three Persons: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Muslims claim that Jesus was one of the most important prophets—not God's Son. Islam asserts that Jesus, though born of a virgin, was created like Adam. Muslims do not believe Jesus died on the cross. They do not understand why Allah would allow His prophet, Isa (the Islamic word for "Jesus") to die a torturous death. Yet the Bible shows how the death of the perfect Son of God was essential to pay for the sins of believers (Isaiah 53:5-6; John 3:16; 14:6; 1 Peter 2:24).

Islam teaches that the Qur'an is the final authority and the last revelation of Allah. The Bible, however, was completed in the first century with the book of Revelation. The Bible warns against anyone adding to or subtracting from God's Word (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Galatians 1:6-12; Revelation 22:18). The Qur'an, as a claimed addition to God's Word, directly disobeys God's command.

Muslims believe that paradise can be earned through keeping the Five Pillars. The Bible, in contrast, reveals that sinful man can never measure up to the holy God (Romans 3:23; 6:23). Only by God's grace may sinners be saved through repentant faith in Jesus (Acts 20:21; Ephesians 2:8-9).

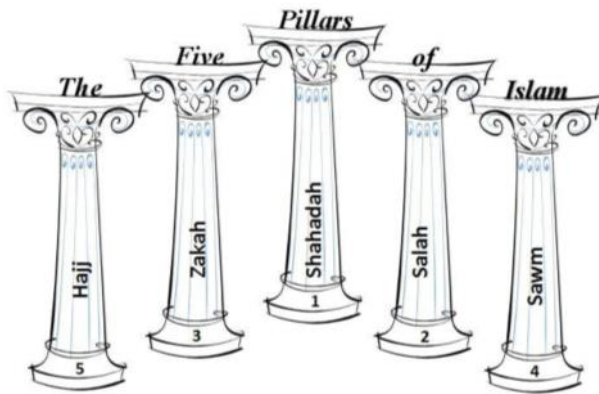
Because of these essential differences and contradictions, Islam and Christianity cannot both be true. The Bible and Qur'an cannot both be God's Word. The truth has eternal consequences.

1 John 4:1-4 (KJV)

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. See also John 3:35-36.

END

The 5 pillars of Islam



Christianity Without Christ

As ridiculous as it may sound, I'm afraid that many religious people and organizations are attempting to practice Christianity without Christ. Some have been doing it for so long that they don't even know they are doing it. Once again, I'm going to lay most of the blame on institutional and denominational religion.

As I study the history of the early New Testament church in the book of Acts, I read that disciples of Christ were first called Christians in a town called Antioch (Acts 11:26). Prior to that, disciples of Christ were simply referred to as members or followers of "The Way" (Acts 9:2 and 24:14).

The early church did not have church buildings to meet in. It did not have pews to sit in. There were no clergy or earthly hierarchy. The early Christians met in one another's homes. They almost always shared a meal together. They met whenever and wherever they could.

In the first century, there were many different groups of Christians in different parts of the world – but Christians were Christians no matter where they were. They were disciples or followers of Christ – and that's all. There were no divisions or denominations. In 1 Corinthians 3:3-5, we find that a few of the early Christians tried to create divisions within the church. The apostle Paul quickly put a stop to this.

The early church was referred to as the body of Christ, with each individual

Christian being a part of it (1 Corinthians 12:27). Jesus is the head of this body (Colossians 1:18). God created the church to be a living and active organism based entirely around Jesus Christ – NOT on anyone or anything else; and that is exactly the way it should be. After all, it was Jesus Christ who paid the penalty for the sins of the world. It was Jesus Christ who provided a way for mankind to be reunited with God. It was Jesus Christ who provided a way for us to escape eternal

Christ. Basically, they are serving and worshipping themselves. God forgive them!

The following is a portion of a prayer Jesus prayed shortly before he was arrested and crucified. He started out praying for himself, and then he prayed for his disciples. Finally, he prayed for all future believers:

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may

know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me (John 17: 20-23).

Christianity without Christ is NOT Christianity, and it will NOT save us. As I said before, we need to get back to the fundamental teachings and practices of the New Testament church. The things that we do need to be based on Christ and the teachings of Christ. We need to do whatever we can to make Jesus' prayer (above) come true.

In 2 Timothy 3:1-5, the apostle Paul warns about godlessness in the last days. He says the so-called religious people will not be lovers of God. Instead, they will be lovers of

CHRISTIAN
without
CHRISTIAN = I Am Nothing

John 15:4-5 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

damnation. In John 14:6, Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. How can we build a church or a religion around or on anything or anyone else?

In the little town of Cheyenne Wells, Colorado, there are at least five different churches – all with a different name and a different set of doctrines and beliefs. Folks, that is absolutely ridiculous!

I am sorely afraid that many of today's so-called Christians spend more time worshipping their man-made denominations, doctrines, traditions, buildings, programs, etc. than they spend worshipping their Lord and Savior, Jesus

—Continued on next page—

Dangers—Continued

themselves – having a form of godliness, but denying its power. Folks, there is much evidence of this all around us.

Forgiveness Without Repentance

The primary reason we turn to Jesus is to receive forgiveness of our sins. The Bible plainly tells us that we have ALL sinned and fallen short of God's expectations (Romans 3:23). You may think that the sins you have committed are not really that bad compared to others – but sin is sin. Sin separates us from God, no matter how big or how small.

Separation from God is not where we want to be. It will eventually lead to eternal damnation. There is something within each and every one of us that longs to be reunited or reconciled to God. The only way we can be made right with God is to be acquitted of our sins and wrong doings. We need to have our sins forgiven. Jesus provides the only way for us to be reconciled to God. When He died on the cross, He paid the price (debt) for our sins. He took our punishment upon Himself. Jesus became the atoning sacrifice, not only for our sins, but for the sins of whole world (1 John 2:2).

After the apostle Peter preached the very first message about Jesus and the forgiveness that was available through him, several in the audience realized that they were in dire need of a

Savior. They asked, "What shall we do to be saved?" The following is Peter's reply to them:

Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 2:38).

Those who accepted Peter's message were baptized, and about three thousand people became saved on that very day. WOW—what a glorious day that must have been!

So, is it possible to have forgiveness without repentance? What is repentance?

The word “repent” comes from a military term that means “about face.” Repentance is to have a change of mind or attitude. It is an internal change. People repent when they realize they are wrong and they want to change. They literally change their ways. They no longer desire to do the sins they used to do. They desire to do things that are pleasing to God.

Baptism without repentance is about the same as taking a bath. You go in a dry sinner and come out a wet sinner. Nothing has really changed.

We live in a world where everyone wants salvation. Everyone wants his sins forgiven. Everyone wants to go to heaven. However, many don't really want to change their lifestyle. They don't want to give up their pet sins. They are looking for religious leaders and organizations that tell them that they can have their cake and eat it,

too. That sounds good, doesn't it? But can it be true? What does God's word say?

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord (Acts 3:19).

For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death (2 Corinthians 7:10).

Salvation through Jesus Christ is a FREE gift from God. We cannot buy it and we cannot earn it. It does, however, require a change of heart and a change of attitude. We must repent before we can be reconciled to God. We must repent to receive forgiveness of our sins.

To repent means that we will no longer willfully sin or desire to sin. We strive to live a sinless life. Does this mean that we will never sin again? No, for as long as we live in this imperfect, fleshly body we will continue to sin. We can't help it. When we do sin, we can confess our sins to God and he will forgive us and purify us once again (1 John 1:9).

Don't just GO to church; BE the church

In the next issues, we will be looking at the rest of these chief dangers. In the meantime, let us look at ourselves and cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh (2 Cor. 7:1).

END

The Amish Voice

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Comments and Prayers Welcome!

1. If you have any comments, ideas, suggestions, questions, prayer requests, or might want to contribute a possible article for the *Amish Voice*, please let us know.
2. If you enjoy the *Amish Voice* and would like to help us with the cost of printing and postage or if you know of others who might benefit from the *Amish Voice*, please contact us.
3. Please pray for us and with us that we would all grow nearer to God.

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Conference Call Schedule
is listed on page 12!

Me! Join the Church? Why?

—By Joe Keim

For more than 2,000 years, the Lord Jesus has used the *local church* as a vehicle (mouthpiece) to call tens of thousands of missionaries to the mission field.

The Lord Jesus has used the *local church* as a way for His people to come together in one place and worship His holy name.

It is at the *local church* where spiritually gifted teachers, preachers, evangelists, elders and deacons serve the Lord Jesus and His people.

The *local church* is the place where hurting hearts get encouraged, challenged, convicted and driven to make a difference in our generation.

In case you have forgotten or no one ever told you, let me say: the Lord Jesus Christ is madly in love with the *local church*; and when Jesus is in love with something, I am in love with it, too.

When I hear God's own family members poke fun at the *local church*, run her down, call her names, find reasons to not

attend, and yes, even mock her—it breaks my heart. The truth is, those who find continued fault with the *local church* and refuse to attend are clearly casting their vote to close the doors of the *local church*.

Consider the words of God in Hebrews 10:24-25: *And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

Just like you, I am very much aware that *local churches* are quite different from one another. Some are dead, and others are alive and thriving. Some are mostly inward focused, while others are both inward and outward focused. Some are



filled with love and generosity, while others are struggling with bitterness and getting along. The truth is, not one *local church* has it all together. If you ever find one that does, please don't join or you'll ruin it, just like I would.

My Personal Experience

At this point, I would like to share a few things about my own church life and experience. The *local church* is where I

Continued on Page 9