

Copyright 1994 - 2011 Endtime Prophecy Net

Published On : April 2, 2000

Last Updated : March 29, 2011

Why I Dropped Out Of Organized Religion, Spiritual Babes Or Mature Leaders, Nature Of True Church, Our Body Is A Living Temple, Christ Within Us, The Cause Of Stephen's Martyrdom, Destruction Of The Temple, Christ The True Rock, Worship In The Spirit, Being Led By The Spirit, God's Word Or Traditions Of Men, Freed By Spirit Of Truth, Finding God's Will Through Total Submission, Stand Upon Your Convictions, Fellowship And Church In The Home, Mega-Churches, Congregations Of Strangers, Going To Church For The Wrong Reasons, Shallow After-Church Chat, Cold Handshakes And Pats On The Back, Brotherly Love

Some time ago, a member of our private Christian mailing list -- EDGE -- wrote to me regarding a problem she was having in her personal life. This problem concerned the goings-on at her local church. Allow me to share her words with you, in order to help you to fully understand her dilemma. She wrote:

----- Begin Quote -----

I was wondering if you could give me some advice? I can't stand it anymore going to our church because of the present pastor. Since we started there, 3/4 of the people have left because of him. [My husband] is so blind to see what this pastor has done and all the people he has hurt. [My husband] said I could go somewhere else. What I was wondering is, if I would be out of God's will, us going in different directions? I know the Lord looks at a married couple as one spirit joined together. I need to be concerned about my own salvation, and work it out everyday with the Lord's help. I was wondering what your thoughts were?

----- End Of Quote -----

Being an avid reader of my writings, as well as a long-time member of our mailing list, this woman was already aware of my personal feelings regarding the modern church system, or churchianity, as I prefer to call it. Like other people who form a part of our online fellowship, for many years now -- decades in fact -- I have chosen to simply not participate in organized religion to any degree, due to the great deal of hypocrisy, rampant materialism, the lack of teaching sound, Bible-based doctrine, the serious, ongoing compromise with the spirit, ideas, beliefs and practices of the world, the man worship and the favoritism, etc. I explain my position in more detail in some of my other articles, so I will not belabor the point here. In short, I can truly relate to how this woman was feeling.

Based upon what I know about this particular couple, I am not certain if they are really ready yet to make this same kind of break with churchianity as I and others have done. While the wife may be ready, being as she has mentioned this same issue to me before, I have some reservations regarding her husband. His hesitancy to leave their current church is

readily reflected in the above message; assuming of course that her description of his current attitude is accurate. If I am incorrect, and they both are ready to "cut the apron strings", as we say in American slang, then my suggestion to them would be to try to start their own fellowship, in their own home, with like-minded believers. I believe that I may have suggested this same possibility to them on a previous occasion as well.

Because of what this woman has shared with me regarding their activities in their current church, I do not view this couple as being spiritual babes; and some of the articles I have written on the topic of spiritual growth, such as "Are You Just A Baby Huey?" definitely apply to them. At their age, and considering their amount of personal experience in the church system, it seems to me that they should now have enough knowledge and wisdom -- not to mention at least a basic understanding of God's Word -- to know how to lead their own flock; or at least how to organize a loose association of fellow believers who get together on weekends for fellowship and reading God's Word. I offer some helpful guidelines in the article "Where Are The First Century Churches?". In other words, there comes a time when we must stop being spiritual babes, and mature in the Spirit and become leaders and fruit-bearing branches in the Lord's Church. I will be sharing more on this topic later on in this article.

As I point out in the aforementioned article, as well as in a number of other articles, the first thing that they -- and many other Christians -- need to realize, is that one does not need to attend a church building in order to "find" God, or to fellowship with the Lord, because a church building in itself is not the true house of God. As I have stated a number of times before, Jesus quite plainly taught His First Disciples the following:

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Matthew 18:20, KJV

Nowhere in that verse does the Lord say that such gatherings have to specifically occur in a church building. In fact, as many of you will already know, church buildings did not even exist at the time that Jesus said that. Church buildings were a man-made invention which was contrived at least a few centuries after the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ, when Christianity became a legal religion -- or "religio licita" -- which was recognized by the Roman Empire, after its radical doctrines had been toned down, and become polluted, corrupted, perverted, and weakened, by those people -- that is, the early 4th Century bishops who conspired with Emperor Constantine I -- who no longer possessed the same moral and spiritual convictions as the founding Apostles of the First Century. Again, I discuss these details in other articles for those of you who possess a serious enough interest to further study my work.

The point is, our gathering together can occur absolutely anywhere, and at any time. Over and over again I have told our readers that God is where we are, because our body is the true temple of the Holy Ghost, and the Spirit of Christ dwells within each one of us when we accept Him as our Lord and Saviour. Isn't that what the Apostle Paul said? Consider the following verses:

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

1 Corinthians 6:19-20, KJV

"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."

Colossians 3:16, KJV

Whether we are discussing Christ the Living Word, or Christ the Written Word, both must dwell within us, and not in a cold, stone building, because they are basically synonymous terms. In the Gospel of John, the Apostle wrote, and Jesus Himself said:

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

John 1:14, KJV

"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

John 6:63, KJV

As you may know, it was in fact because the martyr Stephen said the very same thing in the seventh chapter of the Book of Acts, that the Jewish religious leaders stoned him to death. In so many words, Stephen said, "You don't need to go to the Temple to worship anymore, because you are each now a part of God's Living Temple, and His Spirit dwells within you". Consider some of Stephen's final words spoken right before the demon-possessed Jews stopped their ears, and brought this faithful witness's life to a bloody end:

"But Solomon built him an house. Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things? Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye."

Acts 7:47-51, KJV

Just like many hard-hearted Christian leaders and deceived sheep today, the Jews simply did not want to hear the truth. They didn't want to be told that their glorious Temple compound -- which had been renovated and expanded by King Herod the Great himself -- and their cold, formal, mechanical religious worship, had become outdated, useless, spiritless, and was no longer even pleasing to the Lord. In fact, after they crucified our Lord and Saviour, it became even more of an abomination in God's sight. As I explain in such articles as "Once Upon A Time: A True Story", not only was the Temple veil torn in half, as a symbol of God's displeasure, and a sign of the beginning of the New Covenant, or New Testament between God and man by the Blood of Jesus Christ, but as I explain in more detail in other articles, the Temple itself was destroyed down to its very foundation stones, in 70 AD by General Titus -- the son of Emperor Vespasian -- in direct fulfillment of Jesus' own words, which He spoke at the beginning of Matthew chapter twenty-four, as we see here:

"And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."
Matthew 24:1-2, KJV

It is because the Apostle Peter embraced this very same understanding regarding the nature of the true Temple, and true worship, that he also clarified in his first Epistle, that Jesus Christ is the true Foundation Stone -- and not himself as the Roman Catholic Church likes to insist -- and that each one of us is a Living Stone in God's Living Temple; because as Jesus said, the Spirit brings life, and not death, as in a cold, dead, hollow building made of steel and concrete. Consider Peter's words:

"If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded."

1 Peter 2:3-6, KJV

If there is one thing of which I am certain, it is that God's true Holy Spirit is consistent in what it teaches us. It is not like the spirit of confusion which has filled modern Christianity with so many different false doctrines and odd manifestations. In his first Epistle to the church at Corinth, the Apostle Paul not only prays for spiritual and doctrinal unity within the fledgling church, but he also plainly states that God is not the author of confusion. Not only that, but in full agreement with what was taught by our Lord, by Peter, by Stephen and by others, Paul also tells us that Jesus Christ is the Spiritual Rock in our lives, the Foundation Stone; and that it is not the foundation stone of some physical church building. Please consider the following verses:

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

1 Corinthians 1:10, KJV

"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."

1 Corinthians 14:33, KJV

"And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."

1 Corinthians 10:4, KJV

When Jesus was speaking to the Samaritan woman at the well in the fourth chapter of the Gospel of John, did He not say the following to her concerning true worship in the Spirit?:

". . . Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the

Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

John 4:21b-24, KJV

Can the truth be any clearer than that? Jesus was plainly saying, "Look lady; the day is soon coming when you will no longer have to go to Jerusalem to worship in the Temple, or to any other particular place, because God will require of all of you, true worship in the Spirit". You see, just like many other Jews, she had been taught all her life that if one failed to make a yearly pilgrimage to worship in the Temple, -- and thus help to fill the Temple coffers -- he or she must not be a very devout believer; and this is precisely the same attitude which has been cultivated in millions of Christians today. Unless one goes to church, he or she must not be a very good Christian. In fact, he or she must not be one at all; or at the very least, he or she is terribly backslidden from the faith. As I have already stated, when Stephen tried to reiterate this same message, it got him killed real quick; just like it got Jesus killed real quick; and many of those who followed in His footsteps.

When I first read this woman's question, I realized how serious of a matter it was. As such, I dared not to take it lightly by just offering her a weak, fleshly answer that was based upon my human wisdom; so I said a prayer and asked the Lord for His Wisdom and Spiritual Guidance, and the above Scriptural answer is the result. As I have said many times before, I don't have all of the answers, and I don't pretend to have all of the answers. The only thing that I know how to do, is to draw upon my knowledge of God's Word, and trust that God's Spirit will bring the right Scriptures into my mind, in order to provide the right answer that people need to hear, and which will help them to discover the truth for themselves. This is what Jesus said would happen, so I have to simply trust that my answers are of Him. As Jesus said:

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

John 14:26, KJV

I am not a Prophet, and I don't claim to be a Prophet; so all I can do is share what I believe I receive from the Lord, and leave it at that. All I can do is trust that the Word that I share will speak to people's hearts; at least the part that really applies to them and their personal situation. As the Prophet Isaiah was inspired to write:

"For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

Isaiah 55:10-11, KJV

As is my custom, in responding to this woman, I have not tried to mix in any kind of personal interpretation. All I have done is link verses together to show a common thread, a common belief which was shared by all of these First Century writers. It is obvious to me that Jesus, Matthew, Stephen, Peter, Paul, and all the rest were in complete agreement

regarding what they viewed as the True Church; and it most certainly was not -- and is not -- a cold, stone building down the street, where people just go through the motions of being Christians on the weekends.

Now, in spite of the fact that I have shared the straight Word of God, I daresay that if one were to take this message to his or her pastor, priest or minister, or to anyone who is heavily involved in organized religion, that person would undoubtedly tell you that I have spoken a terrible lie, and that I have perverted and twisted the true meaning of the Scriptures; but have I? Or are they just afraid of losing their control over people's lives by having them exposed to the truth of God's Word, which tells them that they don't need their priest or church system with its hierarchical control system? The Jewish Elders who killed Jesus were afraid of the very same thing. Now, please think about this. If God didn't require or need a temple two thousand years ago, why are so many people convinced that He needs church buildings today? There is no difference.

During the time of His Earthly Ministry, Jesus's message was not just about being freed from the pangs of both physical and spiritual death which result from sin; it was also about being freed from the bondage of man-made traditions, false practices and erroneous doctrines. It was about being freed from spiritual and doctrinal blindness, which often stifles spiritual growth. It is for this reason that during the early part of His Ministry, we find the Lord saying such things as the following. He was in fact quoting from the Old Testament Prophets:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

Luke 4:18-19, KJV

". . . If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free . . . If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

John 8:31b-32,36, KJV

If you are one who feels trapped and dissatisfied within organized religion, let me tell you that God desires to set you free from the enslaving, spiritless control system within which you currently find yourself; but you must be willing to take the step of faith. No one can do that for you. I can only share the truth of the Scriptures with you, but I cannot force you to believe it, or to accept it, or to live it; for as the Apostle Paul also wrote, we must each be convinced for our own selves. Consider these verses:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Romans 12:1-2, KJV

". . . Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

Romans 14:5b, KJV

In other words, before you can truly discover what God's Will is for your life, you must be willing to give up your own will, and what you want to do, or what you think you ought to do, and allow God to renew you, and to give you the mind of Christ. As I explain in such articles as "What Is God's Will For My Life?" and "So You Really Think You Are So Humble?", this means that you must have a totally humble spirit which is submitted to God; just as Jesus did. Once you are convinced of what God's Will is for your life, then as Paul states in the above verse, you need to stick to it, no matter what anyone says. You need to have conviction about your beliefs, because God will judge you by your own words and actions, and not by those of another, or by what they tell you to do, think or believe.

As I stated a moment ago, if you were to share this message with your church elder, or with one of his loyal underlings, I don't doubt that he would immediately accuse me of being some kind of an evil heretic. He might even tell you that I am instructing you to go against God's Word by breaking off fellowship; and he would probably share the following verse with you, because this is one of the favorite ones which they like to use in such cases, in order to keep you under their control:

"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."
Hebrews 10:25, KJV

Now let's clarify some of my previous statements. Have I told the woman in question to stop fellowshiping? No! What I have plainly said is that if she is truly not happy with her current fellowship at her current church because of the pastor there, then given their age, experience and long background in the church system, maybe it is time for this couple to exercise their own faith, spread their spiritual wings, and start their own home fellowship. As I explain in "Where Are The First Century Churches?", this is the true organizational pattern of the First Century Church. The New Testament quite plainly states that the Church was in the house of the believers, and they fellowshiped from house to house. Allow me to share some of those verses again from that article:

"As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison."
Acts 8:3, KJV

"Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ."
Romans 16:5, KJV

"The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house."
1 Corinthians 16:19, KJV

"Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house."
Colossians 4:15, KJV

"And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier,

and to the church in thy house:"

Philemon 1:2, KJV

When God's Word speaks plainly regarding a certain issue, as these verses do, I prefer to believe it. What about you? We are told that before his miraculous conversion, Saul, later to be known as Paul, went into the homes of the believers, and dragged them off to prison, because that is where their fellowships were being held; and not in some huge building down the block. Unless you believe that all of these folks had extremely large homes, capable of holding hundreds, or even thousands of new converts, then these verses seem to indicate that the First Century Christians had small, home-based fellowships where everyone knew each other on a very personal level. There was a real, genuine, spiritual unity, intimacy and fellowship at work there.

Contrary to what is described in the previous verses, some modern churches have such huge congregations -- so-called "mega-churches" with literally thousands of members -- that it is virtually impossible for everyone to know each other on a personal level; not that they would want to anyway. They have become cold and formal institutions; and in some instances, sins and problems cannot be properly addressed due to the sheer size of the congregation; that is, when the church leader is even willing to delve into such sensitive matters. Nowadays, it seems that following the inspiration leader, and making a lot of noise, and having all kinds of strange manifestations, is more important than sharing and following the Word, and keeping personal lives in order, and honorable before the Lord; but again, this is something I discuss in detail in other articles for those of you who are interested.

Furthermore, in such large congregations, quite a few of the members are there, not because they really want to be there in their hearts, but simply because they have bowed to peer pressure, community pressure, political correctness, because mom and dad say they have to go, or because they got tired of the spouse nagging them all of the time. Some of them simply are not there for the right reasons, and would much prefer being at home sleeping in, or watching the football game, or maybe out with the buddies on that fishing trip. If you doubt my words, then listen to some of the conversations which are held immediately following the church service.

In many cases, after-church chat immediately turns to worldly themes, as if those involved want to try to quickly forget any words of conviction which may have been spoken by the well-meaning church leader. They feel embarrassed by the pastor's words, so they try to simply ignore them by talking about other things which they do have in common. It is all so shallow and fake. They don't know how to communicate with each other on a deeper spiritual level, because they have no spiritual depth. Now tell me; is that really true fellowship of the Spirit? I think not. I am reminded once again of the Lord's sad description concerning his Jewish enemies. Jesus said:

"This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me."

Matthew 15:8, KJV

In some churches, they have the customary greeting and handshake, where upon being cued by the elder, everyone is

supposed to turn to their neighbor in the pew, and greet them and give them a handshake. It is possible that this modern-day custom may have evolved from the original, heartfelt expressions of love manifested by the First Century Apostles and Disciples, as they were instructed to do by the Lord Himself. Consider the following verses:

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

John 13:34-35, KJV

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you . . . These things I command you, that ye love one another."

John 15:12, 17, KJV

"Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law."

Romans 13:8, KJV

"Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you."

Romans 16:16, KJV

"All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss."

1 Corinthians 16:20, KJV

"Greet one another with an holy kiss."

2 Corinthians 13:12, KJV

"But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another."

1 Thessalonians 4:9, KJV

"Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss."

1 Thessalonians 5:26, KJV

"Let brotherly love continue."

Hebrews 13:1, KJV

"If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:"

James 2:8, KJV

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:"

1 Peter 1:22, KJV

"And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."

1 Peter 4:8, KJV

"For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another . . . And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment."

1 John 3:11, 23, KJV

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God . . .

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us."

1 John 4:7, 11-12, KJV

"And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another."

2 John 1:5, KJV

Please go to part two for the continuation of this series.

Written by the WordWeaver

webmaster@endtimeprophecy.net
http://www.endtimeprophecy.net

CHURCHIANITY OR CHRISTIANITY : WHICH DO YOU PRACTICE? : PART 2

Copyright 1994 - 2011 Endtime Prophecy Net

Published On : April 2, 2000

Last Updated : March 29, 2011

Cold Handshakes And Pats On The Back, Love Of Many Shall Wax Cold, Home Fellowships & Kindred Spirits, Lack Of Fellowship And Condemnation, Greedy Shepherds, Filthy Lucre And Fleecing God's Sheep, A Life Blessed Of The Lord, Survival Outside Of The Church System, God's Loners And Persecution Of The Lord's Servants, Testimony Of The Apostle Paul, The Threat Of Home Fellowships, Methods That Religionists Use To Stamp Out Home Fellowships, Jewish Persecution Of Early Christian Church, The Whorish Marriage Of Churchianity And The Worldly System, God Will Teach You And Empower You, Paul's View Of His Former Life As A Pharisee, Trust The Lord And Start Out Small, God Is Not Impressed With Numbers, Mega-Churches vs Small, Home Fellowships, Freely Use Study Materials Available On Our Web Site, Rivers Of Living Water, Look To God's Word And Divine Inspiration, Importance Of Spiritual And Physical Unity In Marriage Relationships, Women Should Submit To Their Husbands

Sadly, the heartfelt demonstration of brotherly affection which was shared by the Christian Disciples of the First Century has now devolved into a cold handshake, a pat on the back, and mumbling a few words to our neighbor in the pew, if even that. In the past -- decades ago -- I was involved in such behavior, and it was so mechanical and emotionless. Like a bunch of mindless robots, everyone would do as they were told, and then turn again to face the priest or pastor. As I point out in other articles, this is precisely how Jesus said it would be during the Endtime; because not only do our sins separate us from God, but they separate us from each other as well; and one of the primary sins is the sin of pride. As Jesus said:

"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."

Matthew 24:12, KJV

Returning to the couple which inspired this article, as I stated earlier, if they are not happy in their church, then perhaps they should consider establishing their own home fellowship with people with whom they feel a kindred spirit. Who knows; they might be pleasantly surprised to discover that some of the others who also left their church, might be interested in coming to their home -- or wherever it might be convenient -- in order to have some real fellowship in the Spirit, where they can share the Word together, have prayer and counsel, perhaps share a potluck dinner, or whatever the Lord leads them to do.

Now, suppose that rather than deciding to start their own fellowship, this couple chooses to look for another church where they feel comfortable, but it takes a while for them to find a good quality church where Bible-based doctrine is preached? What if, as a result of their prayerful search for a new church home, they are left out of fellowship for some time? Or suppose that they do choose to start their own home fellowship, but it takes some time for them to find other Christians who may be interested in attending, and who share their same vision? Should this couple feel condemned due to their lack of fellowship?

Well, if we accept churchianity's mantra, that is, the mantra of organized religion and the sermons of church preachers and pastors who are only interested in packing people into their mega-churches by the droves -- they have to keep their church coffers full after all -- then yes, this couple could indeed feel quite condemned. In fact, they might possibly be led to believe that God is going to strike them dead if they don't return to church as soon as possible!

Now, obviously, I realize that I'm being overly dramatic, but it is to emphasize a certain point; and that is that certain church leaders are experts when it comes to exerting control over their flocks, and making them feel like they are totally backslidden from the Lord if they fail to attend services for even a week or two. Some of these false shepherds simply do not like their members gaining any kind of spiritual freedom, or escaping from their grasp. Not only does it make them look bad when members of the congregation start leaving the church in droves -- as seems to be the case in this couple's church where three quarters of the original congregation has already left -- but as I said, it hurts them financially as well; and that is probably what raises their ire the most. The smaller their flock, the less sheep they have to fleece.

As I explain in articles such as "Money-Making Bible Hucksters And Mammon", this practice of fleecing the sheep for personal gain -- or "filthy lucre" -- is nothing new. In fact, it has been going on for literally thousands of years. It was a very big problem in both the Old Testament, and the New Testament. Thus the Lord said through the Prophet Ezekiel:

"Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock . . . Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and

fed not my flock; Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them."

Ezekiel 34:2-3, 7-10, KJV

In the New Testament, we also find a number of verses where the Apostles admonish their followers not to teach and share God's Word for personal gain -- or filthy lucre -- as we see here:

"Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous . . . Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;"

1 Timothy 3:3, 8, KJV

"For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre . . . Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake."

Titus 1:7, 11, KJV

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;"

1 Peter 5:2, KJV

As some of my longtime readers already know, I have not been a regular church member in more than forty years. Based upon what is taught by some of the leaders of organized religion, I must be totally backslidden from the faith, and an absolute sinner of the worst kind. Oddly enough, I don't feel that way at all. In fact, while I live a rather simple life, with only my basic necessities being met, plus the tools that I need to carry on this ministry, in a spiritual sense, I feel that I have been greatly blessed by the Lord. Not only has He been faithful to provide our daily needs, but He has also provided me with a knowledge and understanding of His Word which I honestly don't believe I could have acquired, had I remained a part of organized religion; because their entire objective seems to be to teach the Word of God from a perspective that will justify everything that they do; while at the same time condemning those who do not go along with their program of control and indoctrination.

Another deception of churchianity and organized religion is that a Christian simply cannot survive outside of the church system. The claim is that any attempt to do this will result in a Christian growing weak spiritually, backsliding, and in a worse-case scenario, maybe even denying the Lord. Well, while that may be true with some people, it certainly has not been true in my life. I don't claim to be a spiritual giant of any kind, but I do know what I believe, and why I believe it, and my faith in the Lord and His Word is quite strong. I am not saying that I haven't made mistakes along the way; but when I do err, and if I do begin to stray from the Lord due to worldly enticements and other temptations, the conviction of God's Spirit is strong in my life, and I eventually get back on track again.

If we study the Bible closely, we discover that many of the

Prophets and servants of the Lord were in fact loners who were rejected by the religious order of their day. They were social outcasts who were ridiculed, verbally warned, accused of committing treason, said to be liars, described as being crazy or demon-possessed, thrown into prison, tortured in a variety of ways, thrown out of town, and quite often killed, by the very ones who claimed to be the religion established by God. For example, Jesus and the Apostle Paul made it very clear that persecution would be the fate of Believers, as we see by these verses:

"But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls."

Luke 21:12-19, KJV

"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me."

John 15:18-21, KJV

"They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service."

John 16:2, KJV

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

2 Timothy 3:12, KJV

In the previous verses, Jesus clearly states that the very ones who claim to be members of the religion of God, would persecute and kill the true followers of the Lord; thinking all the while that they were obeying the Lord by committing such heinous acts. The Apostle Paul -- who in former times was known as Saul of Tarsus -- was a classic example of this. Thus, in two of his Epistles, upon reflecting back on his former life as a devout, Law-bound Pharisee, Paul writes the following:

"For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."

1 Corinthians 15:9, KJV

"For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:"

Galatians 1:13, KJV

Satan does not change, and his tactics do not change. What he did in times past against the Lord's children he continues to

do today as well. That being the case, if you decide that you have the faith to start your own home fellowship, and if you are successful at it, don't be the least bit surprised if you are suddenly faced with some degree of opposition from your local church leaders, who are afraid that you might draw away members from their flocks. In their minds, you are a threat, plain and simple.

They will start to slander you in their Sunday sermons. They will inform their flocks that you are backslidden from the Lord, and warn them to stay away from you. They may even find ways to motivate the local authorities to move against you. In fact, in recent years, I've read a number of news reports where this has already begun to happen. No matter how quiet you may try to be, unsympathetic neighbors might complain to the authorities that you are making too much noise. I recall one report where a Christian couple who was holding Christian fellowships in their home was accused of parking violations, due to the number of cars that were parked in front of their house during an evening of fellowship. So my point is, they will find all kinds of technical reasons to try to prevent you from holding home fellowships; that is, church in the home.

What is so alarming about these incidents is the fact that they aren't happening in Russia, or in Communist China, or in some Muslim country where Christianity is prohibited by law; they are occurring in the so-called Christian United States of America!

The pompous, self-righteous Jewish leadership of two thousand years ago was likewise concerned with this very same issue. They viewed the fledgling Christian Church as a major threat to their false religious system, their hold on power, and the cozy relationship that they had with Rome. Thus it was that they not only eventually succeeded in killing Jesus by using the Romans as their pawns, but they also repeatedly warned the First Century Apostles to stop their preaching as well. This they did verbally, and physically, by beating them, and by throwing them into prison on a number of occasions, as we see by these example verses:

"Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not."

John 11:47-50, KJV

"But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus."

Acts 4:15-18, KJV

"Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled

with indignation, And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison."

Acts 5:17-18, KJV

"Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned. And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men."

Acts 5:26-29, KJV

So again, be advised that you may face serious resistance if you attempt to establish any kind of home fellowship which is not blessed by and sanctioned by the local religious and government authorities. In this day and age where everyone has been thoroughly conditioned against anything which even slightly resembles a cult, the potential for persecution is even more of a reality. The powers that be have effectively used the mass media to publish stories occasionally, which will shock the general public into submission, and cause them to accept their way of thinking, so that they are even willing to surrender some of their personal freedoms, all supposedly for the sake of peace and personal security.

As I explain in other articles, organized religion is tightly controlled by the government through tax deductions and their non-profit status; so most church preachers are very careful about what they preach, so that they don't lose their prized status. In short, they have compromised the radical nature of the Gospel message, in order to receive the blessings of the corrupt system with which they love to fornicate. In reality, they aren't that much different from Babylon riding the Beast in the Book of Revelation, because Babylon the Great is also a false religious system. In contrast, the authorities don't have such direct control over private Christian fellowships; thus, they prefer to simply stamp you out, before you even get started. So much for religious freedom in America!

Now obviously, I realize that for some of my readers, I am probably presenting a rather large challenge by proposing the idea of forming a home fellowship. Undoubtedly, some of you are thinking to yourselves, "Well, I would really like to try something like this, but I have no experience. I don't have any formal theological training, so where would I start? What would we do? What would I teach?". The fact that you even feel that way reveals how much you have been indoctrinated by the church system. Organized religion has purposely made you feel and think that way, so that you remain totally dependent on them. In a word, they want you to keep going to church.

However, believe it or not, the very fact that you feel so helpless and incapable is actually in your favor, because it will force you to depend entirely on the Lord for guidance. But, to give you some assistance, allow me to again suggest that you consider reading such articles as "Where Are The First Century Churches?", "The Only Credentials You Need!", and "The Wisdom Of God vs The Philosophy Of Men". It is my personal conviction that with the Spirit of God, and a love for His Word, you are just as prepared for this task as the ignorant fishermen and hated tax collectors that Jesus chose for His Disciples almost two thousand years ago. God will empower you by His Holy Spirit, just as He empowered them.

Consider what Luke wrote in the Acts of the Apostles:

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."

Acts 4:13, KJV

If you possess the Spirit of God, that is all you need. As I also point out in other articles, after Paul came to Christ, he arrived at a point in his life where he viewed his former life -- which apparently also included a lot of theological head-stuffing at the feet of the Pharisee Gamaliel -- as dung. It became worthless in his sight. In fact, he basically tells us that he had to unlearn much of it, and learn anew during his quiet time of personal revelation with the Lord, as we see by these verses:

"But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Galatians 1:11-12, KJV

"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,"

Philippians 3:8, KJV

So my advice to you is that you just trust the Lord. Simply go in the direction in which you believe He wants you to go, and He will take care of the rest. Simply start out small, and start out simple. Maybe in the beginning, it will just be you and a friend or two talking about the Bible together in the privacy of your home. Perhaps they will mention your weekend get-togethers to a friend, and then a few more folks will be added to your fellowship; and thus it will grow as the Lord leads. As we read in the Book of Acts:

". . . And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

Acts 2:47b, KJV

All I can tell you is that when a few people get together to honour the Lord and His Word, Jesus told us that He would be in the midst of them, right? That is your fellowship, and it is as blessed of God as one of those large churches. Who is to say otherwise? What makes your small home fellowship any less legitimate than one of those overstuffed mega-churches? I have said it before, and I will say it again: God is not impressed by large numbers; He is interested in quality; and He is touched by a heart which is sincere, and dedicated to Him. In my view, that most certainly leaves out some of the big fancy churches which are filled with worldly spiritless people who honour Him with their lips, but whose hearts are far from Him, and who have very little interest in obeying Him in their lives, by being faithful witnesses of His Word.

If you require some study materials for your home fellowship, I invite you to use the over two hundred and sixty topical King James Version Bible verse lists which are available on our website, as well as the hundreds of articles which I've written over the years which contain a wealth of Scriptural and historical information. Maybe someone will bring up a certain topic during one of your fellowships, and you won't

quite know how to respond; but then the Lord will remind you of something I wrote on the subject. You could say something like, "Well, I don't really know how to answer your question properly, but I have a friend who wrote a very interesting article regarding this very topic. Would you like to read it together?". You don't have to do that of course; and I hope that it doesn't appear as if I am trying to promote myself; but I just know that there is a lot of good material in my articles which will feed and inspire God's sheep; because most of it is centered around His Word. The choice is really up to you.

I am simply convinced that if you get together with one or more people, and begin to uplift the Lord and His Word, He will take it from there. He will inspire you by His Spirit, and you will have a wonderful time together! Believe me; it is much better than attending church service every Sunday, and sitting through the same, boring, monotonous, mechanical, spiritless routine. I know that in my personal life, when I start discussing the Bible with someone, it is hard to shut me up! I just love discussing His Word, and you will too! As you inspire other people with the truth of His Word, it will inspire you in return. It seems that sharing the Word has a reciprocal effect on those sharing it. As you begin to pour out to others, the Lord will fill you up in return. That is just the way it works; which is why Jesus clearly said:

"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

John 7:38, KJV

Before concluding this series, there is one more important detail which we need to cover, and I have purposely left it until last, because for the woman who was involved in this particular situation, it may have proved to be the most difficult part of my answer for her to receive.

As some of you will have undoubtedly noticed, I approached this issue as if this couple were in agreement. Sadly, the truth of the matter is that they were not. The woman was not at all happy with their church, while the husband seemed to be quite content; so much so that he appeared to be telling her to look for another church, while he remained in the same one; at least that is how I understood her email message at the time. So in a similar situation where a Christian couple is not in agreement, how should they proceed? What does the Lord expect of them in such a situation?

As I stressed earlier in this series, when I am confronted with such difficult questions, in order to avoid doctrinal error, my inclination is to look directly to God's Word, in order to determine what it has to say regarding a certain issue. I just pray, open up my mind and heart to the Spirit, and start typing, and expect the Lord to give me whatever I am supposed to share with a person. That is normally how it happens. I simply accept by faith that what I'm receiving is of Him. Of course, the Lord realizes that due to my cautious nature, He has to speak to me directly from His Word; and so quite often, Bible verses will come to me as I type. That is the basic mechanics of how I write my articles. There is never an outline. They are simply a moment by moment work of inspiration, for those of you who can receive it.

To begin with, while the husband involved may disagree with me, I do not believe that this woman going to one church, while he attends another, is by any means the solution which

would be most pleasing to the Lord. This kind of situation could prove to be extremely detrimental to their marriage relationship, and could result in some serious repercussions in the future. In fact, such an arrangement could easily end up ripping their marriage apart, because once spiritual unity is lost, physical unity soon follows on its heels. I am sure that there are some of you reading this who can testify to this very fact.

In all honesty, I believe that the Lord has already spoken to this woman regarding what He expects of her; and it is for this reason that she mentioned about them being one in spirit in her message to me. This is obviously of concern to her. In essence then, all I can really do is build upon what it seems the Lord has already shown her. While the remainder of my answer will not be very popular with some modern-day feminists, and while I will undoubtedly be accused by some women of being just another male chauvinist, in looking to the Holy Scriptures, and what they say concerning marriage relationships, the answer becomes very clear. I can only stand upon the authority of God's Word, and here is what it has to say concerning this issue:

"Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."

Genesis 3:16, KJV

"And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

Mark 10:4-9, KJV

"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."

Ephesians 5:21-33, KJV

"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them."

Colossians 3:17-19, KJV

"In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."

1 Timothy 2:9-14, KJV

"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:"

1 Peter 3:1-5, KJV

Please go to part three for the conclusion of this series.

Written by the WordWeaver

webmaster@endtimeprophecy.net
<http://www.endtimeprophecy.net>

CHURCHIANITY OR CHRISTIANITY : WHICH DO YOU PRACTICE? : PART 3

Copyright 1994 - 2011 Endtime Prophecy Net

Published On : April 2, 2000

Last Updated : March 29, 2011

Wives Are To Submit To Their Husbands, Honoring A Husband's Decisions, When Christian Couples Aren't In Agreement, Faith Patience And Trusting In The Lord While Awaiting The Outcome, Solution Is In United Prayer And Finding God's Highest Will Together, Test Of Love, Faith, Patience Respect And Humility, Verses Regarding Trusting The Lord, Accepting The Challenge Of Home Fellowships, Churchianity vs Christianity, Essence Of Being A True Christian, First Century Evangelists, Poultry Farms Chickens And Christians, The Church Is Bride Of Christ, We Are Branches On The Lord's Vine, Bearing Spiritual Fruit, When We Fail To Bear Fruit, Parallel Between Physical Sexual Union And Spiritual Unity With Christ, Take Up The Challenge

As hard as it may be on a woman's pride, God made her to be a helpmeet to her husband. He made her to be in subjection to her husband. As the previous verses make clear, this does not

mean that God made men to be tyrants over their wives. They are to love and respect their wives, just as Christ loves His Church; but in matters of decision-making, the man is to have the final word, regardless of whether or not his wife agrees with his decision. This is particularly true when the husband is an individual who knows and fears the Lord. If the husband in this case were a reprobate, and a person who does not know the Lord, or who perhaps even fights against the Lord, or who is an abusive tyrant, then perhaps this situation would be dealt with in a different manner; however, that is not the case here. We are discussing a Christian couple who has known the Lord for many years. Because of this fact, this woman is bound by God's Word to respect and obey her husband. That is the Biblical pattern.

So what are this woman's alternatives? What can she do while still remaining within the bounds of God's Word and honoring her husband's decision?

First of all, let me state plainly that I am not saying that she has to agree with her husband's belief that the leader of their church is one fine pastor. If three quarters of their original congregation has indeed left the church since this individual became the church's elder, then I am inclined to agree with her that something is seriously wrong somewhere. Exactly what that might be I honestly do not know, because I am not in their situation; nevertheless, while she may not agree with her husband's perspective, she must submit to him as long as she remains with him.

At the same time, if she is that convinced in her heart that this pastor is not worthy of his position, then my suggestion to her is that she earnestly pray to the Lord, and ask Him to open the eyes of her husband, so that he'll likewise see the truth of the matter, and make the appropriate decision. While this may not be easy for her to do, there are really no other alternatives as far as I can tell, and it will require both faith and patience on her part. In fact, it may very well be that the Lord is trying to use this situation to teach her important lessons regarding faith, patience and trusting in Him.

Ultimately, I believe that united prayer, and finding God's Will, is really the key to this couple's situation. Instead of yielding to their pride and frustration and firing heated answers at each other which may be both hurtful and damaging, this man and woman each need to forsake their pride, forsake what they each want to do, and find out what the Lord wants them both to do together, and not apart. They need to seek to find out not what is pleasing in their own eyes, but rather what is pleasing in the Lord's eyes. They need to seek His Highest Will, and not their own. They need to earnestly seek to strengthen the spiritual unity in their relationship, lest the situation really begins to fall apart.

While this process is ongoing, this woman is still obligated by God's Word to submit to her husband. Obviously, I realize that this is by no means an easy thing to do. To submit to someone when you really disagree with them in your heart can really test one's love, faith and patience; and in the case of a husband-wife relationship such as this, it can severely test mutual respect as well. It is simply hard to respect someone when you strongly disagree with something that they are doing. To take this a step further, such a situation can also be a real test of humility, and dying to oneself. It is at times like these that we must throw ourselves utterly on

the Lord, and trust that He knows what He is doing; even if we don't. Consider the following verses:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."
Isaiah 55:8-9, KJV

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."
Romans 8:28, KJV

"Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."
Psalms 55:22, KJV

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."
Proverbs 3:5-6, KJV

In this particular case, we can hope and pray that either this husband will come to understand the truth regarding this pastor, and thus decide that it is time to leave this particular church, or else that the Lord will find a way to simply remove this individual from his position of spiritual authority, and provide the congregation with a more worthy, Spirit-led shepherd.

At the same time, I believe that this dear woman needs to seriously consider the challenge which I have presented in this series -- that is, to begin a fellowship in their home -- and to challenge her husband with the same. As I explain in such articles as "Are You Just A Baby Huey?", my personal impression is that in the United States of America -- and perhaps in other countries as well -- many people hold the erroneous view that the end-all of being a Christian, is to simply accept Jesus Christ as one's Lord and Saviour, and then to spend the remainder of one's life faithfully and obediently attending local church services on weekends, and perhaps on a few other holy days as well.

My friends, this is not what the Bible teaches by any means. What I have just described for you is simply churchianity; it isn't true Bible-based Christianity. The aforementioned idea is similar to a grapevine producing luscious grapes, and then leaving those grapes on the vine to slowly rot, when they are supposed to be eaten or used to produce raisins, wine or some other food product. Being as I amply discuss this subject in other articles, such as "The Parable Of The Sower: Salvation And Service", I will not go into great detail here.

Allow me to simply state that during the First Century when our faith was born, becoming a true Disciple of Jesus Christ meant adopting the life of an evangelist, and going out on the road in order to win other souls to the Kingdom of God. It was a hard, danger-filled life which often required a lot of personal sacrifice, but it was also a very rewarding life, particularly in the eternal sense. Christianity was a living, growing faith. It was not the dead, rotten, self-satisfied, lethargic faith that we see today in so many modern churches.

Many Christians today remind of chickens that are maintained in small cages on poultry and dairy farms. As you may know,

they can barely move around, and are stuffed with feed until they are ready for the slaughter. In similar fashion, people today are so stuffed with the Word of God, that many of them are either sick of hearing it, or else they have heard it for so long, that they have totally hardened themselves to its Eternal Truths, and in many cases, have become totally immune to its effects on their lives.

As I explain in the aforementioned article, God's Word is a precious seed, and it is meant to be planted liberally, so that it will produce abundant fruit -- or saved souls -- for the Kingdom of God. God is in a constant war against Satan, to win as many souls to His Kingdom as He possibly can; and He is using us -- His weak, human vehicles -- to accomplish this task. As I discuss in "Once Upon A Time: A True Story", God expects us -- His Bride, the Church -- to bear spiritual fruit for His Kingdom. It is for this very reason that both Jesus and Paul spoke in the following allegorical manner:

"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 . . . Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples . . . Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."
John 15:4-5, 8, 16, KJV

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."
Romans 7:4, KJV

If we are not in some way producing spiritual fruit in our lives, by winning others to Christ, or by helping to feed and nurture those who have already come to Christ, then we are simply dead branches on the Lord's vine; and Jesus said that such unfruitful branches will be cast into the fire, as we see by these verses:

"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit . . . If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."
John 15:2, 6, KJV

Just as a man and a woman cannot bear physical fruit -- in other words, children in their lives -- unless they engage in physical sexual union, in similar fashion, neither can we Christians bear spiritual fruit in our lives -- or souls won to God's Kingdom -- if we are not in unity with the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and obeying His Will. As shocking as that may seem to some conservative Christians, that is the plain truth of the Scriptures, as is clearly exemplified by the previous verses.

So this is the challenge that I am presenting to you today concerning organized religion, churchianity, Christianity and home fellowships. If you are not happy or satisfied in the church in which you currently find yourself; if you feel

that your spiritual life has become stagnated; or honestly believe that your current situation is holding you back from becoming a more fruitful branch for the Lord, then why don't you do something about it? Either join a church that is more active and productive for the Lord, or better yet, if you have the faith, the vision and the motivation, start a local fellowship in your own home. Get back on fire for the Lord! Be a burning ember for Jesus Christ! Don't be an overgrown, spiritually-retarded Baby Huey, or a fat chicken in a cage! Bear fruit for the Kingdom of God! What do you say? He is more than willing; are you? Churchianity or Christianity; which do you practice?

Written by the WordWeaver

webmaster@endtimeprophecy.net
<http://www.endtimeprophecy.net>