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Some 700 years before Christ came to the earth, God said there were folks guilty of calling "evil good and good evil... (putting) darkness for light, and light for darkness; ... (putting) bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter" (Isa. 5:20). He went on to say, "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" (Isa. 5:21). Today, it is the same. Woe to people who exchange their

"think-so's" for God's word and then claim they are following the Lord! If we are guilty of this, beware, for we fool ourselves into thinking we are "doing God service" when in actuality, we are harming the Lord's cause. We end up working for Satan by default, and destroying the very thing we claim to be building. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21). Follow God's will only, and forsake man's will. Let us not be guilty of sinning while claiming we are "doing God service"!

Credit: www.southside-churchofchrist.com ♦

Seeking First Century Christianity Today By Jonathan L. Perz

Why is it that twenty-first century "Christians" seek a form of Christianity so different than that of the first century? Man adds to and takes away from God's word as if there were no warnings in scripture against such behavior (Rev. 22:18-19). If you look around in the church you have chosen to be a part of, what do you see?

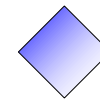
Do you see a church like the one you can read about in your Bible? Do the members act like the Christians of the first century? Is the worship like that of the first century (at least the good and proper examples of it)? Is the Lord's money being spent the way the first century saints spent it? Have you even considered that these things are prescribed within the pages of the New Testament?

I am not suggesting that we give up all modern living and imitate life as it was in ancient times. I am suggesting that we give up modern innovations to the way the Lord's church is organized and operated! You might ask, "Why?" The answer is simple.

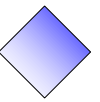
The apostles, who labored to establish the church, were granted authority by Christ to teach and preach the things they did (Mt. 16:19). Their teaching was unified (1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 3:16). They taught the same things in all of the local churches in that day (1 Cor. 4:17). They beseeched the followers of Christ to stand fast in those things taught (Phil. 1:27; 2 Thess. 2:15). They did this because this is what the inspiration of God taught them (2 Tim. 3:16). Jesus Christ wanted His church (Mt. 16:18) to have certain characteristics (Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Tim. 3:1-13). Furthermore, Jesus Christ wanted His followers to do as He commanded (John 14:15; 15:10). What has changed in the past 1974 years?

If Christ is the same today as He was in the first century (Heb. 13:8), and if the Gospel is the same today as it was in the first century (Gal. 1:6-10), why is it so difficult to find genuine first century Christianity today?

Credit: www.moodychurchofchrist.com ♦



The Voice of Truth



September 26, 2010

Why Withdraw? By Jimmy Pettigrew

Those from whom the church is commanded to withdraw are: the fornicator, covetous, railer, idolater, drunkard, extortioner (1 Corinthians 5:11), the false teacher (Romans 16:17), factious (Titus 3:10), and the disorderly (2 Thessalonians 3:6). Included in the idea of withdrawal is: mark and avoid (Romans 16:17), no company (2 Thessalonians 3:14), rejection (Titus 3:10), and with such not to eat (1 Corinthians 5:11). Paul wrote, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (2 Thessalonians 3:6). That is not an optional course of action; it is commanded by the Lord. We must do it!

There are two stated purposes for withdrawing from unfaithful members; the first is to maintain the purity of the church (1 Corinthians 5:6-7). The Lord desires that His church be a pure church (Ephesians 5:26-27). It is unthinkable that Christ will own His bride (church) if she becomes unchaste, plays the harlot, and has her affections taken away from Him and set on things of the earth. If a congregation permits impure individuals to remain unchastened within its fellowship, it becomes a partaker of their sin and will soon drift out of the favor of the Lord and their candlestick will be removed (Revelation 2:5). "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened . . . Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Corinthians 5:6-7,13). The church is to be kept pure. For the sake of the other members, the ungodly are to be put away, lest others be contaminated by temptation to do the same things.

The second reason is to bring the erring brother to repentance by shaming him. When a person is taught, encouraged and admonished, and still will not repent, what more can concerned Christians do? Paul answers: "Withdraw . . . have no company with him, to the end that he may be ashamed" (2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14). Thus,

withdrawal is designed to bring him to repentance. If we continue to treat him as before, withdrawing is robbed of its purpose. We must let him know, by our actions and words, that his manner of life is not acceptable to the Lord and that we do not approve of it. "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat" (1 Corinthians 5:11). If members in the church are guilty of living this way, then loyal saints are not to keep company with them! Don't invite them to eat, visit and play games in your home! Don't let the world see you condoning such lives in Christ's church! You cannot eat with, play cards with, or keep company with one in the church who is guilty of such sins; this includes the family of one from whom the church has withdrawn.

In other words, the purpose of the withdrawing is to save souls. "To deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 5:5). Discipline isn't to get rid of or to run off, but to save a soul (James 5:19-20). We are trying to help him, not leave him lost!

When members of the church sin, they are to be warned by loving brethren who are concerned for their souls. If they stubbornly refuse to listen, and persist in sin in spite of repeated warnings, the church must withdraw from them. And all of this is done to save souls: of the one who sins, and of other members of the church. Such action is taken to keep the church pure and faithful (1 Corinthians 5), and that he may be ashamed (2 Thessalonians 3:14).

Withdrawing is a difficult step to take. But eternity is long and hell is hot, and souls are hanging in the balance. ♦

About the Hillcrest church of Christ		
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How to Contact Us	Our Address	Schedule of Assembly
<p>Telephone: (920)499-5677 E-mail: hillcrestcofc@live.com</p>  	<p>1621 Hillcrest Drive Green Bay, WI 54313</p> 	<p>Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm*</p> <p><small>*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month</small></p>
www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com		

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The People In This Congregation By Wayne Greeson

An old man was sitting out on his front porch whittlin' and enjoying the sunny day. Into town drove a stranger who stopped in front of the old man's house. The stranger rolled down his car window, stuck his head out and yelled, "Hey, old man, what kind of people are in this town?"

The old gent leaned back, looked at the stranger and said, "Well fella, just what kind of people were there in the town you just came from?"

"Why they were the most unfriendly, unlikable and disagreeable folks you ever saw" the man replied.

"Well," answered the old man, "That's just the kind of people that are in this town." With that answer the stranger roared off out of town and out of sight. A little while later, into town drove another stranger. This man saw the older man on his porch and he pulled up, stopped the car and got out.

"Good afternoon sir. How are you this fine day?" the young man cheerfully called out.

"I'm doin' very well thank you, and it is a mighty fine day" the older man grinned.

"Well sir, I'm a little new around here, mind if I sit and we talk a bit?" the younger man inquired.

"Sure, come on up here and sit" the older man invited.

The younger man ambled up and took a seat on the broad porch.

"Well, there is really just one question I have," he began, "What kind of people are in this town?"

The older man gently smiled, "Well, just what kind of people were in the town you came from?"

"Well sir, they were the friendliest, nicest, most likable folks you'd ever want to meet" the young man eagerly responded.

"Well, my good friend, that's jus' the kind of folks you'll find here."

Unfriendly People?

What kind of people are in this congregation? Psychologists have recognized a fundamental principle in human relations. People tend to criticize in others the very things they dislike about themselves. The man who complains about how difficult everyone else is to get along with has trouble getting along with others. The woman who is constantly criticizing how others raise their children, feels that she did not raise her own children properly.

The Bible recognizes this behavior of self-deception. It is the problem of trying to hide one's own faults by criticizing another. Jesus warned about those who look for specks in others, while they carry a plank in their own eye (**Matt. 7:1-5**).

Remove the Plank

Have you ever complained that a congregation or another Christian was unfriendly? Maybe they were not friendly or maybe they were. Instead of complaining how unfriendly others are to me, I need to seriously ask the Lord and myself, "*Lord, is it I?*" (**Matt. 22:26**).

Am I the one who turns and looks the other way to keep from speaking to someone? Am I the one who quickly slips into a tight-circle of family or friends and ignore others? Am I the one who races for the door the minute services are over? Am I the one who refuses to speak unless the other person speaks first. When I accuse another of being unfriendly, am I being unfriendly?

Jesus told speck seekers, "*You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye*" (**Matt. 7:5**).

Be Friendly

The wise man of Proverbs provided a solution on how to handle those we think are unfriendly! "*A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly*" (**Prov. 18:24**).

If you think someone is unfriendly to you, then you need to become more friendly. Maybe the person you think is unfriendly is just shy. Maybe they are waiting for you to speak first. Maybe they are thinking about other things. Maybe they have troubles and burdens that are

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bothering them.

"*Many will entreat the favour of the prince: and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts*" (**Prov. 19:6**). If you want others to be your friends and friendly to you, you must be generous, loving and giving to them. Those who see all others as unfriendly are unwilling to give what it takes to receive friendliness. Receivers of friendliness are givers of warm smiles, hearty handshakes and kind encouraging words.

Don't wait for the other person to approach and talk to

“Doing God Service” By Jarrod Jacobs

Jesus warned the eleven: "*These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me*" (**Jn. 16:1-3**). This is an eye-opening statement to me. Jesus told His apostles that there were some people who were quite zealous and adamant about their beliefs, yet they were wrong! Jesus warned of folks killing the apostles, and in so doing, thinking they were serving God! How wrong can people get?

Execution for preaching Christ was not an act limited to the apostles, though. In his younger days, Saul of Tarsus consented to the death of Stephen, a child of God (**Acts 8:1**). In later years, he admitted that he thought within himself, "*That I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities*" (**Acts 26:9-11**). How could someone brought up at the feet of Gamaliel and "*taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers*"; a man "*zealous toward God*" (**Acts 22:3**), end up making such a wrong decision? I think a key point in Paul's case was his admission: "*I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth*" (**Acts 26:9**). Somewhere in his life, he went off-track, and began selfishly following the whims and wishes of men rather than selflessly following the pure will of God!

you, walk up and talk to them. Smile and be friendly. You'll be amazed how friendly people, who you thought were unfriendly, can be.

The Friendliest, Nicest, Most Likable Folks

Before I complain about other people, I need to see if I am part of the problem. If the congregation is unfriendly then it is up to me to be friendly and to change it. Then I can say, "This congregation has the friendliest, nicest, most likeable folks you'd ever want to meet!"

Credit: www.padfield.com ♦

How do I know this is what happened? It is because if he had followed the pure will of God, he would have accepted Christ rather than rejected Him! Remember Jesus said, "*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad*" (**Jn. 8:56**)! Remember, Moses wrote about Christ (Jn. 5:46)! Jesus on another occasion told the people, "*Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?*" (**Jn. 7:19**)! Therefore, if he (or any of the Jews who had rejected Christ and the Christians in the first century) was following the pure will of God, he would have listened to the Scripture, i.e., the words of Abraham and Moses, and would have accepted Christ. Those who accepted the truth from the inspired words of Abraham, Moses, and other prophets followed Christ! Yet, because folks like Saul of Tarsus and others were following the whims and wishes of men, they were taught to kill Christ and Christians, and in so doing, they would "*do God service.*" How tragic!

What can I learn from this? I can learn that just because I think something is "good" or "holy" or "righteous" does not make it so. The inspired word of God equips us for "**every good work**" (**II Tim. 3:16-17**). Therefore, if what I am doing does not have its basis and authority from the Scriptures, it is not a good work! Maybe it is time we examined our lives (**II Cor. 13:5**) and made sure what we are doing is what has been authorized by God in His revealed Scriptures. If we find we are following the will of man instead of God, then we need to repent, or be guilty of the same thing those Jews were guilty of in the first century. Specifically, we can be guilty of doing something sinful, and saying it is being done "in God's service."

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