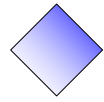


# The Voice of Truth



October 21, 2012

## The Church Doesn't Matter?

By Jimmy Pettigrew

The prevalent attitude toward the church among religious people for years has been, "Oh, the church is not important. It makes no difference whether one is a member or not. One church is just as good as another. The church is non-essential to man's eternal welfare." If what is meant by these statements concerns man-made churches, then we would agree heartily. Jesus said, *"Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up,"* (Matt. 15:13). Every last "church" built, named and governed by man is doomed to destruction. Jesus Christ fervently prayed against them all (Jn. 17:20-21). In reality Roman Catholicism and Protestantism have no connection at all with one's salvation. However, if some are saying that the Lord's church does not matter, now we got a problem, because I strongly protest. God's Book never has taught the concept that the church of Jesus Christ is a worthless institution, one void of all value. If the church doesn't matter, you are telling me, then:

**That The Body Of Christ Doesn't Matter.** Christ is the *"saviour of the body,"* (Eph. 5:23). Paul teaches that there is one body (Eph. 4:4). How many bodies is He the Saviour of? *"But now in deed there are many members, yet one body,"* (1 Cor. 12:20). Paul, as we see, has taught time after time the oneness of the body. What is the body? **THE CHURCH!** (Eph. 1:22-23). In this passage Paul tells us that the church is the body. In Col. 1:18, he teaches that the body is the church. So the church is the body and the body is the church. There is only one body; therefore there is only one church. How perfectly this agrees with the promise: *"I will build my church"* (Matt. 16:18). Salvation is found in this one church. This does not mean the church is the Saviour. The church is the saved! If the church does not matter, neither does salvation matter which is graciously conferred within the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. When Paul was persecuting the church (Acts 9), he was persecuting Christ (Acts 9:4). The church and Christ cannot be separated. The church is important! If the church doesn't matter, then:

**You Are Telling Me The Blood Of Christ Doesn't Matter.** In his epistle to the Ephesian church, Paul said that Jesus *"loved the church, and gave himself for it; . . ."* (Eph. 5:25). Christ shed His blood for the church (Acts 20:28). How could anyone say the church is not important? The blood of Christ purchased the church. If the church doesn't matter, then the blood of Christ doesn't matter. It is the blood of Christ that made it possible for us to be reconciled back to God (Rom. 5:10). We are reconciled unto God in one body (Eph. 2:16), which is the church (Col. 1:18, 24). Thus, one is saved from his sins, reconciled unto God, when he enters the one body, the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16). Who would say that Christ wasted His blood on the cross for a worthless institution? You do if you say the church doesn't matter, that then church is unimportant.

Every Christian, child of God, is a member of the church of Christ. No one can be saved without the blood of Christ (Heb. 9:22; Eph. 1:7), and the church of Christ was purchased by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28). Thus, there are no Christians who are not members of the church of Christ. If the church doesn't matter, then:

**God's Eternal Plan Doesn't Matter.** Who would say this? You do when you say the church is unimportant. The church was not an after-thought on God's part (Eph. 3:8-11). It existed in purpose before the world was; it existed in prophecy (Isa. 2:2-4; Dan. 2:44). God had His plan of redemption before He made man; the church was and is a central part of it. No other foundation is man permitted to lay (1 Cor. 3:11). If the church does not matter, then:

**The Lord's Supper Does Not Matter.** The Lord's Supper is to be observed in His kingdom (Lk. 22:29-30). In 1 Corinthians 11:20-34, the sacred penman taught the brethren at Corinth to observe the Lord's Supper in their church assembly. The church at Troas observed the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). This sacred feast was and is to be done in the church of the Lord. God never

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commanded anyone to partake of His Son's Supper save those in the church and only upon the first day of the week, Sunday. If the church doesn't matter, you're telling me the Lord's Supper doesn't matter. Who would do this? You, if you say the church is not important, one church is just as good as another. If the church doesn't matter, then:

**The Gospel Doesn't Matter.** The gospel of Christ produces the church of Christ, it is the seed (**Lk. 8:11**). If the gospel had never been preached, then the church never could have existed. The church and the gospel are inseparably linked. If the church doesn't matter, neither does the

gospel matter. The gospel is composed of facts that must be believed. We must believe Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, that He died, was buried and rose again for our sins according to the Scriptures (**1 Cor. 15:1-4**). The gospel tells us what we must do to be saved. One must hear God's Word (**Rom. 10:17**); believe it (**Mk. 16:16**); repent (**Lk. 13:3, 5**); confessing Christ is the Son of God (**Rom. 10:9-10**); being baptized for the remission of sins (**Acts 2:38**) and live a life of continued faithfulness (**Rev. 2:10**). None of these are important if the church doesn't matter. If the church is of no value, neither is the Bible which produces the church. Who would say this?

**Does the church really matter to you? \***

## Making Faith Your Own By Larry Rouse

How can we best help others go to heaven? As we gain experience we can see that there are many who begin the Christian life, but for various reasons give up the fight. Our Lord Jesus Christ knew that this would be true for many. In one instance Jesus likened the Christian life to that of building a tower, *"For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish'"* (**Luke 14:28-30**). Why did this man fail? Jesus gave the answer, *"So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple"* (**Luke 14:33**).

How are you building your Christian tower? That depends on how you view your relationship with God. Far too many who have named the name of Christ have yet to take seriously their personal responsibility to build their own faith. A Biblical faith will produce confidence in the scriptures and also humility to be constantly seeking and testing that faith. To this person the scriptures are alive because their faith teaches them that they serve a God who knows them through and through and has spoken so that he can see himself and be changed (**Heb. 4:12-13**). There is a huge difference between the one who has observed what men expect him to believe versus the one who has struggled and fought to find the answers that resulted in faith. One may have, out of peer pressure, memorized the pat answers concerning "what we should believe" and still have no real confidence and knowledge of God's word.

### Our Limitations in Producing Faith in Others

As a parent I am greatly interested in learning how to produce faith in my children. Long before I ever had children, I was interested in helping others to find a living faith. Fortunately, God has given us some simple spiritual laws that if we learn and heed we can best help others to walk by faith.

The first hard lesson for me to learn was that I could not "make" another person believe. In my early years as a Christian I tried to impose my will on others through sincere, but misguided efforts. I tried to use personal pressure and personality to "make" someone serve the Lord. All this accomplished was to have others flee from me and in turn, to greatly raise my own frustrations. Fortunately, I quickly learned the difference between what the Lord wanted from me and what was the responsibility of others. *"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase"* (**1 Cor. 3:5-7**). The Lord wanted me to plant and water His perfect word. The rest would be left to the one being taught in his response to God.

### Faith Takes Time

Genuine faith always takes time. Each man must go through the process of learning about the nature of God and then, through reflection, come to trust God. Also in this process one must come to see the bad news about their

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own sin so that the good news of the sacrifice of Christ can be a life-changing force (**Rom. 3:23; 5:6-8**). There will be some who have previously given much thought to these things and thus can respond quickly when the pure gospel is preached (**Acts 2:41**). There will be others who will need much more time, because of their background, to come to know the one true God (**Acts 17:16-17**).

### How Did Jesus Build Faith?

When you examine the teachings of Jesus, you will find that He placed challenges before His hearers and then let them struggle to find answers. How many times did Jesus ask a question, rather than giving a quick answer? Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" and then let them discuss it (**Matt. 16:13-18**). Why did Jesus speak in parables? He wanted them to think and in that process find God's truth. Sadly, most people would not have this spirit to seek and dig deeper and as a result they rejected the Lord (**Matt. 13:10-15**).

You can easily tell when a man has made faith "his own." He not only can plainly tell you why he believes what he does, but, more importantly, he will stand and fight for these truths, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses" (**1 Tim. 6:12**).

Are we really teaching others to reason from the scriptures, or are we simply giving them a catechism, a man-made series of questions and answers, to memorize?

Consider these truths the next time your faith is challenged.

### Avoid the emotional response to run and hide

It can be very stressful to examine long-held practices. As you build your trust in God you will not be afraid to put

them to the test (**Phil 3:4-10**). If you make changes by faith, you will be willing to talk with others about those changes and not run from them. Some make changes because of peer pressure from false teachers. This new-found "faith" is then used by men to make one "run and hide" from those now considered "traditionalists." A Biblical faith will not do this! "They zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them" (**Gal. 4:17**).

### Do not make sweeping generalizations

Just because you have found one item of past practices that must be changed does not mean everything must be cast away. You should not blindly accept everything that another has taught you, nor should you blindly reject everything that you have been taught. Walk by faith by reexamining the scriptures and allowing that alone to determine your stand.

### Learn patience as you seek

Just like the farmer who must plant, water and wait, so you will be in the process of building your faith (**Jas. 5:9-11**). Give priority to establishing a strong foundation in trusting God, and then to the issue by issue studies that will arise. There may be times where a particular issue will be laid aside for now to be studied later. Let honesty, integrity, and a deep love for God cloth you as you walk before Him. He will give you time and opportunity to know His will (**John 7:17; Eph. 5:17**).

Do you really believe in the Lord? May the Lord bless you as you grow in His grace and knowledge. "You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen" (**2 Peter 3:17-18**). Credit: [www.moodychurchofchrist.com](http://www.moodychurchofchrist.com)

## THINK ABOUT IT!

When a farmer stops plowing his land, stops planting seed, and stops harvesting his crops, he has stopped doing those things that identify him as being a farmer. When a Christian stops attending worship services regularly, stops studying, stops giving as he has been prospered, and has stopped working for the Lord, he has stopped being a Christian because he has stopped doing those things that identify him as a Christian. "By their fruits ye shall know them," (**Matthew 7:20**). •

*It seems a lot of people use religion as they do the city bus;  
They ride on it only as long as it is going the way they want to go.*

# "WHICH CHURCH SHOULD I ATTEND?"

## One Where His Name Is Glorified

**Acts 4:12** - No other name whereby we might be saved.  
**Acts 11:26** - God gave the name Christian  
**1 Peter 4:16** - We can glorify God in this name.

## One Where His Teachings On Salvation Are Followed

**John 14:6** - Only He is the way to heaven.  
**Hebrews 5:9** - All must obey Him to be saved.  
**John 8:24** - He said we must believe on Him.  
**Luke 13:3** - He said we must repent.  
**Matthew 10:32-33** - He said we must confess Him.  
**Mark 16:16** - He said we must be baptized to be saved.

## One Where His Will Is Followed In Worship

**John 4:24** - Worship must be sincere and proper actions.  
**Acts 20:7** - Lord's Supper on the first day of the week.  
**Colossians 3:16** - Singing praises to God.  
**Acts 2:42** - Prayer and teaching.  
**1 Corinthians 16:1-2** - Giving of our means on the first day of the week.

YOU SHOULD ATTEND THE CHURCH OF CHRIST *"The churches of Christ salute you."* (Romans 16:16) ♦

A faith that will not take us to  
 Every services of the Lord's church  
 Will not take us to heaven! ♦

## What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear and Learn - Rom. 10:17 m. 10:9-10 ; 1 Pet. 3:21 ; John 6:45; 17:3  
 Believe - Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24  
 Repent - Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30  
 Confess the Lord - Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21  
 Be Baptized - Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27  
 Continue in the Apostles' Teaching - Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17

When an archer misses the mark, he turns and looks for the fault within himself.  
 Failure to hit the bull's-eye is never the fault of the target. To improve your aim –  
 Improve yourself.

## About the Hillcrest church of Christ

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### Our Address

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 Green Bay, WI 54313



### Schedule of Assembly

**Bible Study:** Sunday, 9:00am  
**Worship Service:** Sunday, 10:00am  
**Bible Study:** Wednesday, 7:00pm\*

\*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

[www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com](http://www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com)