

Seek The Old Paths

"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths...and walk therein."
(Jeremiah 6:16)

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IS THE CHURCH SIMILAR OR IDENTICAL?

Marlin Kilpatrick

The saddest of all things is the departure of some of our own brethren from the path that is right and cannot be wrong.

Most people are familiar with the words "similar" and "identical." The real is genuine, but the similar is not and it may be deceiving in its similarity. Counterfeit money is very deceptive to the untrained eye. Employees of our banking systems are trained to detect the counterfeit. Likewise, members of the Lord's church need to be able to discern between that which is similar to the New Testament church and the church as she is revealed in the scriptures. Satan has many ways of deceiving multitudes into believing they are children of God while, at the same time, he has them firmly within his grip. It's not enough to be similar to the New Testament church, we must strive to be identical in our belief, teaching and practice.

A pistol that fires only blanks may scare-off a would-be thief, but it will not stop him from stealing. When we become satisfied with being similar to the church in the New Testament, we begin firing blanks. These blanks will not stop the liberalism that's running rampant in our brotherhood. We cannot afford to be satisfied with similarity in doctrinal matters.

MUSIC IN THE CHURCH

Denominational churches have for many years been satisfied with being similar to the church of the New Testament. Consider the case of

music in the church. If the scriptures had simply authorized the making of music in the worship of the church, there would be few problems; since there are many ways we may make music. In the New Testament, the kind of music to be made is specified. The command to sing is specific; it specifies the nature of the music to be offered in worship. The denominations respond by saying, "We sing, but we choose to sing with musical instruments." Their actions are similar, but not identical with the practice of the New Testament church. The problem becomes clear when we realize that the command to sing specifies the kind of music the Lord wants in his church. And, the instrument upon which the music is made is the worshiper's heart, and not a mechanical instrument (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). There is absolutely no scriptural authority for the use of mechanical instruments of music in New Testament worship, and those who use them are sinning because they have transgressed the law of Christ (cf. II John 9-11).

THE LORD'S SUPPER

The practice of partaking of the Lord's supper is another case-in-point. The New Testament church observed the Lord's death every first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Most denominations have the supper sev-

eral times a year, but they do not follow the pattern set-out in the New Testament. Although they have the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine, their purposes for participating in the observance range from the forgiveness of sins to simply remembering that Christ died for the sin of the whole world. The denominations are similar in that they have the proper elements of unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine (grape juice or wine), but they are not identical with the practice of the early church. The scriptural purpose for partaking of the Lord's supper is to remember the Lord's death (I Cor. 11:24-26). The forgiveness of our sins can come only through the shed blood of Christ (Heb. 9:22) and not by eating the Lord's supper.

IMMERSION

Several denominations immerse their converts, but the reason(s) for which they immerse are varied. A major denomination whose name is derived from the title worn by John the Baptist, teach that baptism in the New Testament was always an immersion. This is true, but their purpose for immersing their converts is not "for the remission of sins," as Peter declared on Pentecost (Acts

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Is The Church Similar?...



Editorial...

DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE AND LIVING IN ADULTERY

*“One cannot sin, repent of it,
and continue in the sin. Repentance is a change
of heart that leads to change of life.”*

When one divorces their spouse for a cause other than their spouse's fornication and marries another, both individuals are living in adultery. Jesus made this clear in Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9. Adulterers and adulteresses do not go to heaven (I Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Heb. 13:4; James 4:4; Rom. 13:9). However, those guilty of adultery can be forgiven if they repent and terminate (dissolve) their adulterous marriage.

Because of this clear and obvious teaching of our Lord, there are those who say it makes adultery a sin that God will not forgive. Therefore, they seek to get around the Lord's teaching by saying that adultery is a “one time” act of divorcing and remarrying and that the marriage union itself is not an adulterous union. They conclude that those guilty of adultery can repent of it and yet remain in the marriage union. They simply promise to never divorce and remarry again. But, such is not the case. This belief and practice is false teaching and will lead multitudes into hell.

The sin of adultery has not been singled out to be a sin that God will not forgive. The problem is not that God does not care for adulterers or is not merciful to adulterers or is not forgiving of adulterers. Second Peter 3:9 says, “*The Lord...is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*” The Lord will forgive any sin of which one will repent (cf. I John 1:9). Repentance is the key to forgiveness. On the other hand, God will not save those who do not repent. (Note: If one is not a Christian, then one must believe, repent, confess and be baptized to

have forgiveness. If one is a Christian, then repentance and confession before the church is necessary).

Every sin has its consequences, though some sins bear more consequences than others. God can and does forgive every sin of which one repents, but one must also live with the consequences of their sins. For example, I may commit murder, repent of it and receive forgiveness. But, my repentance will not bring the dead person back. My repentance will not wipe away my memory of committing this terrible deed. I certainly received forgiveness at my repentance, but the consequences of my actions will remain with me the rest of my life. I'll be haunted by such memory in addition to having to pay my debt to society. I may get drunk and kill someone or maim someone or myself. I can get forgiveness of drunkenness, but no one's arms or legs will be put back on or make their wheelchair go away.

Consider this modern day illustration. If you steal a car, can you repent of it? Certainly. Can you receive forgiveness of it? Certainly. Can you keep the car after you repent? Of course not! Not only was it wrong to steal the car, it is wrong to keep the car. Your relationship with that car is sinful and the car must be given up to receive and continue in God's forgiveness. Lest some doubt this illustration, read II Samuel 12 where God made a parallel between stealing and adultery.

An illustration of homosexuality will help clarify the issue even more. In today's world, two men or two women may live together or even get married in some places. Obviously, they have no authority from God to

live in such a perverted relationship. They sin in so doing. So, can they repent of marrying (or living with) someone of the same sex? Certainly. Can they receive forgiveness of marrying someone of the same sex? Of course. Can they repent of the sin of homosexuality (sodomy) and yet remain in their marriage and live together? Of course not. Why not? Because marrying each other was/is a sin and continuing to live with each other is a sin. They had/have no authority to be married to each other or live with each other. The relationship itself is a sinful relationship and must be terminated (dissolved) to meet God's approval.

If I divorce my wife and it is not because of her fornication and I marry someone else, Jesus said in Matthew 19:9 that I have sinned and I am living in the sin of adultery. And, the person I married has sinned and continues to sin by living in an adulterous marriage/relationship. Can I repent of marrying someone I had no right to marry? Certainly. Can I receive forgiveness of marrying someone I had no right to marry? Certainly. Can I continue living with the one I had no right to marry and meet God's approval? I most certainly cannot! The sin of adultery is that two people are living with each other when they have no right to be living with each other. The fact that they may be married does not change the fact that they are living in adultery. The relationship itself is sinful. Colossians 3:5-7 makes it clear that one can continuously live in the state of sin, including sexual sins. Verse 7 says, “*In the which ye also walked some time, when ye **lived in them.***”

One cannot sin, repent of it, and continue in the sin. Repentance is a change of heart (attitude, thinking) that leads to a change of life. If one's life does not change, there's no evidence of repentance. If one is guilty of idolatry and repents of it, he/she must discontinue bowing down to idols. You can't repent and continue in the sin, regardless of which sin it is.

All those who are eligible to marry can be grouped into three classes/categories of people. These and only these have a right to marry and meet with God's approval:

1. *Those who have never been married.* God created marriage and

counts it honorable and wholesome (Heb. 13:4).

2. *Those whose spouse has died* (Rom. 7:1-3).

3. *Those who have divorced their mate because of their mate's fornication* (Matt. 19:9; 5:32).

It is obvious that in each of these three classes/categories that those who have a right to marry must also marry someone who has a Scriptural right to marry — that is, they can only marry someone who fits into one of these three classes.

There is another category of people: *those who have divorced their mate for a cause other than their mate's fornication*. According to Matthew 19:9, those in this category, those who marry without a Scriptural cause, are committing adultery and those whom they marry are also committing adultery. The Greek word “committeth”, indicates “continuous action.” As long as they remain married and/or live together, their continued relationship is adultery. They are continuing to live in the constant state of adultery.

The conclusion is this, one can most certainly receive forgiveness of an unscriptural divorce and remarriage. However, one must repent of their sin of adultery. Repentance means they discontinue their sin and sinful relationship. A divorced person can receive forgiveness just like anyone else that sins. However, they cannot continue in their sin of adultery any more than someone can continue in their sin of homosexuality or lying or stealing or idolatry or any other sin.

Those who do not or have not put away (divorced) their mate because of their mate's fornication, do not have a right to get married or remain married. Marriage is not mandatory. Marriage is a privilege allowed by God to those who obey His will. The consequence (alternative), therefore, is for those who have an unscriptural divorce and/or have repented of adultery, to remain single. They do not have the right to marry. First Corinthians 7:11 and Matthew 19:10-12 speaks of those who must remain unmarried in order to meet God's approval. Such a single person can be a faithful child of God and do great work in the kingdom. Living faithful unto the Lord, they will be able to go to heaven in the end.

GOD'S GOODNESS IN QUALIFYING BELIEVERS

Marvin L. Weir

The Colossian brethren had been ensnared by worldliness, lost in sin, and without hope. But now the apostle Paul describes them as “saints in light!” When we learn what the Colossians did to break the bondage of sin and become “partakers of the inheritance,” we will also learn what qualified them as “saints in light.”

Paul writes, “*Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son*” (Col. 1:12-13). The Bible is very clear in communicating what one must do to be “made meet” or “qualified.” How can one claim to study God's Word and then declare that there is nothing for one to do to be saved? The Bible never hints or teaches that God automatically “qualifies” people as “saints in light” without any acts of obedience on their part.

First, the Gospel must be **heard**. It is true that “...*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (Rom. 10:17). The Colossians were reminded “*For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth*” (Col. 1:5-6).

Second, the sinner must become aware of his **lost condition** and **open his heart** to receive God's truth. Many on the day of Pentecost asked, “what must we do” (Acts 2:37)? Their hearts had been “pricked” (cut) by the spoken Word of God. In Acts 2:41 it is stated, “*Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*” This process is emphasized again in the parable of the sower (cf. Matt. 13:18-23).

Third, **belief** plays a role in qualifying one for salvation. Jesus answered, “*Jesus answered and said*

unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent” (John 6:29). You will notice that “belief” (something that most all religious groups teach that one must do) is here called “the work of God” (something these same religious groups teach does not save one). Friends, this is the difference in man's own meritorious works and the works that God has commanded! The writer of Hebrews affirms the necessity of belief in saying, “*But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*” (Heb. 11:6).

Fourth, **repentance** must be forthcoming before one can be saved. The Bible says, “*I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*” (Luke 13:3). The Word of God gives an excellent demonstration of genuine repentance in Matthew 21:28-31: “*But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.*”

Fifth, **confession** is made unto salvation. One must acknowledge Christ's deity — that He is the only begotten of the Father. In Romans 10:10 Paul says, “*for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*” (cf. I Tim. 6:12-13). The Lord promises to confess those before the Father who are willing to confess Him (Matt. 10:32-33).

Sixth, **baptism** finally places one “into Christ” (Gal. 3:27). Baptism is a “burial” (Rom. 6:4), and God has stipulated that baptism is the act that “washes away” one's sins (Acts

22:16). Salvation is never promised in the New Testament to any unbaptized person after Pentecost! The Great Commission declares, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16). Can one not easily see that this passage does not say what most religious groups teach "he that believeth and is not baptized shall be saved!"

When a person fully obeys through faith the commands of God's will, that person is then qualified to be saved. Thank God for His goodness and the gospel!

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TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE VS. MODERN IDEAS

Roger D. Campbell

Some people simply do not know God's will about sex, marriage, and the family. There are others who know well what God's Book says about these matters and simply choose to disregard what He says.

A lot is being said today in American society about "traditional family values," "traditional marriage," and "traditional families." Whether one is for or against the "traditional" approach to these matters, there is one problem in these issues which many fail to notice. Whether or not a concept or activity is acceptable has nothing to do with its newness or oldness. That is, something is not wrong just because it is new to us or has never been done before in our part of the world or nation. At the same time, neither is something right or better just because it "breaks new ground" or parts ways with a former idea or practice. In this context, to label something as "traditional" or "non-traditional" proves absolutely nothing about whether it is right or wrong.

As God's children, Christians must strive to have their thinking be in harmony with His will. We must accept the truth that the Bible is God's inspired word (II Tim. 3:16,17). We must accept the reality that "the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth" (Psalm 33:4). Since the Bible is God's word, and since His word is right/truth (John 17:17), then we need to accept its message about every topic, including what it says about marriage, the family and sexual activities. In all things we are to have the mind of the Christ (Phil. 2:5).

God created us. This makes us "the offspring of God" (Acts 17:29). Because we have a Creator-created relationship, it is our obligation to seek out and follow our Creator's will. This certainly applies in the realm of the family. Jesus once said, "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father

and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:4-6). Because Jehovah God is the One that instituted marriage, then He alone is the One that has the right to determine the "rules" for marriage. In addition, as our Maker, He has the authority to dictate to mankind how to use and not use our physical bodies.

Some time ago, I read a USA Today article entitled "Nordic Family Ties Don't Mean Tying the Knot," that was both thought-provoking and alarming. Unless stated otherwise, all quotes below are from this article: USA Today, 12/16/04, pp.15A,16A. The article deals with current moral values and approaches to parenthood and marriage in Norway. I would like to share some excerpts from the article, along with some observations. Though this article refers to attitudes and action that abound in another nation, the principles involved would apply regardless of where a person might live.

"In Norway, half of all children are now born to unmarried mothers. ... The numbers are similarly high for Sweden and Denmark." Can you imagine? Fifty percent (50%) of all children are being born to women who are not married to the fathers of those children! Scandinavian countries are not the only ones struggling with such a dilemma. Consider the reality of what is taking place in our area, both in the state of Tennessee and the city of Chattanooga in particular. "36.2% of all births in Tennessee are to single, unmarried mothers. This is close to the national average, BUT 49.8% of all births in Chattanooga are to single, unmar-

ried women” [Intercessors for Chattanooga Prayer Letter, Vol. 15, No. 8, p.2]. Nationwide in the U.S., roughly one out every three children that are born are not born into a setting where their mom and dad are married to one another. Thus, by definition, they are illegitimate kids.

What the above means, of course, is that people are having sexual relations with those that are not their spouses. Some “luck out” and don’t get pregnant. However, whether or not a pregnancy results means absolutely zero in considering the question of the rightness of jumping into bed with a person that is not one’s mate. When two people that are not married to one another engage in sexual relations with each other, the Bible calls such action “fornication.” God’s word is not vague when it comes to this topic. Hear the Lord’s message: *“Flee fornication”* (I Cor. 6:18). God said that fornicators shall not inherit the kingdom of God (I Cor. 6:9,10). We need to believe and teach this unchanging truth. Our kids and grandkids need to hear it. So does every adult.

One “priest” of a branch of the Lutheran denomination in Sweden said, “Now days, no one notices if someone is pregnant without being married.” God does! God notices when people engage in unlawful sexual conduct. *“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do”* (Heb. 4:13). Get this point: if people in a society do not give a second thought to someone being pregnant out of wedlock (i.e., they openly accept the practice of pre-marital sex), that does not make it right in God’s sight!

“In turning away from marriage, Scandinavians have done little to harm their quality of life. Norway ranked first and Sweden second in the United Nations’ quality-of-life survey for 2004, which rates per capital income, education levels, health care and life expectancy in measuring a nation’s well-being.” Is there anything that strikes you about these declarations? First, when the article says that Scandinavians are “turning away from marriage,” it has reference to the fact that many of them live together, have children, and then keep living together as a family that

has a dad, a mom, and kids, but the dad and mom never marry. Second, the article boasts that a man and woman living together (and sleeping together), as an alternative to getting married, has not really harmed their quality of life. The meaning? Traditional marriage is okay, but it is not any better than just living together. But, the question is, by whose standards? The answer, of course, is by human standards. Humanism declares that men and women have the right to determine what is best for them. God’s will is totally left out of the picture. People may have a good education, a good job, and a happy family. These things mean nothing, though, if they do not choose to fear God and keep His commands, which is the whole duty of man (Eccl. 12:13). Human organizations such as the United Nations use human measuring sticks to determine a nation’s well-being. Jehovah uses something different when He “weighs” a nation. Hear Him: *“Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people”* (Prov. 14:34).

One Ms. Hanssen, a twenty-five year old woman from Norway, said, *“You choose a father and then you choose a different husband.”* It sounds well planned, does it not? You jump into bed with one person to produce a baby, but then you get married to someone else. We might not bat an eye at the thought of providing stud services for horses, but in human beings it is abominable. The Bible says, *“Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge”* (Heb. 13:4). Remember, there is one circumstance alone wherein the Lord approves of sexual relations between humans. What is that? When a man and a woman are scripturally married to one another.

“Hanssen doesn’t believe the traditional, one-father one-mother family model is necessarily best for raising kids.” Once again, the question boils down to this: “Whose ideas for the home are we going to accept and follow, God’s or man’s?” God has spoken. Sexual relations, in and of themselves, are not sinful. Having children, in and of itself, is not wrong. God’s order, though, is first to marry, then bear children only with the help of one’s lawful spouse (I Tim. 5:14).

The Bible plainly teaches that the husband is the head of his wife (Eph. 5:23), and children are to obey their parents (Eph. 6:1,2). Man may not think this “traditional” family and submission arrangement is best for raising kids, but God says otherwise! It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. God says so in Jeremiah 10:23.

Ms. Hanssen also declared, *“Every single war, every single conflict, everything has been based on religion; so it just reaches a point where you say, ‘If God is that great, he’s not doing a very good job, is he?’ Eventually you end up choosing not to believe because to me it’s just too much of a contradiction. I’ve got to hope there’s no God, because if there is, I’ve got some issues with him.”*

This woman’s words contain falsehood — it certainly is not true that every single war and conflict between men has been based on religion. She seriously needs a history lesson.

Ms. Hanssen’s words also contain blasphemy. She boldly asserts that God is not doing a very good job! The Bible says, *“The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works”* (Psalm 145:17). God does not deserve to be second-guessed, called in for interrogation, or fired! He is perfect. It is not His fault that men fail to follow His instructions about marriage and how to treat other people. This young woman says that if there really is a God, she would have some issues with Him. Unless she changes her ways, what a surprise she will have on the day of judgment. Indeed, there is a God, and He will judge her and all others in righteousness (Acts 17:31). On that day, God will be the One to have some “issues” with this woman and all like her, not vice versa.

There are basically two root problems in the attitudes and actions we observe in this article. First, some people simply do not know God’s will about sex, marriage, and the family. Second, there are many others who know well what God’s Book says about these matters. They simply choose to disregard what He says. Regardless of the costs involved, may we always be ready to live according to God’s will.

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"I USED TO BE A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH"

Douglas Hoff

Christians are glad to see visitors in Bible classes and worship services. We want them to feel welcome so hopefully they will come again. Being the friendly people we are, it is natural to ask visitors about themselves. We inquire if they are just passing through or if they live in the area. We usually ask if they are members of the church or if they have visited the church of Christ before. If they are not members, we try to answer any questions they have about the Lord's church.

Sometimes a visitor will say that at one time he worshiped with the church of Christ but has not done so for quite a while. When the person admits he was baptized into Christ he usually feels a bit uncomfortable and tries to justify himself. At that point it is common to hear something like, "Well, I used to be a member of the church of Christ." The person believes he is no longer a member and thus under no obligation to faithfully attend.

While this thinking is common, it reveals a lack of understanding that needs to be addressed. It is good that the person has resumed attending. However, this person's concept about membership in the Lord's church is faulty. Does a Christian cease being a member when he decides to quit attending? Is it as if he let a club membership expire? Let us consider what the scriptures say about this (cf. John 5:39).

Being saved is likened to a new

birth (John 3:3-5). A person is born of water and the Spirit when he is baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). When one obeys the Gospel, the Lord adds him to the church (Acts 2:47). The Lord's church is also called His body (Eph. 1:22-23). Paul taught that the body is composed of many members (Rom. 12:4-5; I Cor. 12:12-28). Therefore, when one is saved, he is born into the family of God which is equivalent to saying he is a member of the church Jesus built (Matt. 16:18). He then has brothers and sisters in Christ.

In the physical realm, a child is part of a family. His relationship with his parents and siblings cannot be erased. Even if a teen moves out of the house and wants nothing to do with his parents he is still a member of that family. When a daughter gets married and takes the name of her husband's family she is still a member of her father's family. Once the Lord adds someone to the church, he remains a member of God's family. If this is not true, then why did God use the family analogy?

In this life, God does not kick unfaithful children out of the church. Otherwise, to be saved, the erring member would need to be born again and again! A backslider may not feel or act like he is part of the local church but this feeling does not mean he stopped being a member of God's family.

On Judgment Day the Lord will

exclude unfaithful members of the church from heaven. At one time these brothers and sisters were joint heirs with us (Rom. 8:17). The Bible promises that "he who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be my son" (Rev. 21:7). However, church members who practice the works of the flesh shall NOT inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21). God will cast out (i.e., disinherit) His unfaithful children (Matt. 8:12; John 15:6). Casting them out does not mean they cease being family. Sarah told Abraham to cast out Ishmael for he would not inherit with Isaac (Gen. 21:10). Hell will be worse for members of God's family because they once enjoyed the Father's grace and could have been in heaven (II Peter 2:20-22).

When a member's love for Christ grows weak, it often shows in sporadic attendance at worship services. Eventually, the weak soul quits coming altogether. Some say he "quit the church." In one sense this is correct since he no longer assembles with the local congregation. To avoid losing his soul the erring child of God must repent and come back to the Lord just like the prodigal son did (Luke 15:11-32). He was still a son though, living in sin far removed from the Father's house.

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"WHEN I HAVE TIME..."

Roger Hamlet

"When I have the time I will submit to the will of God, return to the Lord, serve God, spend time with my children, savor my life."

A very common phrase we hear is, "When I have time I will..." The statement is completed in any number of ways. God in His mercy and grace has afforded us time or opportunity to plan and use

our time wisely. One of the most important decisions is to whether or not we will be obedient and serve God. Felix, the governor of Caesarea, was given plenty of time to repent and obey God but he never

took advantage of the opportunity (Acts 24:22-27).

Felix was a sinful person. He had stolen his wife (Drusilla, the daughter of Herod Agrippa I) from her first husband. He was corrupt and greedy.

He would take bribes and give his permission for Roman troops to kill and ransack wealthy Jewish homes. The emperor would have executed Felix if his brother had not interceded. For two years Felix had the opportunity to study with the apostle Paul. Paul reasoned with Felix concerning righteousness, temperance, and judgement to come; but Felix would not obey God. He never found time because he never made time. He simply responded, "When I find time. When I have a convenient season."

Many will submit to the will of God when they have time. They know they are living in sin, but allow the world to tug at their heart-strings. There is a danger of waiting too long. The devil can steal the word away from our heart. Jesus warned: "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side" (Matt. 13:19). Our hearts can become so hardened that we will not hear and obey. We could die before we have time to obey. It happens every day: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). Paul taught, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (II Cor. 6:2).

Fallen Christians sometimes say they will return to the Lord when they have time. The pleasures of sin have such a hold on them they just don't want to submit to the great "I AM." Peter warned that a person who had become a Christian and went back into the world is in dangerous territory: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (II Peter 2:20-22). It is hard for them to return. They believe it is so difficult to say, "I'm sorry, I have sinned,

please forgive me."

Legion are those who will serve God when they have time. People think they are just too busy to serve God. There are too many things to do; too many interests vying for their time. But, people will find time for what they really want to do. But God, oh, that is another story: God can wait.

Parents will spend time with their children when they have time. "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate" (Psalm 127:3-5). Parents have been given the responsibility to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). How many parents will use their children as an excuse for not being faithful to God? How many parents neglect their children for other interests? Time is swiftly passing, and our children will grow into adulthood and start the same cycle. Children usually mirror what they see at home. The family was/is God's creation and it is to receive top priority.

When I have time, I will savor life. Many are so busy with making a living or enslaved in some other activity, that their life is out of balance and they cannot really enjoy life. The apostle Peter encouraged: "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (I Peter 3:10-12).

Jesus came into the world and died that we might have an abundant life. He said, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

We CAN faithfully serve God, spend time with our family, and enjoy life. Take time to make time.

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Is The Church Similar?...

(Continued from page 49)

2:38). Their purpose for immersing is to make the convert a member of their church. In fact, this is the only way one can become a member of the Baptist denomination. Can we not see the similarity between the practice of this particular denomination and that of the New Testament church? They immerse and so do we, but not for the same reason. We immerse for the remission of sins according to Acts 2:38. The action involved in immersing their converts is correct, but their purpose for immersing is incorrect. Similar, yes, but not identical! Friend, the church to which you belong, is it similar or identical to the church in the New Testament?

BRETHREN

Brethren, the saddest of all things is the departure of some of our own brethren from the path that is right and cannot be wrong. Some of our brethren have digressed to the point that they now are using instruments of music in their worship. Some of these digressive brethren are now partaking of the Lord's supper on occasions other than the first day of the week worship assembly. Some are now serving the Lord's supper at weddings and funerals; while others are partaking of the supper on Thursday evenings. These erring brethren do not respect the authority of the scriptures; if they did, they would not engage in such sinful practices.

Brethren, are we not making the same mistake Israel made long ago when they wanted a king so they could be like the nations around them? Are we not striving to be appealing (at the sacrifice of having scriptural authority for all we believe and practice) to our denominational friends by trying to be similar to them? It is my judgment, if we must try to be similar to them, we might as well join them and enjoy their fellowship in this life, for that will be the only reward we'll receive. In the hereafter, it will be a far different story. Think about it.

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

God continue to bless your work" ...**E. Russell Billings, Brighton, IL.** "I appreciate your work and stand for the truth" ...**Randy Kea, Forest Park, GA.** "I have just moved back to Texas from Oklahoma. I had lost contact with your fine publication. Some members here gave me a copy of STOP. It is as good as I remember! Thank you for your stand for the truth. So many are no longer willing to stand in the gap!" ...**Jess Whitlock, Evant, TX.** "Would you please send me the periodical you publish? It comes highly recommended. God bless you and your efforts" ...**Douglas Kirk, Chatham, VA.** "I preach for the Jackson church of Christ in Jackson, AL. I would like about 12-15 copies of *Seek the Old Paths* sent to me to put in our foyer for members to pick up and read. I appreciate all the work being done in this area. Let me know if there are any costs and we have a member that will probably donate to you for the shipping. Keep the faith. Thanks" ...**Brian Gentle, Jackson, AL.** "I now have access to the internet and can view your publication online so there is no need for it to be mailed to me. Thank you and keep up the good work" ...**Cindy D. McClendon, Magnolia, AR.** "I have received your monthly publication *Seek The Old Paths* for sometime. I enjoy it very much. Enclosed is a small check to help with expenses. Please send the paper to the enclosed friend. Thank you very much" ...**James M. Neal, Houston, MS.** "Thank you for your works and holding true to the word" ...**Dry Fork Church of Christ, Tompkinsville, KY.** "Thank you for an excellent article on the debacle at Lipscomb" ...**Al Sowins, Camp Wood, TX.** "Refused" ...**Stanley Hurst, Florence, AL.** "Please send 12 copies each month. We appreciate your good work so very much. Thank you" ...**Donald White for the church, Maysville, OK.** "I am enjoying the publication. Thank you" ...**David H. Ogden, Clio, AL.** "I would like very much to receive your monthly publication of STOP. Please add my name to your mailing list. May God continue to bless this great work. Thank you" ...**Barbara Waggy, Granger, TX.** "Please sign me up to receive *Seek The Old Paths*. I'm presently in prison and need all the spiritual food I can get. If anyone has study material that I could use to help me advance in my studies, please send it to me. God bless and thanks in advance" ...**Keith Player 416707, Jim Hamilton Correctional Center, PO Box 334, Hodgen, OK 74939.** "PLEASE, whomever gets this, will you ask Garland Robinson to STOP his ranting and raving about the different churches of Christ? I am so sick of his publication and deeply hurt and offended by him. He published an article a few months ago just before I lost my daughter to cancer that was extremely hurtful to my family (the ones who are here and the ones who are in HEAVEN (many of THEM)). The front page of that told a story that was ridiculous! The back page was not any better. I NEVER want to get another of his publications nor even hear of his name and if it gets any worse I will simply worship at HOME with my family. I wont even darken the door of a church. I was wondering if he is with the Restored Church of God since they say on the same website THEY are the only ones. The only ones what? If he wants to continue bullying, I know a few media people who know how a lot more, believe me! I will ask God to forgive him because he certainly does not know what he's doing. PLEASE do not respond to this, just simply be sure that he gets this msg. Thank you so much. P.S. The irony that he even thinks he's doing good to anyone is totally beyond me. CRITICISM, how awful!" ...**Ann Bruce, Bedford, TX.** "In reference to the May issue of STOP, I was very pleased how you replied to the letter of Mr. Clayton King who wanted his name removed because of his perception of the truth that many of our brethren have submitted as you explained to him that the apostle Paul did in Philippians 1:15-18. Even at times, our Lord had to use harsh words sometimes to get the attention of the people. But the well being of mankind was his motive. So even though some gospel preachers' words may seem harsh, the point one has to understand, if it's the truth, one has to be as Gamaliel did in Acts 5:36-39, he told the council that if the council or that work be of men, it will come to naught but if it be of God, you cannot overthrow it lest one be found fighting against God. So, keep up the good work and may God bless you"

"Just a note to thank you for your STOP publication. We always look forward to receiving the next issue. Keep up the good work. The world needs the truth in all its fullness and STOP sure fills this need. We share our copy with others that they also may receive the same blessing we enjoy. I am enclosing more names and addresses. May

...**John Jenkins, Montgomery, AL.** "I would like to be added to the mailing list for the publication called STOP" ...**Douglas Kirk, Chatham, VA.** "Please add these good brethren's names to your STOP mailing list. The May issue was tremendous. The principles discussed are much needed and should be heeded in the Lord's church today. I appreciate your vigilance and stand for the truth. Take care and may the Lord bless your every effort for his cause" ...**Jeff Grimes, Brantley, AL.** "A good paper" ...**Eugene Britnell, Athens, AL.** "I recently came across your publication from a brother here in the Dallas area. Please put me on your mailing list so I can start receiving this piece monthly" ...**Steve Cooner, Dallas, TX.** "I am a member of the church and someone gave me a copy of *Seek The Old Paths* publication. Please start sending it to me. Thanks" ...**Elizabeth Myrick, Memphis, TN.** "We enjoy so much the STOP publication and what a wonderful way to reach so many souls with the truth of God's way. Would you please send us six (6) copies of the May 2008 issue? Thank you and God bless every effort to teach His word" ...**John & Ann Bessire, Happy Valley, OR.** "I enjoy your paper so much. Hope this donation will help some. God bless you in your work" ...**Anonymous, Tulsa, OK.** "It's a wonderful work you are doing. May God continue to bless all of you. The articles are well written, powerful, according to knowledge, not superficial in teaching, admonishing us to be 'different' as Christians and as a church, more in line with brotherly love as was intended and as it used to be. I'm almost 87 years old, and grew up with this 'powerful preaching,' telling the gospel like it is, preaching it in full. For the second half of my life I've longed to hear it again, but it's not often done. People have changed. Not many want to hear the strong points that point to today's apathy, lack of spiritual thinking, lack of the loving and service minded attitudes that used to exist. It grieves me to see the 'falling away.' Keep up your great God-given work, and may His blessings abound through your efforts" ...**Murriel Windham, Las Vegas, NV.**

Seek The Old Paths is a monthly publication of the **East End Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is mailed **FREE** upon request. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3; II Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:13; Titus 2:1; II Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless otherwise noted. Articles are also welcomed.

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