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## WHICH CHURCH IS RIGHT?

By W. F. Cawyer

It is not difficult to understand why men are confused when it comes to selecting a church, since there are so many denominations in the world, some two hundred or more are registered in Washington, D.C. I deeply sympathize with those who are trying to find the right church from among so many denominations. If men could but understand that God has given us the Bible to lead, guard, and direct us in life's way, this problem would not be so great.

When we turn to the Bible we learn that Christ did not establish a denominational organization. In Matt. 16:18, he said, "I will build my church." At the time Jesus made this statement there were several religious groups - The Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Stoics, and Epicureans. Jesus selected none of these, but announced that he would build his own.

"I", the personal pronoun, identifies him as the builder. "Will build" is future, showing that the Lord's church was not built prior to, or at that time. The pronoun "my" shows ownership, and "my church" shows that the one he built was his. You will notice the expression "my church" is singular. He did not say, "I will build my churches" plural. So we can expect to find one church. And to this agrees the words of inspiration, In. Eph. 4:4, "There is one body". This body is the church, Col. 1:24 "For his body's sake, which is the church." Also in I Cor. 12:20, "But now are there many members, yet but one body."

Sometimes we hear people say that the denominations are the branches of the true vine in John 15:1-8. If this is true, I want to believe it. So lets look at John 15:5-6, "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. 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." "He" is a masculine term, and is never used to refer to the church. The church is referred to in the feminine gender, for we are married to Christ (Rom. 7:4). The church is the bride of Christ. Hence, it is the individual Christian, not church organizations, that are branches in the vine.

As the bride of Christ, we are to wear his name. "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name" I Pet. 4:16. What would you think of a wife who would prefer wearing another man's name in preference to that of her husband? I don't believe that any man would put up with that kind of foolishness. But religiously, this is being done every day, people who profess to belong to Christ, yet who prefer to wear a man-made name. We glorify God in this name (Christian), it is God given (Acts 11:26).

Now let us be serious and find the church that Jesus built. It had its beginning on the day of Pentecost (Acts 11:15). The apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit on that day and for the first time the gospel was preached in its fullness, that Christ died, was buried, rose

again, ascended to Heaven, and sent the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles (John 16:13). By this message, the apostles guided men in the way of salvation, and on that day three thousand were added to the church (Acts 2:41, 47). Now let us turn back in this chapter and see what they did. Acts 2:36-37, They heard the gospel preached, and asked the question: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Now look at the answer the apostles gave them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and he shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Is this the way that you were brought into the organization to which you belong? If not, you need to investigate; and if you did just that, you are thereby a member of the Lord's church, the body of Christ.

If you are a member of the church, which is the family of God (Eph. 3:15), you must now live as the Bible directs. In Titus 2:11-12 Paul said, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

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## Christains Are Blessed

By Lavern Stewart

If non-Christians could be persuaded how blessed they would be after becoming a Christian, surely they would be baptized the same hour of the day or night. Seeing that there is a certain amount of self-concern about all men, evidently the reason more men have not obeyed the Gospel is that they have not been convinced that they would be better off being children of God.

The Bible speaks of all spiritual blessings being in Christ. (Eph. 1:3.) The

apostle Peter speaks of this as "exceeding great and precious promises" being given us (2 Peter 1:4). Some of the blessings of the Christian life are briefly discussed in the following paragraphs.

**FORGIVENESS OF SINS:** Promises were made to lost men of the days when they could be released from the burden of their sins - "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:34). This promise was

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# Teenager and Temptations

By Coy Walters

It is certain that we will be tempted in our Christian lives to indulge in sinful practices. This seems to be especially true with teenagers. Concerning temptations, James said, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." He later said, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

According to James, temptation is not sin, but it is the preceeder of sin. If teenagers, as well as every Christian, can learn to conquer their lusts and temptations, then sin can be defeated and endurance in our Christian living will be strengthened (James 1:3).

In II Timothy 2:22, Paul gives a very practical way to defeat our temptations, "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." Let us consider the gold mine of instructions to the youth in this passage.

The first point of Paul's instructions is to flee from youthful lusts. Everyone in fighting temptation must learn the art of fleeing. The wisdom of Paul shows in this statement. The older, more mature Christian might resist and rebuke a situation, when it would be better for the young to simply remove themselves from the situation. This would even seem to be especially true when one considers the nature of youthful lusts.

We are to flee fornication (1 Cor. 6:18), idolatry (I Cor. 10:14), from the love of money, evil surmisings, railings, strife, envy, disputes of words, questionings, evil doctrine (I Tim. 6:11). To be even more practical for our Christian teenagers, we could list R and X rated movies, on or off the TV, parking, dancing, and etc. It is these things that causes lust and temptation to run wild. The best thing to do to avoid the pains of sin is to abstain from all appearance of evil. (I Thess. 5:22.) But, if Christian teenagers find themselves in these situations, whether by ignorance, pressure from friends, or for some other reason, the best thing to do is to flee or to remove yourselves as did Joseph (Gen. 39:7-12).

The second point of Paul's instruction is to follow the right things rather than youthful lusts. The teenager must strive

to do what he knows is required of him as a child of the heavenly Father. By doing this he becomes an example before other Christian teenagers, and before his or her non-Christian friends. The Christian teenager strengthens himself by following the right things and encourages his weaker friends who are struggling with youthful lusts. Paul said, "Let no one despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

To be able to follow the right things and to help other will cause a great deal of satisfaction in Christian living. But, if teenagers let temptations and lusts become a regular part of their lives it will bring about a very frustrated life.

The third point of Paul's instruction is to follow the right things, "with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." In I Cor. 15:33, Paul said, "Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners." Paul realized the influence that others have upon us and he wanted us to have fellowship with Christians. Don't try to tackle temptations alone. Choose wise friends who will help with your fight against temptation instead of encourage temptation. Date Christians. Dating pressures seem to be hard enough as they are, so date Christians who will help you to stay pure. Two Christian consciences are better than one. Marry a Christian who can share with you the joys of the greatest life on earth, the Christian life.

If our Christian youth will do these things, they will avoid the frustrations that many of us witnessed in our lives and in the lives of other Christian teenagers. Christian teenagers can put joy, not only in their lives, but in the lives of their parents, the church, and their heavenly Father, when they keep their heart, mind and body pure.

## CONTRIBUTIONS CHURCHES OF CHRIST

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Viola . . . . .	5.00
Agnos. . . . .	5.00
Garliel . . . . .	10.00
Garfield . . . . .	15.00
Big Pond . . . . .	12.00
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Eleanor Davis . . . . .	\$ 5.00
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EDITOR . . . . . Mike Pace

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## WHICH CHURCH IS RIGHT?

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If we fail to pattern our lives by the Bible, we will be cast off as the unfruitful branches, which were gathered, cast into the fire, and burned (John 15:6). Some may teach you that once you are saved, you cannot be lost, but that teaching will not stand the test. Listen to the word of God "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace." (Heb. 10:26-29). Jesus said, "And they are burned" (John 15:6).

Jesus prayed that we all might be one in both faith and in practice; "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou Father are in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." (John 17: 20-21).

We can all be one today if we both believe and obey only the gospel. "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 Cor. 1:10).

# NOT FOR THE UNFAITHFUL

By Clifford Payne

It has been a rather common practice for church leaders to call upon men who attend only one service of the church each week and who fail to give liberally of their time, talent, and material possessions to lead prayers, to teach Bible Classes, to direct singing, and to serve at the communion service. We sincerely believe that this is an inadvisable practice which should be discontinued.

The admonition to Timothy is that the teaching of the gospel be committed to "faithful men". The unavoidable conclusion is simply that only active and consecrated Christians are qualified to be teachers. One who attends the church services once a week only can hardly be described as an active and consecrated child of God. Indeed, if he is given a class, what will he teach the members of the class relative to fidelity to the Lord's work? As brother Brewer noted: "If I could control the affairs of the church where I live, I would not allow anyone to teach a class who does not attend all the services of the church, including prayer meetings, of course, and who does not show a lively interest in all the problems and work of the church. What is a teacher to teach? If he is not going to teach respect for and fidelity to the Lord's blood-bought institution, why should he teach anything? If he is not going to teach the students to become Christians and to live as Christians in the fear of the Lord, in faith and prayer and loyalty, why should he be considered a teacher?"

When asked why they utilize the services of unfaithful members in the specific ways previously stated, church leaders usually respond with this major reason: "By using them in such ways, we hope to induce them to greater fidelity." Like all specious reasoning, this may at first sound like a good idea, when in reality it is inadvisable and without scriptural support. A study of I Timothy 3:10 shows that one is qualified to take a position of leadership (and leading in the public worship services would undoubtedly be included in principle in this teaching) when he has first proved himself. Therefore, one is not appointed to the eldership, given a class to teach, called upon to lead prayer, etc. as an incentive for the proper Christian zeal and faithfulness, but, conversely, he is used in these different ways after having manifested love, fidelity and zeal.

In actuality, when church leaders use unfaithful members for the purpose of creating increased interest and zeal, they often reap the very opposite of what they seek. As one negligent member said when he was urged to be more faithful: "What's wrong with my faithfulness? The elders evidently consider me faithful enough. I'm called upon to lead prayers, officiate at the Lord's table, and to serve in other ways." He had concluded, and it is not hard to see why, that, as he was called upon to serve in these ways, it was proof that his fidelity and Christian example were all right. It is quite likely that a greater interest in the Lord's work would have been induced had the person not been used, with the elders giving, of course, a full explanation as to why.

It is nothing short of irreverence when unfaithful men lead the congregation in worship to God (Psalm 24:3, 4). For instance, how repugnant it must be to the Lord when a man who does not have enough interest in the assemblies of the church to be present Sunday and Wednesday nights leads the entire congregation in solemn prayer on Sunday morning! Would we want such a person to pray with us in the hour of death? As brother J. W. McGarvey observed: "If you were sick, and thought you were going to die, and wanted the comfort of prayer at your bedside, would you send for some wicked neighbor, who sometimes prays when scared? Would you send for some member of the church who barely keeps his place in it? You would not think of any such person. If you wanted some one to pray by your bedside, you would send for the very best man or woman you could reach, and you would not have any other, for you could not have confidence in the

prayers of any but the righteous. Leading the thoughts of the congregation in prayer at the Lord's day morning service, or any other time, is no less important. Surely, then, only the faithful should be asked to do this.

At times the situation can even become somewhat farcical. The writer recalls a member who was frequently asked by the elders to make the announcements. Although it was a rare occasion when the man himself attend at night, he always in the course of making the announcements urged everyone to be present at the Sunday and Wednesday evening services. It is plainly seen that the unfaithful member does not possess the ethical proof to even make the customary announcements. When he does assume the job, he must either omit a customary part of the announcements or announce and urge something which he refuses to practice.

A farcical and contradictory situation confronts the unfaithful person who is requested to lead the singing. How can he sincerely and reverently lead the congregation in "*Have Thine Own Way Lord*", or "*Let Him Have His Way With Thee*," or "*I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go*," or, as a matter of fact, any other scriptural song? Should such a person be leading the Lord's people in their worship to Him in song?

Unfaithful members are not to be teachers, but are to be taught; they are not to lead, but are to be led. This is the Lord's pattern! When it goes unheeded, the services of the church are tragically reduced in reverence, power, and acceptability.

## WE NEED SOME DEACONS WILLING TO "DEAK"

By Mike Pace

Inherent in the word "deacon" is the principal function of these men in their relationship to the body of Christ. They are to "serve". Those chosen by the congregation in Jerusalem (Acts 6) were "put in charge" of a particular task of service. A doctor is not a doctor unless he doctors; a fisherman is not a fisherman unless he fishes; a preacher is not a preacher unless he preaches; and an elder is not an elder unless he performs those functions peculiar to his role as an elder. And likewise, a deacon is not a deacon unless he performs

those functions that are characteristic of a deacon as defined in God's Word.

The qualifications of those men who serve the local congregation (I Timothy 3:8-13; Acts 6:3), bespeak the singular principal of service: dignity, sincerity, generosity, probity, founded in the faith, exemplary behavior, married but once, exercising control over his children, having a good reputation and taking direction and guidance from the wisdom of God's Word. Men who so conduct them-

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### CHRISTIANS ARE BLESSED

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fulfilled in the death of Christ, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Heb. 2:9.) To make this blessing available to all, God designed a simple plan wherein the believer through repentance and baptism should receive the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ (Acts 2:38, Romans 6:3). He also provided for the Christian who needs forgiveness (I John 1: 7-9).

**THE RIGHT TO PRAY:** Prayer is a spiritual blessing, (I Cor. 14:15), and therefore it is for the person "in" Christ. God's ears are open to the righteous (I Peter 3:12), and one is righteous only when he is "in" Christ (2 Cor. 5:21).

**HELP FROM CHRIST WHEN TEMPTED:** Jesus has promised to help the faithful child of God at all times: "for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." (Heb. 13: 5-6). In I Cor. 10:13 we are assured; "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." This shows us that we have help in living the Christian life, and cannot fail if we try and trust and follow Jesus. In Romans 8:28 we learn, "And we know that all

things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose." Our Lord will be such a help to us, he can turn even the seeming trials, or other things that happen to us, into that which will help us.

**JOY UNSPEAKABLE:** The word joy means a very glad feeling, happiness and pleasure. The Ethiopian Eunuch felt this joy as he went homeward, after being baptized. (Acts 8:35-39). The Bible states that "he went on his way rejoicing." The same happy condition prevailed in the Jailor's household after they had been baptized. (Acts 16:34). The apostle Peter described the joy of the Christian life, saying, "Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (I Peter 1:8).

**HOPE OF ETERNAL LIFE:** Though I have named this last, it is by no means the least of the Christian's blessings. This hope will keep one going when the world around him seems quite dark. Paul said, that God, who cannot lie, promised eternal life (Titus 1:2). Jesus promised in John 14:1-3, that He would come to receive the saved into the place that He was going to prepare. John tells us that the hope of eternal life will cause one to purify himself (I John 3:3).

Reader, if you are not rejoicing in the blessings of the Christian life, you are robbing yourself! Could you write down the true "reason" for not being a Christian?

### WE NEED SOME DEACONS WILLING TO "DEAK"

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selves in the capacity of a deacon, are those who can best serve God effectively.

When there is work to be done as pertains to the body of Christ, there is in many instances a need for deacons to be in charge of the execution of the work. And deacons are the key to the growth and activity of the local congregation. Under no circumstances, nor in any situations regardless of how unusual they might be, are deacons ever to exercise the authority and privileges unique only to an elder in the church. However, deacons who are "servants" in the most rigid sense are one of the church's most valuable assets. The key to a deacon's effectiveness lies in his servitude and his ability to accept delegated authority. You see, by exercising this "delegated authority" from the elders in the church, the deacon is in fact performing a special service and actually enhances those who are serving as elders.

Here is the point we're trying to make. The Lord's church it to be a "serving" church. And until the church that Jesus built restores this compelling, insistent characteristic of servitude, we'll continue to be inadequate when facing the problems in today's society.

Notice, if you will, the words found in Acts 6:6, 7 which indicate what the results will be when deacons are "serving" the church in the ways in which the Lord intends.

*"Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. And the word of God increased; and the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."*

## EVER WATCH A DOG FIGHT?

By Mike Pace

You may have heard the story of the young boy who anxiously desired to see the king. After much patience, the opportunity finally came! A special processional or parade was arranged by the king's court -- the king would be seen by all!

Dressed in his very best attire, the young boy started early and walked many miles for the experience of a lifetime.

The hour came. The trumpets sounded. And then in distance the king's carriage came into view. People began to cheer and pay tribute to the king. Dogs were running and barking. Then suddenly

there broke out a fierce fight among a couple of the dogs. The little boy watched closely and attentively as the fight grew more and more intense between the two dogs. Just as suddenly, the fight was over, and he turned quickly to view the king's processional -- it was gone! An opportunity to see the king had been missed while he watched a dog fight!

There's a lesson here. There are "dog fights" all around. (Someone once said, "The dogs don't start barking until the wagons start rolling!")

Let's not miss walking with the King because we got interested in dogfights!

