

The Church is a Body of Hope

Hey, how many of you guys ever played that game “Twenty Questions”? You know, where you share some facts and information about somebody and you have to guess who it is? Well hey, that’s right! Since we’re Christians and we like to have fun, right? We’re going to play our own version of “Twenty Questions” only we’re going to keep it to 10. Let’s see if you can guess who this person is.

1. This person has no Biblical or theological training yet addresses a congregation of 12,000 every week.
2. His “ministry” takes in over \$100 million a year, which allows him to maintain a \$3.5 million home, and spend \$8,000 on airline fares and stay in \$2,000 a night hotel rooms.
3. He prophesied that said Fidel Castro would die in the 1990’s.
4. He prophesied that God would destroy the homosexual community in America by fire in 1994-95.
5. He prophesied that the leader of Syria would make a peace treaty with Israel in 2000 but when the leader died he said later it was not God’s plan after all.
6. He says that Jesus is “physically” appearing to Muslims right now.
7. He said Jesus would “physically” appear in Nairobi, Kenya.
8. He said Jesus would “physically” appear at one of his meetings, possibly in Nashville.

9. He said that Adam could fly like a bird, swim underwater like a fish, and even transport himself to the moon.
10. And finally, this so-called Christian Minister said this to those who dared criticize him, "I've looked for one verse in the Bible - I just can't seem to find it - one verse that said if you don't like them, kill them...I wish God would give me a Holy Ghost machine gun - I'll blow your head off!"
11. Who is this person? Why it's none other than television evangelist, BENNY HINN!

Now how many of you guys would say that so-called Christian evangelist probably isn't the **best representative** of Christianity? But folks, believe it or not, did you know there's an even worse representation than that? And **get this**, it's not being done just by one man. It's being done by **millions of Christians all at the same time**. And can anybody guess what it is? Hey, that's right! It's when Christians act like they've got **practical amnesia!**

Oh, we say we know who we are as the Church, but half the time, with our lips and with our lives, we act like we've forgotten who we are. And it's not only detrimental in our walk with Christ. It keeps others from believing in Christ. Therefore, to avoid this **atrocious** of Christian's living like they got practical amnesia by not knowing who they are, we're going to continue our study from the Word of God on the people of God entitled, **"Will the REAL Church Please Stand Up?"**

And we've already seen the **first thing** we need to know about the Church if we're going to stop acting like we've got practical amnesia is that the Church is the **Body of Christ**. The **second thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of Brides**. And last timer we saw the **third thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of One**. And there we saw, believe it or not, how the American Church is actually behaving divisive even though the Bible says we're already unified. **Why?** Because we give into **favoritism, elitism, and racism**. And because of that, we're not only ceasing to be a Body of One, we're actually turning into a Body of **snobs** and **bigots**. And I don't think that's the kind of Church Jesus came to die for, how about you?

But people, believe it or not, did you know that's not the only thing we need to know about the Church if we're going to stop acting like we got practical amnesia? The **fourth thing** we need to know is **The Church is a Body of Hope**. But hey, don't take my word for it. Let's listen to God's.

Romans 15:8-13 "For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name. Again, it says, Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.

And again, Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples. And again, Isaiah says, The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him. May the

God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. One of the main reasons why Jesus came and died on the cross was to save not only Jewish people but Gentile people for what purpose? **For the glory of God**, right? And one of the benefits of having God save you for His glory is not only being filled with joy and peace, but what? He **fills you with hope**, right? And notice it wasn't just a little hope. It's so much hope that we're literally bubbling over with it for all the world to see, right?

And here's my point. Surely, we all know that, right? I mean, surely every Christian who's ever lived knows that the Church is to be a **Body of Hope**, where people look at us and say, “Wow! Now there's a group of people who never get discouraged and are always full of optimism,” right? Well, you'd think so, but we've got some problems. **Why?** Because if you look at most Churches it doesn't look like we're an **optimistic people bubbling with hope**. Are you kidding! It looks like a pack of pessimists dangling by a rope!

So why in the world would Christians **look so hopeless** when the Bible says we should **be so hopeful**? Hey, great question. I'm glad you asked. It's pretty simple. The **first reason** we look so hopeless is because we've forgotten we've been given a **Stable Life**.

Romans 5:1,3-4 “By faith we have been made acceptable to God. And now, because of our Lord Jesus Christ, we live at peace with God. But that's not all! We gladly suffer, because we know that suffering helps us to endure. And endurance builds character, which gives us a hope that will never disappoint us.”

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. One of the most incredible things God gives us after we're saved is not only peace with Him, but what? Hope in Him, right? And since our **hope is in God**, it never disappoints us. **Why?** Because hope in God gives us the ability to have stability in all our difficulties, right?

And people, **the point is this**. Surely the American Church knows this, right? I mean, surely no matter what we go through in life, people never see us down in the mouth or disappointed, right? People, are you kidding! I mean, you've been there. You go into the average Church service today and what do you see? You don't see Christians enduring through difficulties coming out mighty and strong. No! You see, people who look like they just lost their house and somebody ran over their dog!

But you might be thinking, “Well hey, I think you're being a little too **harsh** here. I mean, it's obvious you don't understand my problems! I mean, if you knew what I was going through, you'd understand why I look so hopeless half the time!” Excuse me? Maybe you should tell that to John Bunyan who was **unjustly put in prison**? Did he cry? Did he whine and

give up hope! No people! Are you kidding! While he was in prison he wrote the Christian classic “Pilgrim's Progress” and that one book has encouraged millions of people to place their hope in God just like John did, **in prison**.

Or maybe you should tell it to Fanny Crosby who was **made blind by a Doctor's mistake**? I mean, surely if any one's got a great excuse to bellyache before God it's her, right? I mean, surely she just cried and whined for the rest of her life, right? No people! God used that one Christian woman's blindness to open the hearts of millions of people. **How**? By writing over three thousand hymns of praise inspiring them to place their hope in God as well!

Or maybe you should tell it to Paul and Silas who were put in jail for the Gospel? I mean surely they got ticked off at God for allowing something like that to happen right? No people! With the backs bloody and beaten they put their hope in God, praised Him all night long from the top of their lungs until an earthquake came set them free!

Oh, but that's still not all. Maybe you should tell it to this Christian woman. I mean, if there was ever anyone who should've given up hope it was this lady.

“One morning in Southern California, a young hopeful Christian bride of less than a year received a knock at her apartment door. Her husband had already left for work so she was a little uneasy about opening the door but she went ahead and did it anyway.

And when she did, she saw a man standing in front of her that she'd never seen before. In fact, he seemed nervous, and that increased her uneasiness. But then he simply asked about the location of the manager's apartment and so she gave him the information and promptly shut the door.

But only a few minutes later, there came another knock. So the young bride, cautious, but not cautious enough, opened the door again. And when she did, the long blade of the same man's knife pushed her back into the room. Then he locked the door, closed the drapes, and told her to completely disrobe.

But at that very fearful moment, this young Christian woman looked straight into the face of her would-be attacker and, with remarkable calmness said. 'I am a Christian. The Lord Jesus Christ is watching over me right now, and He is not going to allow anything to happen to me He doesn't want to occur.'

Well at this, the man just stared at her with a blank look, completely dumbfounded. So the woman continued, 'Jesus Christ loves you. He wants to come into your life and become your Lord and Savior.'

And then she asked rather pointedly, 'Have you ever had the gospel explained to you in a way you could understand it?'

And the man lowered his knife and simply replied, 'No.'

And the woman said, 'Well then, please, sit down.' And for the next hour and a half, this young Christian woman discussed the claims of Christ with her would-be attacker. And when she did, she soon learned that he was new in the area and had no friends, no money, no purpose or hope in life.

And so against all hope, this hopeful Christian in a seemingly hopeless situation, led this hopeless man to the Lord of Hope, Jesus Christ."

Now folks, I don't know about you, but I'd say if ever there was a seeming hopeless situation, it had to be that one, right? But it didn't turn out that way, right? **Why?** Because people, we serve a God Who's bigger than

any situation. And no matter how bad things might be, He's promised to use it all for our maturity!

People of God, when are we going to learn that there are no hopeless situations. There are only Christians who have given up hope! And I'm telling you, the longer we live like this, we're not only ceasing to be a Body of Hope, but we're actually turning into a **Body of Despair**.

Oh, but that's not all. The **second reason** we look so hopeless is because we've forgotten we've been given a **Super Afterlife**.

1 Corinthians 15:16-17,19 "If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless, and you are still under condemnation for your sins. And if we have hope in Christ only for this life, we are the most miserable people in the world."

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. God not only gives us stability in the midst of a painful life, but He what? He gives us the promise of a **super afterlife**, right? Therefore, since our **hope is in heaven** and **not in this life** only, we what? We don't have to live miserable lives like everyone else in the world, right? Isn't that great news!

And people, **the point is this**. Surely the American Church knows this, right? I mean, surely we know better than to get tricked into living a miserable life by only living for this world, right? People, are you kidding! I mean, you've been there. You go into the average Church service today and

what do you see? You don't see Christians praising God that they're going to heaven for all eternity. No! You see, them offering up prayer requests for the Dow Jones report and a good economy!

But you might be thinking, "Well hey, I think you're being a little too **unrealistic** here. I mean, it's obvious you don't understand my concerns! If you saw how much time and work it takes to keep what little I got, you'd understand why I look so hopeless half the time!" Excuse me? People, what did our text say? If our only hope is to store up treasures in this life then we're guaranteed what? A miserable life. **Why?** Because nothing on earth is guaranteed to last! Only heaven is! Therefore, isn't it obvious if we place all our concerns in a place destined to perish then sooner or later our hope will perish to? In fact, it's so obvious even these non-Christians figured it out.

"Recently, a man who had spent many summers in Maine, was fascinated by his companions who told about their experiences in a little town named Flagstaff. The town was to be flooded, as part of a large lake for which a dam was being built.

And because of this, in the months before it was to be flooded, all improvements and repairs in the whole town were stopped.

I mean, what was the use of painting a house if it were to be covered with water in six months? Why repair anything when the whole town was to be wiped out?

So week after week, the whole town became more and more focused on their new location and began to invest their lives in that. Why? Because they clearly understood it was a complete waste of time and money to secure their lives in that which was soon to be destroyed."

Now folks, I don't know about you, but I'd say those people made the right decision, how about you? I mean, can you imagine how miserable they would've been if they kept pouring all their time and money in their old homes? Then people why is it a shocker that so many Christians are likewise miserable when all they do is hope for is a powerful economy instead of a place in eternity?

People when are we going to learn that there is no such thing as a hopeless life. There are only Christians who have given up hope in their afterlife! And I'm telling you, the longer we live like this, we're not only ceasing to be a Body of Hope, but we're actually turning into a **Body of Dopes**.

Oh, but that's not all. The **third reason** we look so hopeless is because we've forgotten we've been given **Second Chances in Life**.

Hebrews 6:19-20 "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. One of the most incredible things about the ministry of Jesus **was not** that He went to the cross to forgive us of **most of our sin**, but what? He became our forever High Priest to forgive us of all our sins, right? Therefore, because of His

complete forgiveness, we're what? We're always guaranteed **second chances** in life, right? Man! Talk about a great hope, right?

And **the point is this**. Surely the American Church knows this, right? I mean, surely we all know that matter who we are or what we've done, **we should never shun each other** because Jesus will never shun us, right? People, are you kidding! I mean, you've been there. You go into the average Church service today and what do you see? You don't see the Family of God accepting each other no matter what they've done. No! You see, them gossiping and shunning each other till kingdom come!

But you might be thinking, "Well hey, I think you're being a little too **liberal** here. I mean, it's obvious you don't know this person like I do. I mean, if only you knew their background and know what I know, you know?" Excuse me? I could personally give a rip what you know. In fact, it's obvious **the one thing you don't know** is what it means to be a Christian. People, one of the greatest God-given hopes is not only in being given a stable life or even a super afterlife. It's this. It's in being given and **endless supply of second chances in this life!**

And people, no wonder the Bible calls this an anchor for the soul. I mean, stop and think about it. What better hope is there in an unloving unforgiving world to know that at least in the Church of Jesus Christ, you

will never be shunned, you will never be rejected, you will always be accepted no matter who you are or what you've done, right? But unfortunately, not everyone seems to have figured this out yet. I'm going to share a story from a former Pastor about how a particular Church treated a girl **in need of hope**, and I want you to tell me how well they did.

“I was a Pastor of a Church when I was a young man. And I remember going to visit a young woman who was pregnant out of wedlock. When I got to her house, there was the awareness that the Holy Spirit was in me and with me. And when I stepped into that living room, the Spirit of God was working in that woman and when I laid out the plan of salvation to her she responded and gave her life to Christ. The next Sunday she came to Church services. And she came the Sunday after that and after that and after that, for a month and a half, but then she stopped coming.

So I when I went to see her I said, ‘What’s wrong?’

She said, ‘I can’t come to your Church services anymore.’

And I said, ‘Why?’

She said, ‘Because I feel guilty and dirty and filthy in your congregation.’

I said, ‘Jesus has forgiven you. Jesus has forgotten and blotted out your sin.’

And I’ll never forget her saying to me, ‘Jesus may have forgiven. And Jesus may have forgotten. But the people in the congregation...they haven’t forgiven. And they haven’t forgotten.’

Please, on the subjective level, we in the Church have the capacity to make people feel guilty long after Jesus has forgiven them.”

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say that Church wasn’t doing a very good job of being a Body of Hope, how about you? In fact, I’d

say they looked more like a **Body of Hypocrites**, how about you? **And the point is this**. It not only affected their walk with Christ. But what did it do? It kept that girl from **walking in hope** with Christ!

And people, that's why if we can't stop **playing Church** instead of being the Church then maybe it's time to **get out of the Church? Why?** Because being a Christian is not a game. What we say and do literally affects the eternal destiny of people around us. Therefore, it's high time we get rid of our **practical amnesia**. We've got to remember who we are! We're not a bunch of hopeless hypocrites. Are you kidding! We are the Church of Jesus Christ. We are a **Body of Hope!**

To find the way to God, to understand the *truth* of God's Word, and to received the gift of eternal *life*, begin by repentance and faith through a prayer like this:

“Dear God, I understand that I have broken Your Law and sinned against You. Please forgive my sins. Thank You that Jesus suffered on the cross in my place. I now place my trust in Him as My Savior and Lord. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.”
