

The Church is a Body of Disciples

“One day, there was a middle-aged woman had a heart attack and was taken to the hospital. And while she was on the operating table, she had a near death experience. And so seeing God she asked Him if this was it.

And God said, ‘No you have another 43 years, 2 months, and 8 days to live.’

So upon recovery the woman figuring since she had so much more time to live, she might as well make the most of it and live for herself. So she decided to stay in the hospital and have a facelift, liposuction, tummy tuck, and she even had someone come in and change her hair color.

But when she got out of the hospital after her last operation, she crossed the street and was hit and killed by an ambulance speeding back to the hospital.

So upon arriving back in front of God again she demanded, ‘Hey God, I thought you said I had another 40 some years to go?’

And God replied, ‘Oh, I’m sorry, I didn't recognize you.’”

Now that lady learned the hard way it doesn’t pay to live for yourself, does it? Not at all! What happened? Changing her appearance not only cost her life again but it caused God no longer recognized her again, didn’t it?

But folks, believe it or not, did you know that lady’s not the only one who’s changed their appearance and is no longer recognizable to God? Believe it or not, so are many Christians. **How?** By walking around in life like we’ve got **practical amnesia!** Talk about false appearances!

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**. The **third thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of One**. The **fourth thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of Hope**. The **fifth thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of Joy**. The **sixth thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of Love**. The **seventh thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of Peace**. And last time we saw the **eighth thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of Strangers**. And there we saw that even though the Bible says we need to be strangers living for heaven, the American Church is actually behaving like we're seduced to live for this earth. **Why?** Because we've exchanged **God's dream for the American dream, treasure in heaven for trash on earth, and a heavenly reward for a hellish rat race**. And because of that, we're not only ceasing to be a Body

of Strangers, we're actually turning into a Body of **mentally challenged earth-bound rats**. 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 **ninth thing** we need to know is **The Church is a Body of Disciples**. But hey, don't take my word for it. Let's listen to God's.

Matthew 28:16-20 "Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. Jesus' plan for His Church wasn't just to have only twelve disciples, was it? How many did He want? **A whole world full of disciples**, right? And for those of you who may not know, the word "disciple" comes from the Greek word, "mathetes" which means, "a disciplined learner." Therefore, it's obvious that Jesus wanted all of His followers, not just the twelve disciples, to become disciplined learners, right?

And here's my point. Surely, we all know this, right? I mean, surely every Christian who's ever lived knows that the Church is to be a **Body of Disciples**, where people look at us and say, "Wow! Now there's a group of people who are followers of Christ. I mean, look at them. They're constantly learning about Jesus, pouring over His Words in the Bible, day in and day out! **Surely we know that, 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 learning all we can about our Lord Jesus Christ. Are you kidding! It looks like we're learning all we can about anything and everything but Jesus Christ!

So why in the world do we do this? Why **don't** we Christians **learn about Jesus** when the Bible says we should **be disciplined learners of Jesus?** Hey, great question. I'm glad you asked. It's pretty simple. The **first reason** why we're no longer disciples of Christ is because **We Study Trivial things Instead of the Truth.**

Romans 12:1-2 "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. If we really want to show that we appreciate the goodness and mercy of God, what do we do?

We stop living for ourselves and start living sacrificially for Jesus, right?

But not only that, we stop thinking like this world and start renewing our minds with the truth of God, right? And when we do that, what happens? We know how to live a life that is good and pleasing to God, right?

And people, **the point is this**. Surely the American Church knows this, right? I mean, surely we know if we're ever going to be unbrainwashed from the lies of this world, let alone know God's will, then we've got to be studying His truth, right? People are you kidding? Let's be honest! We don't learn all we can about the truth of God. We learn all we can about the trivia of man! **Let's be honest!** If we even get around to studying anything, what does it usually turn out to be? Maybe it's studying and memorizing the latest statistics on sports figures. Or maybe it's studying and compiling data on how to be physically fit. Or maybe with **what little free time we do have** it's studying and reading the latest best-selling novel. But in general, whatever we study, if we even get around to study, it's usually what? **Anything and everything but God's truth**, right?

And people, don't misunderstand me. There's nothing inherently wrong with those activities. **My point is this**. If we only have a little time to study, why not make it the truth of God's Word instead of the trivia of man? **Why?** Because hello! Which one benefits your life the most? For instance,

when tough times hit do you call upon the power of your trivial knowledge to help you out? Maybe you're having **trouble in your marriage**. Is this what you say, "Praise God I know who won the Super Bowl for the last ten years in a row! Whew! I think my marriage is going to be okay now!" Or maybe when your having **financial difficulties** do you say, "You know, times are really tough right now but praise God I know the fourteen reasons why I need vitamin C in my diet! I know my troubles are over now!" Or maybe, your **health is failing** do you say, "Lord I'm in dire straits here. But I know I'm going to be healed because I've read every best-selling novel I can get my hands on!" **Is that what we do?** No people! We don't call upon the power of trivia of man. We call upon the power of God's truth! Therefore, if we never study God's truth, how in the world can we ever benefit from it? But not only that. How in the world can we call ourselves disciples of Christ when all we do learn about **everything else but Christ?**

And people, **the point is this**. If you don't want to **study God's truth and instead study only the trivia of man**, I guess that's your choice. But what you need to know is it doesn't stop there! It's not only a distraction in your walk with Christ. It could very well be a distraction for someone coming to Christ. **Why?** Because it's a no-brainer people! Think about it from the non-Christians point of view. If Christians have no desire to study

the Bible, then why would I want to study it? Apparently there's nothing good in there to apply to my life. How many of you have heard that before? Gee, I wonder where they're getting it from?

Oh, but that's not all. The **second reason** why we're no longer disciples of Christ is because **We Study Flippantly Instead of Consistently.**

Colossians 3:16 "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God."

Now folks, according to our text, the Apostle Paul here is sharing with the Colossian Church what they're supposed to do every time they meet together. And notice it wasn't just singing and having a good ol' time. What was it? It was to **consistently** teach or learn the Words of Christ so that it would what? So that it would dwell within us richly, right?

And people, **the point is this.** Surely the American Church knows this, right? I mean, surely we know that if we're ever going to get to the point where the God's truth dwells in us richly, we've got to **consistently** take advantage of opportunities to learn, right? People are you kidding? Let's be honest! We don't consistently come to Church services in order to learn. We flippantly come to Church services whenever we get the urge!

But you might be thinking, “Now wait a minute man. I know I’m a little irregular in my attendance to Church services and Bible studies, and I’m a frequent visitor of the Church of St. Mattress with Pastor I.B. Snoozing of the Bedside Sheets Assembly, but God knows my heart. He knows I’m still a faithful member of His.” Oh really? Well, it just so happens I recently came across a letter written to a Pastor by one these so-called faithful members and you tell me if in fact they were ever going to become a true disciple of Christ.

Dear Pastor,

You often stress attendance at Church services as being very important for a Christian. But I think a person has a right to miss now and then and be excused for the following reasons and the number of times indicated:

Christmas (Sunday before or after).....	1
New Year's (Party lasted too long).....	1
Easter (Get away for the holidays).....	1
July 4 th (National holiday).....	1
Labor Day (Need to get away).....	1
Memorial Day (Visit hometown).....	1
School closing (Kids need a break).....	1
School opens (One last fling).....	1
Family reunions (Mine and wife's).....	2
Sleep late (Saturday night activities).....	4
Deaths in family.....	4
Anniversary (Second honeymoon).....	1
Sickness (One for each family member).....	5
Business trips (A must).....	3
Vacation (3 weeks).....	3
Bad weather (Ice, snow, rain, clouds).....	6
Ball games.....	5
Unexpected company (Can't walk out).....	5

Time changes (Spring ahead; fall back).....2
 Special on TV (Super Bowl, etc.).....3

So Pastor, that leaves only two Sundays per year. So, you can count on us to be in Church service on the fourth Sunday in February and the third Sunday in August unless providentially hindered.

Sincerely,

Faithful Member

Now folks, I know this might be a tough question, but how many of you would say that so-called faithful member really was a faithful member? Yeah, who's kidding who, right?

And people, **please don't misunderstand me**. This has nothing to do with Christian legalism. It has everything to do with Christian learning. For instance, we tell our kids if they're ever going to succeed in academic things they have to do what? They have to consistently be faithful in their studies right? Therefore, how much more is this true in **spiritual things**? And if we skip services and attend meetings only often enough to show we're interested but never enough to get involved in learning, how in the world are we ever going become disciples of Christ?

And people, **the point is this**. If you don't want to **study God's truth consistently and instead study it flippantly**, I guess that's your choice. But what you need to know is it doesn't stop there! It's not only a delay in your walk with Christ. It could very well be delaying someone from coming

to Christ. **Why?** Because it's a no-brainer people! Think about it from the non-Christians point of view. If Christians have no desire to go to Church services to learn, then why would I want to? Apparently, there's no value in going. How many of you have heard that before? Gee, I wonder where they're getting it from?

Oh, but that's not all. The **third reason** why we're no longer disciples of Christ is because **We Study for Personal Gain Instead of Godly Gain.**

Philippians 2:20-22 "I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel."

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. If we want to be a loyal and genuine **disciples-in-training** like Timothy, what do we got to do? We not only stop looking out for ourselves but we start getting concerned with the things of Jesus, right? And how do we do that? What did the text say? We **devote ourselves to being educated Biblically**, right?

And people, **the point is this**. Surely the American Church knows this, right? I mean, surely we know that if we're ever going to be disciples of Christ we've got to be educating ourselves Biblically and not just secularly, right? People are you kidding? Let's be honest! We don't study for godly

gain. We study for personal gain! We don't study like Timothy to deliver God's message. We study so we can get delivered a bigger paycheck!

But people when are we going to realize that the purpose of an education is not just to get a good job. **The purpose of an education is to show yourself approved unto God!** But that's right! If you think I'm being a little too radical, then maybe you should listen to this guy. Maybe he's got a better grip on the true purpose of an education.

"It becomes too easy to think that being a Christian is somebody who believes all the right stuff. I want you to believe in Jesus. I want you to believe that He died on the cross for your sins. I want you to believe that He was resurrected. I want you to believe that He's here and now and wants to establish a personal relationship with you.

But listen to me. You can believe all the right stuff and not love Jesus and not love other people. As a matter of fact, the Church is filled with those who believe all the right stuff and don't know how to love.

Now, I know what you're going to say. 'You're making Christianity too hard. I mean, my goodness. I didn't mind this belief stuff but you expect me to change the whole way in which I live?' Of course I do! That's what Christianity's about! It's about changing the whole way you live!

Maybe you don't like this Jesus. Maybe you don't like this Jesus who says, 'If any man would be my disciple, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me.' Maybe you don't like Him. That's okay. Reject Him! But for goodness sakes, do not call yourself a follower of Jesus if you're not!

The Jesus I talk to you about is radical, extremely radical, and He calls you to a whole new lifestyle, a dangerous lifestyle, and a threatening lifestyle. Because from the day you were a kid, they drilled into your head to fit into this American system. Your parents did it, the Church did it, and the school did it.

They said, ‘Get a good education.’ You talk about dropping out of school and they go crazy. And if you should ask why should I get a good education the answer is simple, ‘If you get a good education you’ll be able to get a good job. And a good job is one in which you earn a lot of money.’

Stop to think about how unchristian that is! You need to go to college. You need to get a good education. But the purpose of an education is not to make enough money to buy things! The purpose of an education is to equip yourself to serve others in the Name of Jesus!”

Now folks, I know what some of you might be thinking. “You know, that all sounds good and all but I think that guy’s being a little too radical as well. I mean, we can’t really be expected to live like that nowadays.” Well, if you think that’s too radical, then you’re certainly not going to like the **Founding Fathers of our Country**. Let’s see if they can remind us of what the true purpose of an education is.

1. The first colleges formed in America (123 out of 126) were formed on Christian principles.
2. Up until 1900 it was very rare to find a university president who was not and ordained clergyman.
3. The New England Primer, America’s first textbook and used for 210 years taught the alphabet like this: A – In Adam’s fall we sinned all. C – Christ crucified for sinners died. Z – Zaccheus he did climb the tree our Lord to see.
4. The 107 questions at the end of the New England Primer included questions like, “What offices does Christ execute as our Redeemer?” “How does Christ execute the office of a priest?” “What is required in the fifth commandment?” “What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?”

5. George Washington made it crystal clear that American schools would teach Indian youths the “religion” of Jesus Christ and Congress assisted in doing so.
6. In 1782, Congress had 10,000 bibles printed for use in schools.
7. Dr. Benjamin Rush said, “The only means of establishing and perpetuating our republican forms of government is the universal education of our youth in the principles of Christianity by means of the Bible.”
8. Thomas Jefferson wrote the first plan of education for the city of Washington D.C. and adopted two textbooks, the Bible and Watts Hymnal, and hired clergymen to be the teachers.
9. The 1854 edition of Webster’s Dictionary had Biblical definitions, Bible verses, and Webster’s own testimony of personally receiving Christ.”
10. America’s first school was Harvard, founded in 1636 by Reverend John Harvard whose official motto was “For Christ and the Church.” Harvard had several requirements which students had to observe, one of which was, “Let every scholar be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to consider well, the main end of his life and studies is to know God and Jesus Christ, which is eternal life.”

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say we’ve long forgotten the purpose of an education, how about you? In fact, I’d say **it’s our departure from it is what’s truly radical!** And gee, could this be the reason why we’re seeing our country lose its Christian values and morals? Could it be because we’re no longer educating ourselves in Christian values and morals?

But you might be thinking, “Hey wait a minute. You’re being a little too harsh here. I mean, yeah okay, so I study only trivial things instead of the truth and I only study flippantly instead of consistently and I only study for personal gain instead of godly gain, but so what! It only affects me!”

Well that’s where you’re wrong. You see, refusing to become a disciple of Christ has just as a dramatic affect **as if you we’re to become one**. Just ask Susanna Wesley.

“At the age of nineteen she became the wife of a minister named Samuel Wesley, and was married forty-four years. And during this time, they suffered illness, disease, poverty, and the death of many of their children. But through it all Susanna accepted it as the will of God and placed herself and her family in God’s hands.

Susanna bore nineteen children nine of whom died as infants—including two sets of twins. One baby was accidentally smothered by a maid. Another was crippled for life in a tragic accident. But Susanna met her trials with the faith in God that she had learned when she was discipled as a child by her parents. You see, she was the youngest of twenty-five.

And no matter the circumstances, Susanna was committed to caring for and discipling her family the best way possible. Though resources were limited, she started a daily school for her children. She said her purpose was exclusively ‘the saving of their souls.’ And because of that, the rigorous academics never took priority over instruction in God's Word.

And because Susanna wanted to develop a personal relationship with each one of her nineteen children, she scheduled a private appointment with each one every week for encouragement. And it was these bonds of faith and love that helped them to survive their continual hardships.

And through it all Susanna Wesley remained a steadfast Christian who not only discipled herself through the Scriptures but her children as well. And the results? Two of her sons, (maybe you’ve heard of them) John and

Charles Wesley, won tens of thousands of souls to Jesus Christ. She could not have wished for more.”

Now folks, I don't know about you, but I'd say the world is a much better place because that one lady sacrificed to become a disciple of Christ, how about you? And can you imagine how many millions of people never would have gotten saved if Susanna Wesley refused to do so?

And so here's the point. How many millions of people are **never going to get saved and are going to go to hell** because the American Church **is refusing** to become disciples of Christ? How many people will never know the joy of eternal salvation because we refuse to undergo a godly education?

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 distracted people disinterested in Christ. Are you kidding! We are a bunch of disciplined learners in love with Christ. We're His Body. A **Body of Disciples!**

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.”
