



Key

to:

Fruitful
Church Membership

David W. Cloud

Keys to Fruitful Church Membership

Copyright 1999 by David W. Cloud

This edition April 24, 2017

ISBN 978-1-58318-147-8

This book is published for free distribution in eBook format. It is available in PDF, MOBI (for Kindle, etc.), and ePub formats from the Way of Life web site. We do not allow distribution of this book from other web sites.



Published by Way of Life Literature
PO Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061
866-295-4143 (toll free) - fbns@wayoflife.org
www.wayoflife.org

Canada: Bethel Baptist Church
4212 Campbell St. N., London Ont. N6P 1A6
519-652-2619

Printed in Canada by
Bethel Baptist Print Ministry

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Keys to Fruitful Church Membership	9
Conclusion	33
About Way of Life's eBooks.....	35
Powerful Publications for These Times.....	36

*“Knowing Christ and abiding in Him is the most
essential key to fruitful church membership.”
David W. Cloud*

Introduction

The first edition of the following report appeared in *O Timothy* magazine in 1992 under the title “The Other Side of Separation.” We later published an updated edition under the title “Grace and Authority in the Church.” In 1999, we changed the title to *Keys to Fruitful Church Membership*, and this edition is a further rewriting and enlargement.

A few years ago, I received a letter from a young couple who exhorted me as follows:

“Your book on separation is very good, but you may want to add a caveat that a person must have a better church to separate to before he separates from a church. We were shocked at the liberal doctrines held by the fundamental churches in our city.”

Later they wrote to give more detail about the “liberal doctrines.” Following are specific things that they mentioned:

“(1) Their former pastor did not teach that women should not work outside the home, and the wife of the associate pastor worked. (2) The church held parties or fellowships on Valentine’s Day, Halloween, and Christmas. (3) The pastor allowed a divorced person to work in the bus ministry. (4) The pastor failed to correct publicly certain erroneous statements which were given during testimony times and certain (supposed) erroneous statements which were made by visiting preachers. (5) The pastor failed to do anything about missionaries who joked and told stories in the pulpit. (6) Though the church took a stand for the KJV, this man did not think there was sufficient teaching on the subject of Bible versions. (7) The pastor “used humor to break the tension” in his preaching, whereas this one felt that sober-mindedness required that such levity in

the pulpit cease. (8) The pastor seemed to prefer to let God change people about such things as appearance (long hair, ear rings on men, etc.) rather than approach them directly.”

The couple eventually wrote and said they had “separated” from this fundamental Baptist church and from its pastor “because of his liberal teaching on remarriage, women working outside the home and his refusal to correct error.”

It is natural that in any church we will find things with which we do not agree. To practice separation based on the type of things discussed in this letter, though, is not proper or healthy. These are matters of preference, or, at best, relatively minor issues. Church members must learn to deal with many such things.

Another couple left a church because the pastor taught tithing, which they don’t believe in.

Some make an issue of music that goes beyond good sense. Music is a very important issue, and we have given extensive teaching on this matter, but one can become unreasonable and petty on any issue and lacking in practical wisdom. I think of a family that wouldn’t join a church because it uses a hymnal that contains a few songs by the Gaithers and others that are unsound. The church doesn’t even sing these hymns, but they are in the hymnbook.

Music is a major issue, a much more important issue than most churches understand or acknowledge, but one must use good spiritual wisdom in dealing with any issue. For example, at one of my Bible conferences the pianist played the Gaither song “Because He Lives” for the offertory. I have given many warnings about the Gaithers, but I’m not going to make a major issue if a church uses some of their older songs on rare occasions. What I look at is the church’s overall position on music. I will focus on the rule not the exception. This particular church is careful about music and is well educated and is actually getting stronger on this issue rather than weaker. This is what I look for.

Those who leave churches over issues such as this will never be a fruitful church member. For example, I recently heard from a couple who had been in 19 churches in 10 years!

While we are to separate from error, we are also exhorted to submit ourselves to pastoral authority and to exercise much patience and grace in the church. I believe there are many types of things about which we can disagree in a church while continuing to submit ourselves to God-ordained authority.

I know of many who have separated from practically all churches because none of them take what they believe is a proper stand in all matters. In some cases these are good people who want to stand for the truth in an apostate hour. Others, though, are contentious people who simply refuse to submit to God-ordained authority.

I praise the Lord for anyone who has a zeal for the truth, but I also believe there are some important lessons in the Word of God that can help us deal with the complex matter of church membership.

The following thoughts, which are an enlargement of my original reply to the aforementioned couple, can help us to have a more fruitful attitude toward the assembly in spite of the many problems and imperfections we find there.

These are lessons I have learned personally over the 45 years I have been a church member since my conversion at age 23. These are lessons I have had to learn repeatedly, in fact, because the “old man” doesn’t like to submit to authority and is naturally divisive. One of the works of the flesh is “variance” (Gal. 5:19).

No Ecumenism or Compromise

Let me hasten to say that I am utterly opposed to ecumenism and spiritual compromise. I realize that New Evangelicals and ecumenists take some of the things we will

deal with in this article and misuse them to excuse their disobedience. They speak much of love and grace and liberty, but they take verses on these subjects out of context and refuse to deal with the enormous amount of teaching in the Word of God on other matters, such as rebuking sin and error, contending for the faith, warning about apostasy, and exercising separation and discipline.

In this article I intend to deal with grace and liberty and submission to church authority, but I have no intention to ignore these other issues.

Those who know us will not have to be told this, but I say this for the sake of those who do not know us. For decades, we have stood unapologetically for Bible separation. In this instance, though, we are dealing with other important matters.

Keys to Fruitful Church Membership

Please bear with me while I offer several things we must know and do in order to be a fruitful member of a New Testament church. I think of these as “keys to fruitful church membership.”

A Vibrant Relationship with Jesus Christ

The first and foremost key to fruitful church membership is a real and vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ.

“Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (John 6:67-69).

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me” (John 15:4).

“And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming” (1 John 2:28).

In order to submit to godly pastoral leadership in a right way and to have the spiritual discernment to know right from wrong in churches and to be able to weigh issues properly, one must be born again and have the indwelling Spirit of God.

Many church members who cause unnecessary problems in the church and who injure the welfare of the church do so because they do not have a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. They lack spiritual discernment; they walk after the flesh rather than the Spirit; they do not know how to submit to godly authority; and they do not care how their actions affect the church.

The Bible warns that God will deal severely with those who harm His churches. “If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Cor. 3:17). The reason many troublemakers do not fear God’s retribution is doubtless that they are not saved.

In order to be a fruitful church member year after year, one must not only be saved but he also must abide in Christ. The individual must walk in fellowship with Christ. When we walk with Christ and have our eyes on Him, we do not become offended at what man does. “Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them” (Psalm 119:165).

This is why some church members throw up their hands and quit or become disgruntled and spiritually ineffective when they witness a pastoral failure or some such serious problem in the church, whereas other church members keep on going for the Lord in spite of any discouragement that comes their way. They are disappointed when men fail them, but they do not quit or turn aside, because their eyes are upon One who never fails!

Knowing Christ and abiding in Him is the most essential key to fruitful church membership.

The Importance of the Church

Another key to fruitful church membership is to understand that the church is a divine institution; it is at the center of God’s work in the world today and will continue to be so until Jesus returns to catch away the New Testament saints.

The Bible emphasizes that the church is God’s appointed means of accomplishing His plan in this age. Even the most cursory study of the New Testament demonstrates this. There are more than 100 references to the church in the New Testament. This shows how highly the Holy Spirit has

emphasized the church, and the vast majority of those references refer unquestionably to the local assembly, not to a general or prospective aspect of the church.

Men have corrupted churches, but the church is God's plan. The Lord Jesus said, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mat. 16:18). The church is Christ's program.

The church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:16), and the context of this passage is a church with elders and deacons (1 Tim. 3:1-8).

Most of the New Testament was written directly to churches. And even those portions not written directly to a particular church refer to the church.

The theme of Acts is the planting and multiplication of the first churches.

The Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) were written to instruct church planters.

Even the General Epistles, which are not written to particular churches, have the churches in mind. Hebrews refers to the church in chapters 10 and 13. Hebrews 10:25 exhorts God's people not to forsake the assembling of themselves together. In Hebrews 13:7 and 17 Christians are exhorted to obey church rulers.

The last chapter of James refers to the church. Those who are sick are to call for the "elders of the church."

The final chapter of 1 Peter also refers to the church, in exhorting elders in their duties.

John refers to the church in his third epistle, when he mentions the proud Diotrephes.

The book of Revelation, of course, is addressed to seven churches that existed in that day.

Consider, too, that there is no Bible instruction about the discipline and watch care of Christians apart from the church. There is no instruction about leadership among Christians apart from the church. The entire life and work of

God's people for this age appears in the context of the assembly.

We must also understand what a church is. A proper New Testament church has certain biblical ingredients. It is not merely a group of Christians meeting for prayer and Bible study. Paul wrote to Titus about church work in Crete. The gospel had been preached and believers were meeting together, but that was not sufficient. Paul instructed Titus that certain things were lacking (Titus 1:5). Those things were qualified leadership and biblical organization, the things Paul emphasizes in his epistle to Titus.

The very first thing that Paul mentions is the ordination of elders. "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee" (Titus 1:5).

We see the same thing in the book of Acts. When Paul and Barnabas raised up groups of believers in various cities through the preaching of the gospel, they were careful to "ordain elders in every church" (Acts 14:23).

A proper New Testament church, therefore, is a body of baptized believers who are congregated together under the oversight of qualified and ordained pastor/elders and who are accomplishing the work described in the apostolic epistles.

It is clear from Scripture that it is God's will that every believer be a faithful, fruitful member of a sound New Testament church. That is what we see in the first church in Acts 2. Those who were saved on the day of Pentecost "continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

If there is not such a church in an area, the establishment of such a church must be the highest priority. A believer should never be content merely to listen to recorded preaching sermons, or to read sermons from a book, or to listen to preaching on radio or television, or to meet together

with a loose-knit group of believers without scriptural leadership and organization.

The reason I have remained a faithful member of a church for 42 years is not that I have found perfect pastors and perfect churches, but it is because I know that this is God's will and anything less would displease Him. It is my understanding of the doctrine of the church that has kept me going in spite of grave imperfections I have found in churches.

No Perfect Church

Another key to fruitful church membership is to understand that there are no perfect churches.

We have mentioned this, but it needs to be emphasized. It sounds like a simple matter, but it is not. It is something that must be relearned frequently.

Even the early churches founded and pastored by the apostles had problems. In fact, there were very serious problems in many of the early churches.

Consider the church at Corinth. The members were carnal and divided. They refused to discipline one of their own although he was living in open fornication with his father's wife! They were taking each other to court. They were getting drunk during the Lord's Supper. They were misusing the spiritual gifts. They allowed false teachers to discredit the Apostle Paul. What a church! Yet Paul was thankful for the grace God had given them (1 Cor. 1:4).

The seven churches mentioned in Revelation also had many serious problems, including spiritual coldness, false teachers, and immorality.

Two women in the church at Philippi had to be corrected for being disunited (Phil. 4:2).

Paul had to rebuke Peter for his hypocrisy (Gal. 2:11-14).

Paul and Barnabas had a contention that was “so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other” (Acts 15:39).

Need we go on? There never has been a church that did not have problems, and the simple reason for this is that church members are sinners.

It is not therefore surprising to find many problems in fundamental Baptist churches today. I have spoken in more than 500 churches across North America and in many other countries, and I have observed the problems firsthand.

When I was a young Christian at Bible School, I saw problems that almost devastated me. As I started Bible School training in 1974, I was almost 25 years old, but I was only one year old in the Lord, and I was shocked at many things. More than 40 years later, I am still saddened by these same things! These were things such as Sunday School promotionalism that turns the church of Jesus Christ into a carnival; too much levity at times in the pulpit; little biblical content in much of the preaching; exaltation of men above that which is proper; shallow, manipulative methods of evangelism, and an overemphasis on “decisions” and “prayers” rather than on repentance and regeneration.

Because of issues like these, I left after the completion of my first year of Bible School, determined to attend a different school. The Lord gave me no peace over my decision, though, and within a few weeks I returned and completed my studies.

Looking back, I am thankful for the Lord’s leading, though I did not understand it very well at the time. The other school that I was looking at was Calvinistic and was part of a group that was already part proceeding down the path to New Evangelicalism, and I would have faced an entirely different set of problems--problems possibly even more unhealthy than the ones I was trying to flee.

I still believe the aforementioned issues are wrong, and I try to avoid them as much as possible; but I have also learned

some things that have helped me, I believe, have a more balanced attitude toward church problems in general.

We must keep the big picture in focus. Every church has strengths and weaknesses; to focus exclusively on the weaknesses can cause us to forget the strengths. 1 Thessalonians 5:21 says to prove all things AND to hold fast that which is good. We must not “throw the baby out with the bath water”!

There simply is no perfect situation in this present life.

If you leave a church, you should move to a better one, not a weaker one.

It is a good practice to count your blessings. What are the things that attracted you to the church in the first place?

In spite of the fact that all churches are imperfect, we do not see in Scripture any healthy examples of Christians who neglected the assembly. In fact, those who separated themselves were considered unregenerate. John says, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us” (1 Jn. 2:19).

Keen Spiritual Discernment

Another key to fruitful church membership is keen spiritual discernment which enables us to distinguish between the important and the less important issues.

Observe the following Scripture:

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone” (Mat. 23:23).

In Matthew 23:23, the Lord Jesus Christ taught that not all things in the Bible are of equal importance. Some biblical

teachings are “weightier” than others. Everything in the Bible has some importance, but everything is not of equal importance.

Knowing the difference between the two requires a thorough knowledge of God’s Word and keen spiritual discernment.

This is the lesson of the following passages:

“And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another” (Rom. 15:14).

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:12-14).

Such discernment comes only through a close walk with Christ, diligent study of God’s Word, and the exercise of the spiritual senses to discern good and evil.

Paul told the church at Rome that the reason they were able to admonish one another was because they were full of goodness and filled with knowledge (Rom. 15:14). That refers to the maturity of their Christian lives and to their Bible knowledge.

It is my conviction that the friends who wrote to tell me that they were “separating” from all independent Baptist churches lacked the maturity to distinguish between the “weighty” matters of biblical truth and those matters that are

less significant. Although they lacked such maturity, they were convinced they had better discernment than even their pastor, better than anyone, in fact!

This happens frequently. In fact, it tends to be a characteristic of young Christians. Someone has wisely stated that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. This is one reason why God forbids a novice to be a church leader (1 Tim. 3:6).

The young Christian begins to gain some knowledge of the Bible and the ministry, and suddenly he “knows it all” and tries to straighten out everybody else, blithely ignorant of his own serious shortcomings. This happens frequently to young Christians who are in Bible College. They have some knowledge, but often they don’t have the life experience and maturity to use it correctly. If they are not careful with their newly found knowledge, they can cause more problems than they solve!

Pastors and churches are to be judged by the Word of God (1 Thess. 5:21), but church members cannot do this until they first gain the necessary biblical knowledge and discernment required for such judgment.

Young Christians, in particular, need to be extremely cautious and patient about exercising judgment against a pastor. Unless the matter in question is something that is exceedingly plain in the Bible and unless there are mature Christians who can confirm the judgment, it is wise for the immature Christian to defer to the pastor’s greater knowledge and maturity.

Some of the *weightier matters* of God’s Word in relation to churches are things such as sound doctrine, the gospel, Christian love, godliness, separation from error, soul-winning, and missions. Some of the *less weighty matters* are things like promotions, youth activities (unless they are clearly worldly), and political involvement. Good examples of less weighty matters are the list of eight things mentioned at the beginning of this article: whether or not the church has

fellowships at Christmas or jokes being told from the pulpit, etc.

I am not saying that the child of God should ignore the danger of contemporary music or false teaching or unqualified leadership or worldly youth ministries or anything like that. I am not saying we are to be blind to things that are clearly unscriptural.

I am simply saying that not all matters are of equal importance, and we must learn to weigh various issues of church life before the Lord in order to exercise mature judgment.

We see this in Christ's judgment of the churches in Revelation 2-3. The problems He rebuked were of a truly serious nature. He did not rebuke a church for having a church social on Valentine's. I'm not trying to be facetious. I'm not trying to make light of less important things, but the fact remains that Christ did not treat all church problems with the same degree of seriousness, and we must follow His example.

This is exactly what we see in the church epistles. The problems rebuked by the apostles under inspiration of the Holy Spirit were of a serious nature. The Church at Corinth was not rebuked for allowing a divorced man to work in the evangelistic ministry, but for drunkenness and immorality and carnal divisions.

Conviction vs. Preference

Another key to fruitful church membership is to understand the difference between conviction and preference. Conviction is based upon a clear teaching of God's Word. Preference is not. A Christian can have preferences on all sorts of church matters, but he is not at liberty to make his preference a law for others. This is discussed in Romans 14:

“Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks” (Romans 14:1-6).

This passage is often misused by ecumenists to support their phony idea of legalism. They claim that it is not right to judge others even in matters of doctrine, but that is nonsense. It is not legalism to cry out against sin, to judge false teachers, to set standards for God's people based on the clear teaching of the Word of God, to demand that Christians obey the details of the Bible. In Romans 14, the Lord forbids us to judge others IN MATTERS THAT ARE NOT CLEARLY TAUGHT IN SCRIPTURE.

Two examples are given: what we eat and how we respect holy days. These are issues that the New Testament does not address. There are no dietary laws for Christians, and there are no Old Testament holy days that we must keep. These are matters of Christian liberty. I am free to eat meat or not to eat meat, but I am not free to judge others by *my* conscience in this matter or in any other matter that is not plainly taught in the Scripture.

When the Scripture speaks plainly, we must speak; but when the Scripture does not speak, we have no authority to speak. In such matters I am free to follow my conscience and the Lord's leading for my personal life, but I am not free to

make my conscience a law for others. That is the teaching of Romans 14.

The things mentioned earlier in this article fall into this category. There is the matter, for example, of holding fellowships on Valentine's Day, Christmas, and Halloween. Obviously it is wrong to be involved in witchcraft, idolatry, or immorality, but as for the days themselves, they are nothing. Why would it be wrong to have a church fellowship on October 31, for example, as long as the church does not promote things associated with evil, such as a haunted house or ghosts and goblins? If the church tries to incorporate such worldly things into youth activities, this should be resisted loudly, but if the church is simply having a youth activity on or near October 31 in order to reach the unsaved or for the edification of Christian young people, there is nothing wrong with that.

It is a matter of preference rather than law. Our former church had a Harvest Fellowship at Halloween, primarily to provide an activity to help keep young people away from the wicked things that go on in the world then. I see nothing unscriptural about this.

I am not giving a blanket endorsement of the world's holidays. There is much that is evil there. The Cupid of February 14 is connected with a pagan god of lust, and the Christian must avoid every form of immorality. But I don't believe it is wrong for a church to have a fellowship or some sort of "sweetheart banquet" at Valentine's Day for married couples.

I am convinced that there is freedom of conscience in such matters. These are matters of preference. If a person doesn't want to have any type of get together on such days, he shouldn't have them. He doesn't have to participate in something at the church if his conscience will not allow him to do so, but he shouldn't make his own opinions about these things a law for others when God has made no such laws.

I know some are going to groan when they hear this, but I believe this principle is applicable for certain Christmas practices, as well. We know that the Christmas season has come from Rome. I am as opposed to Romanism as anyone. I have written many unpopular books against Rome. Yet while I am sickened at the commercialism and debauchery that often characterizes the Christmas holidays, I don't think it is wrong to enjoy some aspects of that season. I am convinced there is Christian liberty in many of these things.

Definitely we must not be involved with Santa Claus, which is a combination of a pagan god and a Catholic "saint," but I believe a person can enjoy the social and family aspects of the season without worshipping false gods or committing sacrilege. I don't believe in setting up Christmas trees in or having a Santa visit the church, but I don't think it is wrong to have a nativity play and sing some of the Christmas carols that are Scriptural and otherwise involve one's self in activities that do not bring dishonor to the Lord Jesus Christ.

My objective is not to defend Christmas. I am simply talking about one's attitude toward those things that other people or churches do that I might not agree with, but that are not directly and plainly condemned in the Word of God. I am trying to illustrate this with some concrete things that we face in everyday life.

I don't expect every reader to agree with me in all of these matters. I am simply saying that we have liberty in matters not directly addressed in Scripture.

The very fact that each of these matters is highly controversial illustrates my point. I must be careful that I am not trying to make my own preference and private interpretations laws for others.

While we must stand for the Word of God, we must also be careful that we not take away God-given liberty and hold our own conscience up as a law for others. Anything that is not clearly taught in Scripture falls into this category:

whether or not a church uses musical instruments, times and frequency of services, evangelistic methods (unless those methods are unscriptural), how to conduct children's ministries.

The list is very long. It is a blessing to understand that God has given His people much liberty in Christ and that in such matters each Christian and each home and each church is free to follow the Holy Spirit's leading.

Avoiding Hypocrisy

Another key to fruitful church membership is to beware of hypocrisy.

It is much easier to criticize others than it is to live a consistent spiritual life in my own right. The sin that Jesus reproved in Matthew 7:1-5 is the sin of self-righteous hypocrisy, the sin of judging others for things of which I am guilty.

We must never forget that we are sinners, too. We must not forget that God has been very, very patient and merciful to each of us. We must not forget the long path that has taken us to where we stand today, and how many sins and failings the Lord forgave in order to bring us along in our Christian lives.

To require perfection of others when we have never had any such perfection in our own lives is hypocrisy.

I think of my own Christian life. I think of the early years of my Christian life and what a mess I was in so many ways. It took me months even to decide to cut my long hair or to give up smoking, which are quite superficial things. Even today, after decades of growing in the Lord, I am so very far from what God wants me to be spiritually. We are to lay aside the old man and put on the new man, which is Christ. We are to be conformed to the image of the One who has the Spirit without measure. He is the definition of love as

described in 1 Corinthians 13. He is the perfect holy man of Psalm 1.

That is our objective, yet how terribly far we fall short. Each and every one of us!

Let's flee from that hypocrisy whereby we are so quick to judge others about things that we are guilty of in God's eyes, if the truth be known, even if it is perhaps in a smaller measure than those we are judging.

Judging is something we are accountable to do. We are to judge righteous judgment (John 7:24). We are to be good Bereans and prove all things by God's Word (Acts 17:11; 1 Th. 5:17). But let us be more severe in judging ourselves than others.

Building the Church

Another key to fruitful church membership is to be busy building the church to the glory of Christ.

It is easier to criticize what others are doing than to do something constructive ourselves, but we are less likely to criticize improperly when we are busy building.

Many church members aren't actually building the churches. They are spectators, and spectators are naturally critics. They are "Monday morning quarterbacks."

Before I have a right to "criticize" others, I need to get in the battle and be an effective part of building up the church and furthering the Lord's Great Commission. If I am bringing people to the Lord and helping them grow, I know how very difficult this job is and how much patience and wisdom is required and how far from perfect our converts are.

Those who zealously participate in the work of joining hands with the leaders to build the church for the glory of Christ are invested in the church in a very real way, and they

will be less likely to criticize unnecessarily and unwisely and destructively than those who are mere spectators.

The question to ask is this: what am I doing to build the church? Have I dedicated myself without reserve to this important business? If I were to leave, would the church even miss me?

Pastoral Authority

Another essential key to fruitful church membership is to have a right attitude toward pastoral authority.

“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation” (Heb. 13:7).

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (Heb. 13:17).

We have looked at the emphasis God has placed on the local church. That emphasis is woven into the very warp and woof of the New Testament and is undeniable. It is God’s will that every Christian be a faithful, fruitful, contributing member of a sound New Testament church.

That being the case, it is not surprising that we are exhorted to obey those who have the rule over us. The verses quoted above are strong; we are to obey our church leaders. They are not to be dictators; they do not have unlimited authority; they are not to be obeyed unquestioningly; but they ARE rulers.

Hebrews uses plain language, and I believe it means exactly what it says. Not all Christians have equal authority in this world. Some are rulers, and the others are to obey those rulers.

The pastors of a church have the major responsibility before the Lord for the teachings, practices, and direction of that church.

The Bible says that church leaders must watch for our souls and that we must not cause them grief for that is unprofitable for us. I believe that this points to the judgment seat of Christ. If I am a grief to my pastor, it will be unprofitable for me at Christ's judgment bar.

The notable exception to this, of course, is if the pastor himself is not obeying the Word of God or is leading contrary to the Word of God and is grieved at me simply for my stand for truth.

(In the free eBook *The Pastor's Authority and the Church Member's Responsibility* we deal with the abuse side of pastoral authority. This is available at the Way of Life web site under the Free eBook tab.)

In light of exhortations such as Hebrews 13:7, 17, I must find a church that is following the Word of God, and I must then obey my leaders in that church. I must support that church in every way possible. That is the will of God for every Christian.

The leaders, in turn, will give an account to the Lord for their teaching and decisions. **THEY HOLD THE GREATER RESPONSIBILITY, AND I, AS A CHURCH MEMBER, WILL NOT GIVE ACCOUNT FOR EVERYTHING THAT GOES ON IN THE CHURCH.**

Obviously, this does not mean that church members are to close their eyes to false teaching and sin, but it **DOES** mean that church members should not try to impose their views upon the church and its leaders. The church member must remember that he is not the pastor of the church. He, therefore, doesn't have the wisdom, the unction, or the responsibility for that job. He must submit to those who are the pastors and must allow them to make decisions with

which he might not agree, submitting himself and herself because God has told him to do so.

The church member will never find a pastor with whom he agrees 100%. Think about it. This would be impossible. The only one with whom I agree with 100% is myself, and sometimes I disagree with myself! Recently a pastor told me that he liked my book *The Calvinism Debate*, but he disagreed with one statement. I replied that I disagreed with that statement, too, and that I should have made myself more clear!

We all know this in theory but the practice of it is often a difficult matter.

I must recognize that if I am ever to submit to a pastor, it will be to an imperfect one and to one with whom I will not agree on all things.

Isn't it reasonable to believe that God will guide the man he has placed over the church? Who am I to try to impose my views on him?

I must understand this if I am to learn to get along in a church and be a fruitful member. God works in this world through our imperfections. This, of necessity, is the way He works in a church.

The friends who wrote to me that they were "separating" from a certain fundamental Baptist church, said that the pastor holds what they believe to be a weak position on divorce and remarriage. By this, they meant that the pastor allowed a divorced person to work in the bus ministry. I take a strong position, personally, against divorce and remarriage. I believe we must preach against divorce, and I don't believe a divorced man is qualified to be a pastor or a deacon, but I don't believe it is wrong for a saved, repentant divorced person to work in the bus ministry. There are difficulties with any position one might take on this issue, and the more perverted our society becomes, and the more fragmented our

families become, the more difficult it will be to deal with these issues.

The problem with divorce and remarriage is not so much whether a pastor believes divorce is wrong; practically all Bible-believing pastors believe this. The difficulty comes in how we treat those who are divorced. Do we allow them to join our churches? I know of one fundamental Bible church that does not allow divorced people to be members. Does the pastor perform weddings for those who are divorced? If so, under what conditions? Do we allow divorced people to serve in the church? If so, in what capacity? Can they be Sunday School teachers? Ushers? Can they work in the bus ministry? Good churches differ in these matters, and I believe this is an example of something in which a church member can submit to his leaders, leaving it in the hands of the Lord.

The pastors will answer to God about these things, and there are many matters like this.

I might disagree with my pastor over his teaching on giving, for example. Some believe tithing is a law in the New Testament dispensation and others don't. I think of a man who makes a big issue of this, and if a church teaches tithing, he will not join it regardless of any other issue. As a result, he is not in any church, having a little "home church" instead, and though he does a lot of evangelism he has very little if any fruit.

I might disagree with some of the music in my church. Some Christians don't like any recorded background music to be played during the services; others don't like guitars to be used; others don't like gospel quartets. In my estimation, none of these things are wrong in themselves; it is the character of the music that is played or performed that makes such things right or wrong. I have heard some spiritual recorded music, and I have heard a lot of worldly recorded music. I have heard guitars used in a spiritual manner as well as in a worldly manner. I have heard spiritual quartets and unspiritual ones.

The point is that there is room for some variety in the music program of the church, and I might not agree with all of the decisions that are made. (Our video series *Music for Good or Evil* deals with this issue extensively. It is available for free download from www.wayoflife.org.)

I might disagree over my church's standards for workers, thinking that the standards are either too strict or not strict enough.

I might disagree over whether or not a pastor has a TV and whether or not he preaches against this enough. We would never encourage someone to stay in a church that has low moral standards for workers, if they listen to rock music, for example, or wear immodest clothing, or where the pastor and other leaders watch ungodly television programs and movies. I am merely saying that my exact standards might not be enforced by the pastors, and that alone does not mean that I should leave.

I might disagree with how my church conducts its business meetings. A church we were once members of, for example, doesn't include women in the business meetings. The women can attend if they choose, but they do not make motions or vote. The men conduct the business. Imagine such a thing in this feministic society! I am sure there are many who would not agree with this, but it is not contrary to Scripture.

I might disagree with some of the missionaries the church supports.

I might disagree with some of the ways the church finances are used.

I might disagree with the kind of materials that are used in Sunday School, about whether or not promotions are used, about whether or not puppets or plays or such things are used, about whether or not there is a bus ministry.

I might have problems with how the missions program is conducted. I might not like some of the special speakers that

the pastor brings in. I might disagree with my pastor over his involvement in or lack of involvement in political issues. I might disagree with him regarding his dealings with erring members. He might seem too patient or too harsh.

I'm simply saying that there are many things that we must leave in the hands of the pastors, and this is never an easy matter.

In every church I've been a member of, I've disagreed with some things. There is a time to leave a church over things that we believe are wrong, when we have a clear scriptural basis and the issues are important and the direction of the church is set, but we must also learn to put many things into the hands of the Lord and do what He has told us to do: submit to the church leadership and be a blessing.

The pastors must be allowed to be pastors. They will answer for things that I will not answer for, and they have an authority that I do not have. This is not shirking responsibility; it is obedience to the Bible; and it is the path of wisdom and blessing.

(We deal with this issue much more extensively in *The Pastor's Authority and the Church Member's Responsibility*, available as a free eBook and in print from www.wayoflife.org.)

Grace

Another essential key to fruitful church membership is to bathe all of our judgments in love and mercy and graciousness.

“But speaking the truth IN LOVE, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:15).

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort WITH ALL LONGSUFFERING and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2).

“Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, IN FAITH AND LOVE which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 1:13).

“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; BUT BE GENTLE UNTO ALL MEN, apt to teach, PATIENT, IN MEEKNESS instructing those that oppose themselves...” (2 Tim. 2:24-25).

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one IN THE SPIRIT OF MEEKNESS; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:1-2).

Some of the things mentioned in the letter from the friends who “separated” from a fundamental Baptist church remind me of these verses. God tells us that we must maintain an attitude of meekness, patience, and compassion when dealing with others about their perceived problems.

The friends mentioned some instances in which their pastor supposedly “failed to correct error in the church.” The examples they gave made me think of the above verses. While it is necessary to stand for the truth and to rebuke sin and error, there is also such a thing as wisdom and patience and caution when dealing with people. You don’t necessarily come down hard and publicly on every problem that arises.

They mentioned the rambling testimony of a new convert. The new convert believed a woman who had recently died went to heaven because of the peaceful expression on the face of her corpse. That’s a weird testimony, to be sure, but I don’t think it is something the pastor should necessarily have corrected publicly. Lack of wisdom can easily turn a slight problem into a large one. Pastors are the ones who have to make those calls.

They mentioned a deacon who testified that “he liked to put God in impossible situations just to see what He will do,” and they seemed shocked that their pastor and the other

deacons said “amen” to this. They said this contradicts Matthew 4:5-7, in which the Lord told the devil that we are not to tempt God. But the deacon was probably just saying that it is a great thing to be in a situation in which God must do something special to help us, or something to that effect. I read a little ditty in the *Maranatha* paper some few years ago that said, “When God is going to do something wonderful, He begins with a difficulty; if it is going to be something very wonderful, He begins with an impossibility!” That is probably the idea that the deacon was trying to convey. His way of saying it might have left something to be desired, but this is not a serious matter.

We must judge such things in a spirit of graciousness and patience, always giving the benefit of the doubt and giving room for people to grow.

They mentioned that the song leader said one night that Satan was the king of this world, and that Christ was not king. They said that since Christ is Prophet, Priest, and King, they felt the title of king is reserved for Christ, but that is not so. Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords, but there are kings many and lords many in this present order of things. Satan is called the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4) and the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2). He is not necessarily spoken of as king of the world, but I do not believe it would be wrong to call him that in light of these verses. He is king in the hearts of lost people.

Again, this is a petty matter that requires more graciousness and spiritual maturity than that which was displayed by the couple who wrote to me.

A pastor has to exercise supernatural wisdom and kindness. This is one reason I have a tremendously high regard for godly pastors who are committed to God’s Word. They must always walk that fine line between caution, concern, and compromise, between zeal for the truth and patience with the erring. I believe they have the most difficult job in the world. If they make mistakes and fail to do

everything exactly as we think they should, we shouldn't be surprised!

How would you do in the pastor's shoes?

We must always season our judgments with grace. Mel Rutter, late Vice President of Maranatha Baptist Mission of Natchez, Mississippi, once told me, "Dave, be as firm as the rock in your position for truth, but as sweet as the honey from the rock in your disposition when striving for truth."

That's good advice, and though I have often fallen short of practicing this, it is definitely one of the goals of my ministry. I want to be a gracious Christian and a gracious preacher. Anything less is un-christlike and wrong.

Standing Back and Looking at the Whole Picture

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

It is easy to get tunnel vision when thinking about church problems. You focus on the problem(s) so much and so long that you forget what else is going on.

It is good sometimes to stand back and look at the whole picture. Oftentimes this will help you see that though there are problems, there are also great blessings and that perhaps the blessings far outweigh the problems.

Perhaps you will see that your church, even with its problems, is better than any other church in the area, and that you need to stay and do your best to make things better.

Conclusion

There is much more that could be said, but I will stop here.

I must add that I am definitely *not* giving a blanket endorsement of independent Baptists churches. There are MANY I would not join because of matters I count too serious to overlook. In fact, I am on the periphery of the Independent Baptist movement and the number of churches I can recommend with a good conscience is relatively small, probably 10% or less. Some are New Evangelical in principle. Some use corrupt Bibles. Some remind me more of a carnival than a church. Some appear not to know anything of old-fashioned Bible holiness and separation from the world and have very low or nonexistent moral standards. Some use the world's music. Some have a strutting *Poobah* for a pastor, a man who requires unquestioning loyalty to himself. (The pastor's authority is limited by the Bible, and he is to be proven in all things, 1 Thess. 5:21. Further, a biblical pastor is not a proud lord; he is a humble shepherd, 1 Peter 5:1-5.)

Please understand, too, that I am not trying to quench anyone's zeal for doing right. *We need more zeal for truth and righteousness, not less.*

It is not wrong to try to correct perceived problems in the churches or to talk to the pastor about things about which we disagree. The Bible instructs us to "prove all things" (1 Thess. 5:21) and to judge all preaching (1 Cor. 14:29). There is a ministry of correction that is taught plainly in Scripture, but I did not set out to address that subject in this article. We have addressed a ministry of correction in many articles. Here, I am dealing with other important issues.

I am not saying we should stay in a church no matter what is wrong or that we should accept whatever happens. I am saying, simply, that the church is God's program today and

He has promised rewards for faithful, fruitful members of sound churches

I am saying don't let anything draw you away from church itself.

I am saying that you should focus on what God has commanded you to do, which is to serve Christ and be fruitful.

We should remember, too, that there are things God's wants to teach you even in difficult situations (Romans 8:28).

I want to be a blessing to the Lord's churches. The Bible makes it plain that God wants His work to be done through the church. Thus it behooves us to make a supreme effort to submit ourselves to this institution except in matters of clear doctrinal error and entrenched moral corruption.

POSTSCRIPT: The people to whom I originally addressed the previous information did not receive my counsel. In fact, they cut off all fellowship from me and counted me as their enemy and as a compromiser. The last I heard of them, they were moving from church to church, becoming increasingly bitter, in search of that ideal congregation. This is very sad, but I have seen the same thing happen many times.

For more on this subject see the following free eBook at the Way of Life web site, www.wayoflife.org: *The Pastor's Authority and the Church Member's Responsibility*

About Way of Life's eBooks

Since January 2011, Way of Life Literature books have been available in eBook format. Some are available for purchase, while others are available for free download.

The eBooks are designed and formatted to work well on a variety of applications/devices, but not all apps/devices are equal. Some allow the user to control appearance and layout of the book while some don't even show italics! For best reading pleasure, please choose your reading app carefully.

For some suggestions, see the reports "iPads, Kindles, eReaders, and Way of Life Materials," at www.wayoflife.org/database/ebook.html and "About eBooks, eReaders, and Reading Apps" at www.wayoflife.org/help/ebooks.php.

Powerful Publications for These Times

Following is a selection of the titles published by Way of Life Literature. The books are available in both print and eBook editions (PDF, Kindle, ePub). The materials can be ordered via the online catalog at the Way of Life web site -- www.wayoflife.org -- or by phone 866-295-4143.

Following is a selection of the titles published by Way of Life Literature (updated Feb. 20, 2017). The books are available in both print and eBook editions (PDF, Kindle, ePub). The materials can be ordered via the online catalog at the Way of Life web site -- www.wayoflife.org -- or by phone 866-295-4143.

BIBLE TIMES AND ANCIENT KINGDOMS: TREASURES FROM ARCHAEOLOGY. ISBN 978-1-58318-121-8. This is a package consisting of a book and a series of PowerPoint and Keynote (Apple) presentations which are a graphical edition of the book. The PowerPoints are packed with high quality color photos, drawings, historic recreations, and video clips. Bible Times and Ancient Kingdoms is a course on Bible geography, Bible culture, and Bible history and has a two-fold objective: to present apologetic evidence for the Bible and to give background material to help the student better understand the setting of Bible history. We cover this fascinating history from Genesis to the New Testament, dealing with the Table of the Nations in Genesis 10, the Tower of Babel, Ur of the Chaldees, Egypt, Baal worship, the Philistines, the Canaanites, David's palace, Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, Ahab and Jezebel, the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel, the Assyrian Empire, Hezekiah and his times, Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylon, the Medo-Persian Empire, Herod the Great and his temple, the Roman rule over Israel, and the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. Many of the archaeological discoveries from the past 200 years, which we relate in the course, are so fascinating and improbable that they read like a novel. It is easy to see God's hand in this field, in spite of its prevailing skepticism. The course also deals with Bible culture, such as

weights and measures, plant and animal life, Caesar's coin, the widow's mite, ancient scrolls and seals, phylacteries, cosmetics, tombs, and the operation of ancient lamps, millstones, pottery wheels, and olive presses. The course begins with an overview of Israel's geography and a timeline of Bible history to give the student a framework for better understanding the material. Each section includes maps to help the student place the events in their proper location. The course is packed with important but little-known facts that illuminate Bible history and culture. The preparation for the book is extensive, the culmination of 40 years of Bible study, teaching, and research trips. In this context the author built a large personal library and collected information from major archaeological museums and locations in North America, England, Europe, Turkey, and Israel. We guarantee that the student who completes the course will read the Bible with new eyes and fresh enthusiasm. 500 pages book + DVD containing 19 PowerPoint presentations packed with more than 3,200 high quality color photos, drawings, historic recreations, and video clips.

THE FUTURE ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE. ISBN 978-1-58318-172-0. One of the many reasons why the Bible is the most amazing and exciting book on earth is its prophecies. The Bible unfolds the future in great detail, and *The Future According to the Bible* deals in depth with every major prophetic event, including the Rapture, the Judgment Seat of Christ, the Tribulation, the Antichrist, Gog and Magog, the Battle of Armageddon, the Two Witnesses, Christ's Return, Muslim nations in prophecy, the Judgment of the Nations, the resurrection body, the conversion of Israel, the highway of the redeemed, Christ's glorious kingdom, the Millennial Temple, the Great White Throne judgment, and the New Jerusalem. The first two chapters deal at length with the amazing prophecies that are being fulfilled today and with the church-age apostasy. Knowledge of these prophecies is essential for a proper understanding of the times and a proper Christian worldview today. The 130-page section on Christ's kingdom describes the coming world kingdom in more detail than any book we are familiar with. Every major Messianic prophecy is examined. Prophecy is a powerful witness to the Bible's divine inspiration, and it is a great motivator for holy Christian living. In

this book we show that the Lord's churches are outposts of the coming kingdom. The believer's position in Christ's earthly kingdom will be determined by his service in this present world (Revelation 2:26-27; 3:21). The book is based on forty years of intense Bible study plus firsthand research in Israel, Turkey, and Europe.

BAPTIST MUSIC WARS. ISBN 978-1-58318-179-9. This book is a warning about the transformational power of Contemporary Christian Music to transport Bible-believing Baptists into the sphere of the end-time one-world "church." The author is a musician, preacher, and writer who lived the rock & roll "hippy" lifestyle before conversion and has researched this issue for 40 years. We don't believe that good Christian music stopped being written when Fanny Crosby died or that rhythm is wrong or that drums and guitars are inherently evil. We believe, rather, that Contemporary Christian Music is a powerful bridge to a very dangerous spiritual and doctrinal world. The book begins by documenting the radical change in thinking that has occurred among independent Baptists. Whereas just a few years ago the overwhelming consensus was that CCM was wrong and dangerous, the consensus now has formed around the position that CCM can be used in moderation, that it is OK to "adapt" it to a more traditional sacred sound and presentation technique. The more "conservative" contemporary worship artists such as the Gettys are considered safe and their music is sung widely in churches and included in new hymnals published by independent Baptists. As usual, the driving force behind this change is the example set by prominent leaders, churches, and schools, which we identify in this volume. The heart of the book is the section giving eight reasons for rejecting Contemporary Christian Music (it is built on the lie that music is neutral, it is worldly, it is ecumenical, it is charismatic, it is experienced-oriented, it is permeated with false christs, it is infiltrated with homosexuality, and it weakens the Biblicist stance of a church) and the section answering 39 major arguments that are used in defense of CCM. We deal with the popular argument that since we have selectively used hymns by Protestants we should also be able to selectively use those by contemporary hymn writers. There are also chapters on the history of CCM and the author's experience of living the rock

& roll lifestyle before conversion and how the Lord dealt with him about music in the early months of his Christian life. The book is accompanied by a DVD containing two video presentations: *The Transformational Power of Contemporary Praise Music* and *The Foreign Spirit of Contemporary Worship Music*. 285 pages.

BELIEVER'S BIBLE DICTIONARY. This volume, the product of forty years of study, is based upon the King James Bible and is written from a dispensational, Baptist perspective. The studies are thorough, practical, devotional, and designed to be used by preachers, teachers, and homeschoolers. The *Believer's Bible Dictionary* is designed to be more affordable and transportable than the *Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible & Christianity*. We encourage every believer, young and old, to have his own Bible dictionary and to have it right beside his Bible as he studies, and we are convinced that this is one of the best Bible dictionaries available today. There are eight ways it can help you: (1) **It can help you understand the Bible.** The first requirement for understanding the Bible is to understand its words. (2) **It can help you understand out-of-use words and phrases from the King James Bible,** such as blood guiltiness, die the death, and superfluity of naughtiness. (3) **It can help you to do topical studies.** The student can study the full range of Bible doctrines by following the thousands of cross references from entry to entry. (4) **It can help you to study issues relating to morality and practical Christian living,** such as capital punishment, child training, cremation, and divorce. (5) **It can help you to study Old Testament types of Christ,** such as day of atonement, high priest, Melchizedek, passover, and tabernacle. (6) **It can help you to find the meaning of Bible customs and ancient culture,** such as agriculture, idolatry, military, money, music, and weights and measures. (7) **It can help you to study Bible places and geography,** such as Assyria, Babylon, Caesarea, Ephesus, and Jordan River. (8) **It can help you in preaching and teaching.** The doctrinal material in this dictionary is presented in a practical manner with outlines that can be used for teaching and preaching, in the pulpit, Sunday Schools, Bible Colleges and Institutes, home schools, family devotions, prisons and jails, nursing homes, etc. Missionary author Jack Moorman calls the dictionary "excellent"

and says, “The entries show a ‘distilled spirituality.’” Second edition May 2015. 385 pages.

THE DISCIPLING CHURCH: THE CHURCH THAT WILL STAND UNTIL JESUS COMES. New for March 2017. This church planting manual aims to establish churches on a solid biblical foundation of a regenerate church membership, one mind in doctrine and practice, serious discipleship, thorough-going discipline, and a large vision for world evangelism. We examine the New Testament pattern of a discipling church, and we trace the history of Baptist churches over the past 200 years to document the apostasy away from the biblical pattern to a mixed multitude philosophy. We also document the history of “sinner’s prayer” evangelism which has affected the reality of a regenerate church membership. The book deals with biblical salvation with evidence, care in receiving church members, the church’s essential first love for Christ, the right kind of church leaders, the right kind of preaching, training church members to be Bible students, the many facets of church discipline, building strong families, youth ministry, training preachers, charity, reproof, educating the church for spiritual protection, maintaining standards for workers, the church’s prayer life, the church’s separation, spiritual revival, the church’s music, and many other things. The last chapter documents some of the cultural factors that have weakened churches over the past 100 years, including the theological liberalism, public school system, materialism and working mothers, the rock & roll pop culture, pop psychology, the feminist movement, New Evangelicalism, television, and the Internet. There is also a list of recommended materials for a discipling church. 550 pages.

THE EFFECTUAL BIBLE STUDENT. This is a 12-hour series of video presentations plus an accompanying textbook containing a detailed outline to the course. It is our goal and passion to help God's people, including teenagers, become effectual Bible students. The course, which is the product of 40 years of Bible study and teaching, has life-changing potential. It has four major sections: (1) The spiritual requirements for effectual Bible study, (2) tips for daily Bible study, (3) principles of Bible interpretation, and (4) how to use Bible study tools. It also deals with using Bible

study software on a computer, a tablet, or a smartphone. It is a package consisting of the videos of the course and the textbook with review questions for testing. The course notes can be used as a standalone tool by teachers to teach church classes and home schooling programs or can be used for self-study. The package can be purchased as a set of 6 DVDs and a textbook, or it can be downloaded for free from www.wayoflife.org.

KEEPING THE KIDS: HOW TO KEEP THE CHILDREN FROM FALLING PREY TO THE WORLD. ISBN 978-1-58318-115-7. This book aims to help parents and churches raise children to be disciples of Jesus Christ and to avoid the pitfalls of the world, the flesh, and the devil. The book is a collaborative effort. It contains testimonies from hundreds of individuals who provided feedback to our questionnaires on this subject, as well as powerful ideas gleaned from interviews with pastors, missionaries, and church people who have raised godly children. The book is packed with practical suggestions and deals with many issues: Conversion, the husband-wife relationship, the necessity of permeating the home with Christian love, mothers as keepers at home, the father's role as the spiritual head of the home, child discipline, separation from the pop culture, discipleship of youth, the grandparents' role, effectual prayer and fasting. Chapter titles include the following: "Conversion," "The Home: Consistent Christian Living and the Husband-Wife Relationship," "Child Discipline," "The Church," "Unplugging from the Pop Culture," "Discipleship," "The Grandparents," "Grace and the Power of Prayer." 531 pages.

THE MOBILE PHONE AND THE CHRISTIAN HOME AND CHURCH. ISBN 978-1-58318-198-0. Many Christian homes and churches are losing a frightful percentage of their young people to the world. This practical and far-reaching youth discipleship course deals with the parent's part, the church's part, and the youth's part in discipling young people. It covers salvation, child discipline, the Christian home environment that produces disciples, reaching the child's heart, Bible study techniques, how to protect young people from dangers associated with the Internet and smartphones, how to use apologetics, and many other things. The section on building a wall of protection deals with such things

as having a basic home phone that teens can use under parental oversight, using filters and accountability software, controlling passwords and apps, the power of pornography, the dangers of *Facebook* and video games, avoiding conversation with members of the opposite sex, and monitoring the young person's attitude. The course explains how the church and the home can work together in youth discipleship. It describes the characteristic of a church that produces youth disciples, such as having qualified leaders, officers, and teachers, maintaining biblical standards for workers, being careful about salvation, being uncompromising about separation from the world, building godly homes, discipline, prayer, and vision. It deals with how to train young people to be effective Bible students and how to involve them in the church's ministry. Finally, the course deals with eleven biblical principles of spiritual protection that young people must build into their own lives. These are living to please the Lord, living by the law of the Spirit, practicing humility, pursuing Christian growth, pursuing edification and ministry, pursuing honesty, practicing vigilance and separation, pursuing pure speech, redeeming the time, pursuing temperance, and obeying and honoring one's parents. 200 pages. The *Mobile Phone* youth discipleship course can be downloaded as a free eBook from www.wayoflife.org.

MUSIC FOR GOOD OR EVIL. This video series, which is packed with photos, video and audio clips, has eight segments. **I. Biblical Principles of Good Christian Music.** **II. Why We Reject Contemporary Christian Music.** It is worldly, addictive, ecumenical, charismatic, shallow and man-centered, opposed to preaching, experience-oriented, and it weakens the strong biblicist stance of a church. **III. The Sound of Contemporary Christian Music.** In this section we give the believer simple tools that he can use to discern the difference between sensual and sacred music. We deal with syncopated dance styles, sensual vocal styles, relativistic styles, and overly soft styles that do not fit the message. **IV. The Transformational Power of Contemporary Worship Music.** We show why CCM is able to transform a "traditional" Bible-believing church into a New Evangelical contemporary one. Its transformational power resides in its enticing philosophy of "liberty" and in its sensual, addictive music. We use video and audio to illustrate the sound of contemporary worship. **V.**

Southern Gospel. We deal with the history of Southern Gospel, its character, its influence, and the role of the Gaithers in its renaissance. This section is packed with audio, video, and photos.

VI. Marks of Good Song Leading. There is a great need for proper training of song leaders today, and in this segment we deal with the following eight principles: Leadership, preparation, edification, spirituality, spiritual discernment, wisdom in song selection, diversity. One thing we emphasize is the need to sing worship songs that turn the people's focus directly to God. We give dozens of examples of worship songs that are found in standard hymnals used by Bible-believing churches, but typically these are not sung properly as "unto God."

VII. Questions Answered on Contemporary Christian Music. We answer 15 of the most common questions on this subject, such as the following: Is rhythm wrong? Isn't this issue just a matter of different taste? Isn't the sincerity of the musicians the important thing? Isn't some CCM acceptable? Didn't Luther and the Wesleys use tavern music? What is the difference between using contemporary worship hymns and using old Protestant hymns?

VIII. The Foreign Spirit of Contemporary Worship Music. This presentation documents the frightful spiritual compromise, heresy, and apostasy that permeate the field of contemporary praise. Through extensive documentation, it proves that contemporary worship music is controlled by "another spirit" (2 Cor. 11:4). It is the spirit of charismaticism, the spirit of the "latter rain," the spirit of Roman Catholicism and the one-world "church," the spirit of the world that is condemned by 1 John 2:16, the spirit of homosexuality, and the spirit of the false god of *The Shack*. The presentation looks carefully at the origin of contemporary worship in the Jesus Movement of the 1970s, examining the lives and testimonies of some of the most influential people. 5 DVDs.

ONE YEAR DISCIPLESHIP COURSE, ISBN 978-1-58318-117-1. This powerful course features 52 lessons in Christian living. It can be broken into sections and used as a new converts' course, an advanced discipleship course, a Sunday School series, a Home Schooling or Bible Institute course, or for preaching outlines. The lessons are thorough, meaty, and very practical. There is an extensive memory verse program built into the course, and each lesson features carefully designed review

questions. Following are some of the lesson titles (some subjects feature multiple lessons): Repentance, Faith, The Gospel, Baptism, Eternal Security, Position and Practice, The Law and the New Testament Christian, Christian Growth and Victory, Prayer, The Armor of God, The Church, The Bible, The Bible's Proof, Daily Bible Study, Key Principles of Bible Interpretation, Foundational Bible Words, Knowing God's Will, Making Wise Decisions, Christ's Great Commission, Suffering in the Christian Life, The Judgment Seat of Christ, Separation - Moral, Separation - Doctrinal, Tests of Entertainment, Fasting, Miracles, A Testing Mindset, Tongues Speaking, The Rapture, How to Be Wise with Your Money, The Believer and Drinking, Abortion, Evolution, Dressing for the Lord. 8.5X11, coated cover, spiral-bound. 221 pages.

THE PENTECOSTAL-CHARISMATIC MOVEMENTS: THE HISTORY AND THE ERROR. ISBN 1-58318-099-0. The 5th edition of this book, November 2014, is significantly enlarged and revised throughout. The Pentecostal-charismatic movement is one of the major building blocks of the end-time, one-world "church," and young people in particular need to be informed and forewarned. The author was led to Christ by a Pentecostal in 1973 and has researched the movement ever since. He has built a large library on the subject, interviewed influential Pentecostals and charismatics, and attended churches and conferences with media credentials in many parts of the world. The book deals with the history of Pentecostalism beginning at the turn of the 20th century, the Latter Rain Covenant, major Pentecostal healing evangelists, the Sharon Schools and the New Order of the Latter Rain, Manifest Sons of God, the charismatic movement, the Word-Faith movement, the Roman Catholic Charismatic Renewal, the Pentecostal prophets, the Third Wave, and recent Pentecostal and charismatic scandals. The book deals extensively with the theological errors of the Pentecostal-charismatic movements (exalting experience over Scripture, emphasis on the miraculous, the continuation of Messianic and apostolic miracles and sign gifts, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the baptism of fire, tongues speaking, physical healing guaranteed in the atonement, spirit slaying, spirit drunkenness, visions of Jesus, trips to heaven, women preachers, and ecumenism). The final section of the book

answers the question: "Why are people deluded by Pentecostal-Charismatic error?" David and Tami Lee, former Pentecostals, after reviewing a section of the book said: "Very well done! We pray God will use it to open the eyes of many and to help keep many of His children out of such deception." A former charismatic said, "The book is excellent and I have no doubt whatever that the Lord is going to use it in a mighty way. Amen!!" 487 pages.

A PORTRAIT OF CHRIST: THE TABERNACLE, THE PRIESTHOOD, AND THE OFFERINGS. ISBN 978-1-58318-178-2. This book is an extensive study on the Old Testament tabernacle and its priestly system, which has been called "God's masterpiece of typology." Whereas the record of the creation of the universe takes up two chapters of the Bible and the fall of man takes up one chapter, the tabernacle, with its priesthood and offerings, takes up 50 chapters. It is obvious that God has many important lessons for us in this portion of His Word. Speaking personally, nothing has helped me better understand the Triune God and the salvation that He has purchased for man, and I believe that I can guarantee that the reader will be taken to new heights in his understanding of these things. Everything about the tabernacle points to Jesus Christ: the design, the materials, the colors, the court walls and pillars, the door into the court, the sacrificial altar, the laver, the tabernacle tent itself with its boards and curtains and silver sockets, the tabernacle gate, and veil before the holy of holies, the candlestick, the table of shewbread, the incense altar, the ark of the covenant, the high priest, and the offerings. All is Christ. The tabernacle system offers brilliant, unforgettable lessons on Christ's person, offices and work: His eternal Sonship, His sinless manhood, His anointing, His atonement, His resurrection glory, His work as the life and sustainer and light of creation, His eternal high priesthood and intercession, and His kingdom. In addition to the studies on every aspect of the tabernacle, *A Portrait of Christ* features studies on the high priest, the Levitical priests, the five offerings of Leviticus, the day of atonement, the ransom money, the red heifer, the cherubims, strange fire, the golden calf, leprosy, the Nazarite vow, the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire, and the transportation of the tabernacle through the wilderness. The tabernacle is very practical in its teaching, as it also depicts believer priests carrying

Christ through this world (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). Like the Israelites in the wilderness, believers today are on a pilgrimage through a foreign land on the way to our eternal home (1 Pet. 2:11). Don Jasmin, editor of the *Fundamentalist Digest* says, “This new book on the Tabernacle constitutes the 21st-century classic treatise of this rich theme.” 420 pages.

SEEING THE NON-EXISTENT: EVOLUTION’S MYTHS AND HOAXES. ISBN 1-58318-002-8. This book is designed both as a stand alone title as well as a companion to the apologetics course *AN UNSHAKEABLE FAITH*. The contents are as follows: Canals on Mars, Charles Darwin and His Granddaddy, Thomas Huxley: Darwin’s Bulldog, Ernst Haeckel: Darwin’s German Apostle, Icons of Evolution, Icons of Creation, The Ape-men, Predictions, Questions for Evolutionists, Darwinian Gods, Darwin’s Social Influence. The **ICONS OF EVOLUTION** that we refute include mutations, the fossil record, homology, the peppered moth, Darwin’s finches, the fruit fly, vestigial organs, the horse series, the embryo chart, the Miller experiment, Archaeopteryx, bacterial resistance, the big bang, and billions of years. The **ICONS OF CREATION** that we examine include the monarch butterfly, the trilobite, the living cell, the human eye, the human brain, the human hand, blood clotting, the bird’s flight feathers, bird migration, bird song, harmony and symbiosis, sexual reproduction, living technology, the dragonfly, the bee, and the bat. The section on **APE-MEN** deals with Cro-Magnon, Neanderthal, Java Man, Piltdown Man, Nebraska Man, Peking Man, Lucy, Ardi, Ida, among others. The section on **PREDICTIONS** considers 29 predictions made by Biblical creationism, such as the universe will behave according to established laws, the universe will be logical, and there will be a vast unbridgeable gulf between man and the animal kingdom. **DARWINIAN GODS** takes a look at inventions that evolutionists have devised to avoid divine Creation, such as panspermia and aliens, self-organization, and the multiverse. 608 pages.

SOWING AND REAPING: A COURSE IN EVANGELISM. ISBN 978-1-58318-169-0. This course is unique in several ways. *It is unique in its approach.* While it is practical and down-to-earth, it does not present a formulaic approach to soul winning,

recognizing that individuals have to be dealt with as individuals. The course does not include any sort of psychological manipulation techniques. It does not neglect repentance in soul winning, carefully explaining the biblical definition of repentance and the place of repentance in personal evangelism. It explains how to use the law of God to plow the soil of the human heart so that the gospel can find good ground. *The course is unique in its objective.* The objective of biblical soul winning is not to get people to “pray a sinner’s prayer”; the objective is to see people soundly converted to Christ. This course trains the soul winner to pursue genuine conversions as opposed to mere “decisions.” *The course is also unique in its breadth.* It covers a wide variety of situations, including how to deal with Hindus and with skeptics and how to use apologetics or evidences in evangelism. There is a memory course consisting of 111 select verses and links to a large number of resources that can be used in evangelism, many of them free. The course is suitable for teens and adults and for use in Sunday School, Youth Ministries, Preaching, and private study. **OUTLINE:** The Message of Evangelism, Repentance and Evangelism, God’s Law and Evangelism, The Reason for Evangelism, The Authority for Evangelism, The Power for Evangelism, The Attitude in Evangelism, The Technique of Evangelism, Using Tracts in Evangelism, Dealing with Skeptics. 104 pages, 8x11, spiral bound.

THINGS HARD TO BE UNDERSTOOD: A HANDBOOK OF BIBLICAL DIFFICULTIES. ISBN 1-58318-002-8. This volume deals with a variety of biblical difficulties. Find the answer to the seeming contradictions in the Bible. Meet the challenge of false teachers who misuse biblical passages to prove their doctrine. Find out the meaning of difficult passages that are oftentimes overlooked in the Bible commentaries. Be confirmed in your confidence in the inerrancy and perfection of the Scriptures and be able to refute the skeptics. Learn the meaning of difficult expressions such as “the unpardonable sin.” A major objective of this volume is to protect God’s people from the false teachers that abound in these last days. For example, we examine verses misused by Seventh-day Adventists, Roman Catholics, Pentecostals, and others to support their heresies. We deal with things such as the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, cremation, head coverings, did

Jesus die on Friday, God's repentance, healing in the atonement, losing one's salvation, sinless perfectionism, soul sleep, and the Trinity. Jerry Huffman, editor of *Calvary Contender*, testified: "You don't have to agree with everything to greatly benefit from this helpful book." In researching and writing this book, the author consulted roughly 500 volumes, old and new, that deal with biblical difficulties and the various other subjects addressed in *Things Hard to Be Understood*. This one volume, therefore, represents the essence of a sizable library. Sixth edition Feb. 2014, enlarged and completely revised, 441 pages.

AN UNSHAKEABLE FAITH: A CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS COURSE. ISBN 978-1-58318-119-5. The course is built upon nearly 40 years of serious Bible study and 30 years of apologetics writing. Research was done in the author's personal 6,000-volume library plus in major museums and other locations in America, England, Europe, Australia, Asia, and the Middle East. The package consists of an apologetics course entitled *AN UNSHAKEABLE FAITH* (both print and eBook editions) plus an extensive series of Powerpoint/Keynote presentations. (Keynote is the Apple version of Powerpoint.) The 1,800 PowerPoint slides deal with archaeology, evolution/creation science, and the prophecies pertaining to Israel's history. The material in the 360-page course is extensive, and the teacher can decide whether to use all of it or to select only some portion of it for his particular class and situation. After each section there are review questions to help the students focus on the most important points. The course can be used for private study as well as for a classroom setting. Sections include The Bible's Nature, The Bible's Proof, The Dead Sea Scrolls, The Bible's Difficulties, Historical Evidence for Jesus, Evidence for Christ's Resurrection, Archaeological Treasures Confirming the Bible, A History of Evolution, Icons of Evolution, Icons of Creation, Noah's Ark and the Global Flood.

WAY OF LIFE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE BIBLE & CHRISTIANITY. ISBN 1-58318-005-2. This hardcover Bible encyclopedia contains 640 pages (8.5x11) of information, over 6,000 entries, and over 7,000 cross-references. Twenty-five years of research went into this one-of-a-kind reference tool. It is a complete dictionary of biblical terminology and features many

other areas of research not often covered in such volumes, including Bible Versions, Denominations, Cults, Christian Movements, Typology, the Church, Social issues and practical Christian living, Bible Prophecy, and Old English Terminology. It does not correct the Authorized Version of the Bible, nor does it undermine the fundamental Baptist's doctrines and practices as many study tools do. The 5th edition (October 2008) contains new entries, extensive additions to existing entries, and a complete rewriting of the major articles. Many preachers have told us that apart from *Strong's Concordance*, the *Way of Life Bible Encyclopedia* is their favorite study tool. A missionary told us that if he could save only one study book out of his library, it would be our Bible encyclopedia. An evangelist in South Dakota wrote: "If I were going to the mission field and could carry only three books, they would be the Strong's concordance, a hymnal, and the *Way of Life Bible Encyclopedia*." Missionary author Jack Moorman says: "The encyclopedia is excellent. The entries show a 'distilled spirituality.'" 5th edition, 640 pages. A computer edition of the encyclopedia is available as a standalone eBook for PDF, Kindle, and ePub. It is also available as a module for *Swordseacher*.

Way of Life Literature
P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061
866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org
www.wayoflife.org

This book is sold in a print edition and is also published in a free eBook edition. It is available in PDF, MOBI (for Kindle, etc.), and ePub formats from the Way of Life web site. See the Free Book tab.

We do not allow distribution of this book from other web sites.

Keys to Fruitful Church Membership
Copyright 1999-2007 by David W. Cloud