

WHAT
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STRONG
CHURCH?

DAVID W. CLOUD



What If There Is No Strong Church?

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Contents

Introduction	5
Understand the Importance of the Church.....	7
Don't Look for a Perfect Church.....	9
Commute	11
Relocate	13
Attend the Best Church Available.....	15
Seek to Make the Church Stronger.....	16
Be Wise in Dealing with Pastors.....	24
Give Full Attention to Your Own Spiritual Life.....	36
The Issue of Starting a New Church.....	41
Conclusion.....	43
Publications for These Times	45

What If There Is No Strong Church?
David W. Cloud

Introduction

I hear from many people who tell me there is no really sound church in their entire area, and in at least many cases, I know this is true. They can't find a church that is strong in God's Word and prayer and holiness and separation from the world and ecclesiastical separation and serious discipleship, a church that isn't at least dabbling in contemporary music and moving quickly in that direction and thus building bridges to the "greater church."

Following are a couple of examples:

"I am so discouraged that it is hard for me to go on. I live in ----- . I have been here for over 14 years and I have searched my heart out, trying to find an independent Baptist Church that stands against sin, preaches against sin, is actively seeking to win the lost to Christ, is still using the KJV. They are dead and lifeless. And most of all they all believe in using quick prayerism and easy believism, without true repentance, faith, and Holy Spirit conviction. I have a real problem being a member of any of these churches. I want to serve the Lord so badly, but no church that takes a stand. I would first of all appreciate your prayers, and secondly any advice you may have for someone in my condition."

"I am attending a church of small size, with a pastor who says he is fundamental, but in actual practice, he is new-evangelical. He does not name the names of false teachers. He won't correct any members in error. He will sound no alarm about ecumenism, apostasy, etc. In my estimation, there are only two or three of the families in the church that care anything about separation from the world and apostasy, and those cannot speak freely the whole counsel of God because the leaders won't allow it. This is the best church within my area. There are two churches 40 miles away that claim to be fundamentalist but promote

Dobson-style psychology and other things that a true fundamentalist cannot countenance.”

Following is my advice for those who are in this situation:

1. Be sure that you understand the importance of the church.
2. Be careful that you are not looking for a perfect church.
3. Commute to a strong church.
4. Relocate to a place that has a strong church.
5. Attend the best church available and put the situation into the Lord’s hands.
6. Be wise in dealing with pastors.
7. Give full attention to your own spiritual life.
8. In some cases, a new church can be established.

Understand the Importance of the Church

It is important to be reminded of, and convinced of, how important the church is. Men have corrupted churches, but men did not create the church. The church is God's institution. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "I will build my church" (Mat. 16:18).

The New Testament church is called "the house of God, the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15), and in the context, that refers to an assembly that has pastors and deacons.

The book of Acts is the record of the establishment of the first churches under the leadership of the apostles. In Acts, we see the church as the divinely-ordained headquarters of world evangelism. The Lord's commission of world missions is given in Acts 1:8. The method of carrying out that commission is found in Acts 13-14, and this is the pattern for the entire church age. Here we see a properly established church sending out missionaries to found new churches that, in turn, accomplish the same thing.

Most of the New Testament was written to churches to instruct them about how to increase in their knowledge or and service to Christ.

When Christ gave His final Revelation, He delivered it to seven churches of that day (Rev. 1:4), and seven times He said, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). Christ spoke to the believers through the churches and their leaders.

There is no doubt that God has exalted the church and that it is not His will that believers neglect it. The Word of God warns, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:25).

A child of God that wants to obey God should leave a church that is departing from God's Word, but he can never be content with not being a committed member of a New Testament church.

Don't Look for a Perfect Church

I meet and hear from two types of people in regard to the church issue. First, there are those who live in an area in which there truly is no sound church, and they have to do the best they can in that situation. Second, there are people who are not satisfied even with a good church and are on a never-ending search for a church that is ideal by their standards.

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.

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 sit down and count your blessings. What are the things that attracted you to the church in the first place? What are the strengths of the church?

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

Some people who have told me that they are looking for a strong church and would join it if they found one, are self-deceived. I know this to be true because such people have attended my Bible conferences in good churches and they live within driving distance of these churches, but they won't join them. For example, I recently preached a conference at Grace Baptist Church in Oxford, Pennsylvania, pastored by Steve Rogers, and though I personally recommend this ministry, some people who live in that area and say they love my writings and preaching find an excuse not to join it. I have no sympathy for that.

I have concluded that some people who say they love my preaching would not long be content if I had pastoral authority over their lives. They like my preaching only so long as I am a distant figure and they can pick and choose what they want to hear from me. For one thing, I am very strong on the importance of the assembly and on faithful, committed church membership. This is absolutely a fundamental issue with me. But by their actions it is clear that they don't agree with this part of my teaching.

While it is important to find the best church possible, you are never going to find a church that is "perfect" by any standard. You are certainly not going to find a church that in practice is exactly what I preach and teach other than the church where I am in a leadership position. Every preacher is different, and there will be differences between preachers and churches.

Our book *Keys to Fruitful Church Membership*, which was first published in 1999, deals with this issue in a very practical way. Recently revised and expanded, it is available in a print edition and as a free eBook from www.wayoflife.org.

Commute

I know many people that travel an hour and more to attend a good church. I know one couple who drove three hours one way. Some drive (or ride a bus or walk) in on Sunday morning and stay the entire day, then travel home after the evening service.

We find this to be a very reasonable thing to do. It is not uncommon today for people to commute hundreds of miles each week to work, and the church is more important than one's job.

In South Asia, I know of some dear believers who WALK four hours and more to church, and I know many believers who walk one to two hours to attend church.

They put to shame many Christians in North America who wouldn't dream of driving in a comfortable automobile on good roads for an hour or an hour and a half to attend a good church.

Commuting a significant distance is a small price to pay for the blessings of a strong church. Many parents have testified to me that being in the right church was a major reason why their grown children are serving the Lord today. I met a grandfather in Chesterton, Indiana, who told me that his children and now his grandchildren are serving the Lord. He said that he moved to that area many years ago when his children were young and he had bought a house. Afterwards he found Fairhaven Baptist Church and knew this was where the Lord wanted him to raise his family, but it was more than an hour's drive from his house. He put the house on the market and commuted to church every service. He thought his house would sell quickly, but it took more than two years, if I remember correctly, yet he continued to commute to a good church rather than settle for a mediocre one. The sweet

fruit of this wise decision has already continued to the third generation.

Relocate

Assuming there is no sound church within commuting distance, we recommend that you relocate. In my estimation, in light of the Bible's teaching, the church should be the most important consideration in determining where to live.

Of course, one must follow the Lord's leading in such matters; but the fact is, as we have seen, that He has made it plain that the church is His ordained means of fulfilling the Great Commission and He wants every Christian to be a fruitful member of a sound New Testament church.

The church directory we maintain at the Way of Life web site can be helpful in determining where to relocate. But please understand that in most cases we do not have personal knowledge of these churches. Each church on the directory has successfully filled out our questionnaire, but that doesn't mean it is a good church. We have also discovered, to our amazement, that it is not uncommon for church officers to be less than honest in answering the questionnaire!

If someone is serious about relocating for the sake of a good church, we might be able to make a recommendation. But don't contact us about this if you are merely interested and curious. It takes time to make recommendations, and I will only make the effort to do that for people that I deem to be very serious about relocating.

And we would warn against trying to put God's will into a small box. If you want God's will, you have to put His will absolutely first. One man said that he MIGHT be interested in moving IF I could give him the names of good churches in a couple of states that he listed. That is to allow God to work only within the parameters of *your* will. It is saying, "Lord, I will go where you want me to go, so long as it is within this little geographical parameter." If you want God's perfect will,

you must be ready to go *anywhere* He leads and do *whatever* He says.

I realize that not everyone can move. There are many situations in life. But I am convinced that if God's people made this the priority it should be, that more people would relocate. I have been recommending this for decades, but I can count on the fingers of one hand the number of people I know of who have done this.

Attend the Best Church Available

If there is no strong church within commuting distance and you cannot move, attend the best church available, assuming there is one that is not too deeply compromised, and be faithful as unto the Lord.

Remember that it is pastors who have the greatest accountability for the doctrine and policy of the church.

It is important to understand that the pastor's responsibility is not your responsibility. I am not recommending blind, unquestioning loyalty. The believer is to prove all things (Acts 17:11; 1 Th. 5:21). You should voice your concern to the pastors about anything that you believe to be wrong, and a godly pastor will listen carefully and prayerfully. But God has given pastors the responsibility to make decisions.

And I am not saying that a Christian should submit to a church that is teaching false doctrine or that is plainly departing from the Word of God, that is permeated with worldliness, that has capitulated to contemporary worship and a contemporary philosophy, and such.

There are many Independent Baptist churches I would not personally join, and that number is increasing each decade. But there are different kinds of and degrees of church problems and errors, and one must have godly wisdom to discern what is most important in church matters and what is less important, and about when to leave and when to stay.

Again, for more about this see *Keys to Fruitful Church Membership*. Also see *The Pastor's Authority and the Church Member's Responsibility*. These are available as free eBooks from www.wayoflife.org.

Seek to Make the Church Stronger

While there is a time to leave a church when it is clearly and irrevocably committed to unscriptural paths, it is also very important to do everything possible to strengthen existing churches insofar as this is possible. And regardless of how strong a church might be, there are doubtless ways it can be strengthened.

A biblical church that has even many weaknesses is worth fighting for as long as there is hope of strengthening it.

In regard to churches, I have two goals in my ministry. One is to strengthen existing Bible-believing churches, and the other is to encourage the establishment of new churches that are built on a strong foundation from the very beginning.

This is not to say that a church cannot be irredeemably spoiled by unrepentant sins and errors. Christ warned the church of Ephesus that if it did not repent of leaving its first love, He would remove its candlestick so that it would no longer be one of His churches (Rev. 2:4-5). He warned the church at Pergamos that if it did not repent of its worldliness He would come quickly and fight against them (Rev. 2:14-16). He warned other churches similarly. There are definitely sins and errors that can destroy a church if not repented of.

There is a time to fight for a weak church and a time to leave it alone, and only the Lord can give wisdom about these matters.

I know of a number of churches that have become stronger in recent years rather than weaker, thus going in a different direction than that in which most churches are headed. The “people” have strengthened the hands of the pastors in issues such as prayer, music, standards for workers, the building up

of the homes, separation from the world, discipline, evangelistic vision, etc.

I think of many young preachers who have strengthened senior pastors in recent days by their zeal for the truth. And I encourage young preachers to do this very thing. Don't be afraid of man. Fear God and love Christ and truth and help your fellow preachers, even the oldest ones, to be stronger rather than weaker in these evil days.

I know of a number of churches that have gotten stronger in the music issue, for example, because the pastors were challenged by members or by other preachers. Some church members are better informed in many ways than the pastors, and wise pastors will benefit from their knowledge and spiritual wisdom.

I think of a very conservative Independent Baptist church with a passionate and godly pastor. It has some strengths but also plenty of weaknesses, some of them serious from my standpoint. In fact, I am convinced that this church will not be standing in the next generation unless some major changes are made. But the pastor is getting stronger rather than weaker, more knowledgeable rather than less, and the church is benefitting. This is through the influence of many things. The pastor is a student and a reader, for one thing, and he is willing to hear challenges from a wide variety of men, even "radicals" like me! And there are godly people in the congregation who are graciously and wisely pushing for the church to be stronger and are holding up the pastor's hands in that direction.

The church is what I call a mixed multitude in that the membership is composed largely of people who are *not* passionate Christians. Only a handful attend special prayer meetings, for example, and when people don't love prayer meetings I have a difficult time thinking they are even true Christians. Whatever they are, they don't have the spiritual character of the members of the first church (Acts 2:42). One man told me that he could count only about ten true disciples

in that church family, though the membership is about 70, I would guess. This is typical, as we point out in the book *The Discipling Church*.

But this is a church with many good biblical characteristics, and it is moving in a stronger direction and for that we are thankful to the Lord. We want to do everything we can to help such churches.

By Prayer

One of the most important ways this is done is earnest prayer. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16).

Prayer can change any situation, even the most hopeless, because effectual prayer is entering into intimate communion with God and taking hold of His infinite power and omniscient wisdom. “To pray is to enter the treasure house of God and to enrich oneself out of an inexhaustible storehouse of riches.”

When praying for a church, we must focus our attention on the power of God, not the weakness of the situation. To Abraham and Jeremiah, God said, “Is any thing too hard for the LORD?” (Ge. 18:14; Jer. 32:27). God was challenging their faith. Many times Jesus reproved the disciples for their lack of faith (Mt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; Lu. 12:28).

I have witnessed situations in which pastors became concerned for issues about which they had not previously been concerned, and I have no doubt that this was an answer to the prayers of, and a product of the effort of, concerned church members.

Instead of merely criticizing pastors, pray for them! Pray believing (Mr. 11:24); pray earnestly (Ro. 15:30; Jas. 5:16); pray persistently (Mt. 7:7; Lu. 18:1); pray with fasting (Mt. 17:21). Pray with prayer partners. Paul taught the importance of this by his frequent, earnest requests for prayer (Ro. 15:30;

Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3; 1 Th. 5:25; 2 Th. 3:1). Agree with likeminded brethren to pray for specific things in the church.

By Challenging the Pastors

Another way to help strengthen a church is to challenge the pastors and teachers in a gracious and wise way. This is never wrong. It's not wrong to talk to a pastor or teacher about an issue. It is not wrong to encourage a pastor or teacher to read something that could help them. I have often been helped in this way by well-meaning people.

I thank the Lord that I know of *many* churches that have been strengthened by members who have challenged the preachers on a variety of issues.

Of course, this requires that a preacher receive challenges, even instruction, from the "people."

No man naturally likes to be challenged or corrected, but a pastor or teacher who does not receive exhortation properly misunderstands his position and authority. The church is a body in which the leaders have a *unique* teaching role but not the *only* teaching role (Eph. 4:11-16). Every member of the body is to contribute to the edification of the whole.

"From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. 4:16).

The brethren are instructed to "exhort one another" (Heb. 10:25).

This is not to say that a church member is to be a "loose canon" and operate independently of or in defiance of the leaders. But in light of the Bible's teaching, why wouldn't God use any member of the church body to challenge the preacher?

The pastor does have very real authority. We believe in that and we teach God's people how to submit to that

authority, but a pastor's authority is not the authority to demand blind, unquestioning loyalty. The people are commanded by God to "prove all things" (1 Th. 5:21), so it cannot be wrong when they do so. Paul did not reprove the Bereans for testing him by Scripture (Acts 17:11).

In *Lectures to My Students*, Charles Spurgeon gave the following counsel:

"A sensible friend who will unsparingly criticize you from week to week will be a far greater blessing to you than a thousand indiscriminating admirers if you have sense enough to bear his treatment, and grace enough to be thankful for it. When I was preaching at the Surrey Gardens, an unknown censor of great ability used to send me a weekly list of my mispronunciations and other Slips of speech. He never signed his name, and that was my only cause of complaint against him, for he left me in a debt which I could not acknowledge. I take this opportunity of confessing my obligations to him, for with genial temper, and an evident desire to benefit me, he marked down most relentlessly everything which he supposed me to have said incorrectly. Concerning some of these corrections he was in error himself, but for the most part he was right, and his remarks enabled me to perceive and avoid many mistakes. I looked for his weekly memoranda with much interest, and trust I am all the better for them. ... He demanded my authority for calling a man covetous; and so on. Possibly some young men might have been discouraged, if not irritated, by such severe criticisms, but they would have been very foolish, for in resenting such correction they would have been throwing away a valuable aid to progress. No money can purchase outspoken honest judgment, and when we can get it for nothing let us utilize it to the fullest extent" (Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, vol. 4).

The preacher who doesn't like challenges not only misunderstands his position and authority, he is also ignorant of the reality of his own condition. No man knows everything or sees everything. *Every man* has weaknesses and

blind spots. It matters not how long one has lived, how much experience one has, and how much one has studied, we are all like babes in this present life. We must be careful to maintain the humility demonstrated by Agur, who said,

“Surely I *am* more brutish than *any* man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy. Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what *is* his name, and what *is* his son's name, if thou canst tell?” (Proverbs 30:2-4).

Agur was not saying that he was ignorant. He was comparing himself to God rather than to man. He was saying that before God's omniscience, he is like a dumb animal. This is the humility that will keep the preacher right in his self-perception so that he remains open to further learning and correction.

By Being Busy Building the Church

Every member of the church should serve Christ with all of his heart and strength, doing everything he can to make the church prosper. As we have seen in Ephesians 4, the church is a body and the ministry of the church is the work of the entire body, with each member diligently contributing his or her part.

We see the same thing in 1 Corinthians 3. The warning about the Judgment Seat of Christ is given in the context of the work of the church.

“For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, *ye are* God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this

foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which *temple* ye are" (1 Co. 3:9-17).

The church is the temple of God; the foundation is Christ; and each member is to build on this foundation by the unction of the Holy Spirit. Paul, as an apostle, was a masterbuilder. He didn't choose that function; it was assigned by God. Paul was used by God to write a large portion of the blueprint for the church in the canon of the New Testament. Every member has his or her assigned part in this great business, and each member will be judged as to how he builds.

Kelly Whiting makes the following important observation from this passage:

"It is extremely clear from the passage that even the conflict-riven, carnal, and sin-tolerating church at Corinth was God's church and that the members, all of them (1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 2:1; 3:1; etc.), were responsible for correcting the errors of the church and that their reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ would consist very largely of what they did with respect to building up that church. The context of verses 9-14 show that the Holy Spirit is speaking of the foundation of the church in Corinth and that the rewards were the things built 'upon this foundation.' So the child of God who believes God's Word will aim to protect, defend, and edify the church God has placed him in so long as he discerns that it remains a church (by using his well-exercised spiritual senses, Hebrews 5:14), knowing that his labor of faith will receive reward at the Judgment

Seat of Christ. Similarly, if a believer refuses to do his part to edify his church, he will suffer loss at that Judgment, AND it goes on to say that any man that defiles the church will be destroyed by God.”

If you want to make the church stronger, be faithful to all of the services, to every prayer meeting, to visitation programs. Get involved in every ministry opportunity that is open to you, then ask the pastors what you might be able to do in particular beyond that.

Those who are faithful and are busy serving are much more likely to get a hearing from the leaders as opposed to those who are on the sidelines. A team member can “criticize” more effectively than a bystander.

And a team member tends to care for the team a lot more than those who merely watch others play.

There is a saying, “If the whole church were like me, what would the church be?”

Be Wise in Dealing with Pastors

It is important to learn how to deal with pastors in a wise and biblical way.

“And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves” (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

Following are some suggestions about dealing with pastors:

1. Guard your heart and attitude.
2. Give pastors the benefit of the doubt.
3. If you are a man, don’t hesitate to approach the pastor if you perceive that something is wrong scripturally.
4. Women must be especially cautious in dealing with pastors.
5. Be wise in how you approach the pastor about perceived problems or errors.
6. Be sure that you are contending for clear Scriptural truth and not for your own preferences and opinions.
7. Guard against allowing a church problem to poison your attitude toward the church as a divine institution.
8. Keep your eyes focused on Christ rather than man.
9. Pray for your pastors and other church leaders.
10. If you have a problem or question, go directly to the pastors or to the people involved.
11. Follow the “royal law.”
12. Don’t forget that pastors have greater authority and greater responsibility.

1. Guard your heart and attitude.

We are to esteem the church leaders highly in love for their work's sake.

“And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves” (1 Th. 5:12-13).

We need to have a cool head and a warm heart, not a cool heart and a warm head! When we attempt to correct others, we must guard our own hearts and do so in the spirit of meekness (Gal. 6:1).

2 Timothy 2:24-25 describes the spirit in which we are to seek to correct others:

“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.”

The late evangelist Mel Rutter would say, “Be as firm as the rock in your position but as sweet as the honey from the rock in your disposition.”

The difference between leaving a church over legitimate doctrinal concerns and leaving in rebellion toward pastoral authority will be evidenced in two ways, according to James 3:14-18.

“But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”

First, the difference will be evident in one's attitude. Contrast the “bitter envying and strife” of verse 14 with the godly attitude described in verse 17: “peaceable, gentle, and

easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.”

Second, the difference will be evident in the fruit that issues from the situation. Contrast the fruit of verse 16 -- “envying and strife ... confusion and every evil work” -- with the fruit described in verse 18, which is “the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”

The long-term consequences will demonstrate the secrets of the heart. On the one hand, those who are seeking to strengthen the church and are opposed to things that are truly ungodly and unscriptural and who leave a church on that basis alone and not because of their own self-will or carnality, will go on to serve Christ fruitfully in stronger churches.

On the other hand, those who are merely striving for their own self-will and who are causing trouble in a carnal manner usually hop from church to church, causing trouble everywhere they go, losing their testimony and usually their children, often going from a strong church to a weaker church. When someone moves to a church that is weaker doctrinally and spiritually, it demonstrates that the issue was not actually about truth and righteousness, but was a personality conflict or something of that sort.

2. Give pastors the benefit of the doubt, and do everything you can to be an obedient church member.

The Bible uses very strong language about the church’s submission to pastoral authority.

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves...” (Heb. 13:17).

Those are strong words. *Unless the pastors are leading contrary to the Bible in a very clear and obvious manner, the church member must submit to them as unto God.* It is like a wife’s submission to a husband.

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord” (Eph. 5:22).

Every wife knows that if she submits to her husband she is submitting to an imperfect man. Sometimes she will disagree with his decisions, but the godly wife is not merely submitting to her husband, she is submitting to the Lord who gave her that husband. Her eyes are on Christ. She is like Sarah of old who called her husband “lord” because she trusted in God (1 Pe. 3:5).

Likewise, the church member does not submit merely to a man. The church member submits to the Lord who has established the office of the pastorate and who has put that man into the office and who has commanded obedience.

Too many church members think it is their duty to advise and correct the pastor in all matters if they think he is not doing his job properly, even in matters that do not pertain to scriptural error. But it is wise and scriptural to let pastors be pastors.

As stated in other parts of this book, I am not saying that it is wrong to give suggestions to pastors or to challenge their decisions. God’s people are to prove all things (1 Th. 5:21), and pastors are not above discipline (1 Ti. 5:19-20). Blind obedience is not scriptural or godly, but cultic. What I am saying here is that after I have shared my thoughts or concerns with those in authority over me and they decide against my position, I must leave the matter in the Lord’s hands and submit with a right attitude. This is always true unless the pastors are clearly acting contrary to Scripture.

Giving pastors the benefit of the doubt is an important principle. It means that when the pastor’s interpretation or application of Scripture is contrary to mine, I should submit to his position unless it is clear that his cannot be supported by Scripture rightly divided. It means that *as far as possible scripturally* I should support him in his interpretations and decisions.

Oftentimes it is possible to apply different Scriptures to a situation, and in such a situation the leader's application should stand. For example, one time I told one of my Bible college students that since it was common knowledge that he had cheated on a test to gain a tenth grade certificate in the national educational system, he should not try to build on that foundation to get his 11th-12th grade certificate. My thinking was based on the fact that he had gotten the certificate unlawfully, and the law of restitution says that we should try to make things right when we have sinned against men (Lev. 6). Plus I cited Philippians 2:15 and Psalm 15:4 and noted that believers need to demonstrate honesty in a corrupt generation, even to their own hurt.

Some other men in the church disagreed with that decision, quoting Scriptures that say the past is under Christ's blood and that "everyone cheats before he is saved."

All of these Scriptures could be applied, but which one should stand in that particular situation? I believe the Lord will give the senior leader the best wisdom in such matters.

Also, in that situation I was looking at things that others could not see or were not considering, such as this young man's particular situation, his need to focus on his Bible studies rather than looking back, and the overall work of the Lord in the churches we are building and the future of that work. This is a reminder that a church leader often knows things and sees things that the average church member doesn't. This is why the Lord's people should let the Lord lead their pastors and not try to force the pastors to be under the authority of the people unless they are very clearly going astray from God's Word.

I would also suggest that you might not be able to serve with good conscience in every aspect of the church's ministry, but you might still be able to remain a faithful member of the church. I know of members who have quit the music ministry or quit a Sunday School position because of issues that they could not with good conscience support, but

they were able to remain faithful members of the church because it was the best church in their area and they were not in a position to relocate at that time.

3. If you are a man, don't hesitate to approach the pastor if you perceive that something is wrong scripturally.

Not only is it acceptable to “prove all things” (1 Th. 5:21) and to act as a Berean to “search the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11), it is a spiritual duty to do so. God's people are not to be simple or gullible. “The simple believeth every word: but the prudent *man* looketh well to his going” (Pr. 14:15).

The church is a body, and every member has an important function. The edification and protection of the body is a ministry of the entire body. The leaders have a special role in this, but every member is to contribute (“according to the effectual working in the measure of every part,” Eph. 4:11-16).

It has been said that the only thing that good men have to do to allow evil to prosper is to do nothing. That is true in the church. If the men stand idly by and allow the church to go into error, allow it to go down the slippery slope of spiritual compromise without protest, they are guilty before God and will give account for their role in the apostasy, which was their silence.

4. Women must be especially cautious in dealing with pastors.

Nowhere do we see that it is a woman's job to correct pastors. In fact, they are forbidden to teach men.

“But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence” (1 Ti. 2:12).

The only exception to this is when we see a woman working together with her husband in the informal context of the home.

“And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly” (Acts 18:24-26).

Aquila and his wife Priscilla brought Apollos into their home and helped him come to a sound doctrinal stance. The Bible says “they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God,” referring both to Aquila and Priscilla. This is an example of a wife involved in informal teaching of the Bible in the home under her husband’s headship. As a newly saved 23-year-old Christian man, I was helped like this by a godly woman in the first church I joined. She had no authority in the church and had no teaching ministry to men as such, but she and her husband opened their home to young people and created a godly atmosphere for spiritual healing and discipleship. In that context, in casual conversation, she was able to help me and other young men by sharing favorite verses, describing her own experiences with the Lord, and recommending good reading material.

But this is not an example of a woman trying to correct a church leader. Apollos was a new Christian. He was not a church leader.

It is a man’s job to approach church leaders about matters that seem to be wrong.

Oftentimes women have written to me about spiritual matters and have tried to correct me about something they perceive to be wrong, and they will include their husband’s name on the email, but it is the husband who should deal with a preacher about such matters rather than the wife. If the husband is not willing to do this, the wife should keep

silence and pray about the matter before God. This is the principle we see in the following Scripture:

“Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church” (1 Co. 14:34-35).

I don't think it is wrong for a woman to recommend to a pastor or a preacher that he read some report or book or check out some web site, but that is as far as it should go, because she simply is not given permission in Scripture to teach and correct leaders.

5. Be wise in how you approach the pastor about perceived problems or errors.

Always be respectful and kind. If you are upset, wait until you have calmed down and can deal with the matter in a godly way. An elder is not to be rebuked, but is to be entreated as a father (1 Ti. 5:1). This refers to elders in age as well as elders as a ministry position. (An elder, referring to a pastor, is to be rebuked only if he sins and the sin has been proven by witnesses 1 Ti. 5:19-20, and he should be rebuked in that context by proper representatives of the church, such as other elders or the deacons.)

Approach the pastor at the right time. For example, don't try to talk to him just before he is scheduled to preach or just after he preaches or at some other time when he might be distracted. Make an appointment.

Approach the pastor to listen carefully and not only to talk. Approach the conversation with the mindset that you might be wrong about the matter and the willingness to hear another side.

6. Be sure that you are contending for clear Scriptural truth and not for your own preferences and opinions.

If I think that something is wrong in the church, I must ask myself, “Does the Bible plainly say that this is wrong or is this merely something that I personally do not like or agree with?” Many church problems arise because of personality conflicts and self-will and the attempt to exalt personal preference and tradition to the place of Scripture.

Romans 14 speaks to this issue. Here Paul is addressing those things about which the Bible does not speak in this dispensation. The two examples that he gives are dietary rules and holy days. These are things about which the New Testament faith is silent.

Unlike during the Mosaic dispensation, there are no laws in the New Testament about what we are to eat (1 Tim. 4:4-5). Likewise, there are no laws in the New Testament about keeping the sabbath and about maintaining certain holy festivals and special days after the Old Testament fashion.

Since the New Testament does not contain laws on these things, they are areas of Christian liberty. In such things, each believer is free to do as he sees fit before the Lord, but he cannot push his preferences on others and judge others according to his preferences.

The church member who has a problem with something in the church and disagrees with something the leaders are doing needs to ask himself if his thinking on the issue is based on clear Scripture or if it is based merely on his personal preference and human thinking.

7. Guard against allowing a church problem to poison your attitude toward the church as a divine institution.

This is similar to the previous point, but it deserves a separate paragraph. It is not uncommon for someone who discovers a serious and legitimate church problem, especially a sin or error on the part of the pastors, to become embittered against the church as a divine institution. Eventually he or she sees nothing but problems and errors in

churches. Everything is wrong. We must be careful not to allow the devil to do this in our lives, and we resist it by counting the good things as well as the bad and by not forgetting that Christ is the one who established the church and made it the pillar and ground of the truth for this age (Matthew 16:18; 1 Timothy 3:15). Consider Paul's attitude toward the church at Corinth. In spite of its serious errors, he thanked the Lord for them on many points (1 Cor. 1:4-9; 2 Cor. 1:11, 14).

8. Keep your eyes focused on Christ rather than on men.

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2).

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Col. 3:1-4).

Some believers are said to carry permanent “spiritual scars” because of being in churches that are led by pastors that abuse their authority. Others leave church altogether and use this as their excuse. The problem in this is that such folk have their eyes upon and their trust more in men than on Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus will never disappoint us, but men will always disappoint us in one way or the other. Pastors are only imperfect men at their best. They make mistakes. They sin. They can be selfish and partial and shortsighted. They should live up to their calling, of course, but that doesn't always happen.

9. Pray for your church, the pastors, and other church leaders.

“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have *free* course, and be glorified, even as *it is* with

you: And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all *men* have not faith” (2 Thessalonians 3:1-2).

Pray much for your church and for the pastors and other spiritual leaders. Every preacher needs prayer. The apostle Paul constantly asked the people to pray for him. I am convinced that pastoring is the most difficult job in the world, and it cannot be done properly without God’s supernatural supply, and this supply is largely given in answer to prayer.

Effectual prayer does two things. It brings change, because God answers and works through it; and it also helps keep my heart tender toward those for whom I am interceding.

10. If you have a problem or question, go directly to the pastors or to the people involved.

Oftentimes I have discovered that my perception of a matter was wrong or that the information I had received was wrong or that I did not have all of the necessary information. By discussing a matter directly with those concerned right from the beginning, we can avoid coming to wrong conclusions and possibly causing strife over nothing.

11. Follow the “royal law.”

“If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well” (James 2:8).

Christ’s royal law teaches us to treat the church leaders with the same patience, kindness, and mercy by which I would want to be treated if I were in their place.

It is called the “royal law” because it is the law of the King of kings, and it is the law that permeates His kingdom.

12. Don’t forget that pastors have greater authority and greater responsibility in the church.

This bears repeating. It is something that has often helped me personally in my relationship with pastors.

The fact that the pastor has greater authority and responsibility means that pastors must make decisions that the average church member does not make and that they will answer to God for those decisions.

There is a time to leave a church over things that are seriously wrong, but we must also learn to put many things into the hands of the Lord and do what He has told us to do, which is to submit to the church leadership and be a blessing and be fruitful and seek to glorify Christ. Each church member needs to focus on his own part.

Don't confuse your job with that of the pastor. As a non-pastor, you don't have the work of the pastor (visiting the sick, burying the dead, being on call for any need, watching for souls, the care of the church, feeding and protecting the church, bearing the brunt of the devil's attack against the church).

As a non-pastor, you also do not have the responsibility of the pastor. He will give account for more (James 3:1). This has helped me many times when I have not agreed with some decision that the pastors have made. I have laid the matter before the Lord and told the Lord that though I do not agree with this decision, it is not my decision to make and I will leave the matter in His hands and do my part to be a blessing to His church.

Give Full Attention to Your Own Spiritual Life

No matter how strong or weak the church itself might be, the believer's first priority is his or her own Christian life and home.

What I recommend is that each believer focus like a laser on taking everything to a new and much higher level in his or her own spiritual life and home.

It is right to critique the church by God's Word and not to blindly accept what is happening, but the first question I need to ask is what am I doing to build up the church and to make it strong spiritually? How strong is my personal Christian life? My home? Am I perfectly faithful to prayer meetings and evangelistic programs? Do I pray for the church and its leaders earnestly and persistently? Have I rolled up my sleeves and found something to do in the house of God?

Seek a powerful revival in your own life, and that will have a mighty effect on your family and perhaps even your church.

Turn your eyes on Jesus. Set your affection on things above. With the old songwriter, heartily sing,

I'm pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining every day;
Still praying as I onward bound,
'Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.'
Lord, lift me up, and let me stand
By faith on Canaan's tableland;
A higher plane than I have found,
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.

Following are suggestions toward this end:

Free up time for God (Eph. 5:16). Spiritual growth and progress requires freeing up more time for life's most important business. As the old hymn says, it takes time to be holy:

Take time to be holy,
 Speak oft with thy Lord;
Abide in Him always,
 And feed on His Word:
Make friends of God's children,
 Help those who are weak;
Forgetting in nothing
 His blessing to seek.
Take time to be holy,
 The world rushes on;
Spend much time in secret
 With Jesus alone:
By looking to Jesus
 Like Him thou shalt be;
Thy friends in thy conduct
 His likeness shall see.
Take time to be holy,
 Let Him be thy guide,
And run not before Him
 Whatever betide;
In joy or in sorrow
 Still follow thy Lord,
And looking to Jesus,
 Still trust in His Word.
Take time to be holy,
 Be calm in thy soul;
Each thought and each motive
 Beneath His control;
Thus led by His Spirit
 To fountains of love,
Thou soon shalt be fitted
 For service above.

Bible study, prayer, witnessing, loving one's wife, serving one's husband, disciplining and training one's children, and educating oneself in godly things require time. Lots of time. The growing, fruitful Christian is very wise about the use of time.

Fill up your life with God and His business. Have a single eye for the things of God (Mt. 6:22). This means to have only one Master, which is Christ (Mt. 6:24). It means to seek “first” the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Mt. 6:33).

Put away vain activities so you will have time for more important things (e.g., inordinate time spent on social media, video games, novels, inordinate amount of time spent on unprofitable talk - Pr. 14:23, sports). Even wholesome things must be weighed in the balance of God’s perfect will, so that my time is spent in the most profitable way possible. I think of a preacher who grew up near Kruger Wildlife Reserve in South Africa. He absolutely loves the park. It is a wholesome place to visit, and it is God’s amazing creation. But he told me that he has to be careful so that he doesn’t spend too much time there and thus neglect the ministry. This is a wise Christian.

Develop an appetite for the spiritual, for truth and righteousness. It is like weaning away from junk food. If I have a keen appetite for junk food, I won’t have an appetite for wholesome food, and the only way to get a new appetite is to leave off the junk. The same is true in the spiritual life. If I love fiction, I won’t love good doctrinal books. If I love to rush onto the Internet first thing in the day and allow my mind to be captivated by vanity, I won’t love to study the Word of God and meditate on it effectively.

Seek the Lord more passionately. The Christian life is a personal, intimate relationship with God. It is Christ in me (Col. 1:27). The believer is part of Christ’s bride and of His very body (Eph. 5:25-30).

Learn of Him (Mt. 11:28-30). Delight in Him (Psa. 37:4). Seek Him (Pr. 8:17; Jer. 29:13). Abide in Him (Jo. 15:5). Love Him (De. 6:4-5).

Become a more fruitful Bible student. Delight in it and meditate in it day and night (Psa. 1:2). Measure everything by it (1 Th. 5:21). Cast down every wrong imagination (2 Co. 10:5). We suggest the *Effectual Bible Student*, a 12 hour

course on Bible study and Bible interpretation which is available for free from www.wayoflife.org. Carve out enough time in your daily schedule to become a serious Bible student. It is guaranteed to be a life-changing thing. Obtain and use the Bible study tools that we recommend in the *Effectual Bible Student*. Take a serious survey of the Bible, then proceed on to studying other Bible courses to steadily increase your knowledge of Scripture.

Become a more effectual prayer warrior. Nothing is more important in the Christian life than the Bible and prayer. Our course on prayer entitled *An Effectual Prayer Life* is scheduled for publication in August 2017.

Become a more effectual ambassador for Christ. Keep good gospel tracts with you and distribute them as you meet people and use that as a way to try to strike up a conversation about Christ. Keep a contact prayer list and pray for your contacts by name. Follow up on your contacts with phone calls and texts. Participate faithfully and heartily in any organized evangelism program in the church.

If you are a married man, seek and study to be a more effectual husband and father. Study this business and put into practice the things you learn.

If you are a married woman, seek and study to be a more effectual wife and mother.

Pursue holiness more diligently.

Pursue God's will more diligently.

Pursue separation from the world more diligently.

We have published dozens of books and video materials to help God's people in these pursuits, such as the following:

- *Advanced Bible Studies Series* (the equivalent of a Bible Institute education)

- Believer's Bible Dictionary

- Biblical Separation

- The Discipling Church

- The Effectual Bible Student
- Holiness: Pitfalls, Struggles, Victory
- Keeping the Kids: A Family Discipling Course
- The Mobile Phone and the Christian Home and Church
- One-Year Discipleship Course
- Sowing and Reaping: A Course in Evangelism
- Things Hard to Be Understood: A Handbook of Biblical Difficulties
- Unshakeable Faith: A Christian Apologetics Course
- Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible & Christianity

If you are passionately, 100% pursuing Christian growth and spiritual revival, you will have wisdom to make good decisions about church matters. You will have power in prayer to see God change things. You will have a godly spirit rather than a critical spirit. You will bear fruit before the Lord regardless of the condition of the church.

The Issue of Starting a New Church

This is not a simple or easy matter. It is a difficult and dangerous situation not to be in a proper church.

It is dangerous spiritually because God has ordained that Christians be under the authority of duly constituted church leaders (Hebrews 13:7). They are to watch for our souls (Hebrews 13:17). They are to instruct us and protect us from error (Ephesians 4:11-14). They are to have the oversight over us (1 Peter 5:2).

It is not enough to say that Jesus Christ has the rule over my life. The Lord has ordained that God-called men have the rule over me under God. If God has not called me to be a church leader, then I am to be in submission to church leaders. There is no alternative in the will of God, except in certain abnormal situations in which there is no sound church and no possibility of starting one.

A New Testament church is not merely a group of believers meeting together to have a Bible study or to listen to a recorded sermon or an Internet broadcast. These things aren't wrong, assuming the doctrine is sound, but that is not a church. A New Testament church must not only have proper doctrine, but also proper leadership, proper ordinances, and proper organization. The epistles to Timothy and Titus were Paul's instructions on how to form New Testament churches. (See 1 Timothy 3:15; Titus 1:5.) Titus was ministering on the island of Crete and some had been saved. Naturally, these would have been meeting together for fellowship and teaching, but that was not enough. Titus was instructed to "set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city" (Titus 1:5). Some things were lacking, and those things had to do with duly qualified and ordained leadership and the proper organization of the assembly.

Not just anybody can start a church. Not just anybody can lead a church. It is probably the most difficult job in this world. First of all, this work is the work of a man. Second, it is the work of a God-called man. Third, it is the work of a biblically trained man (Titus 1:9). Fourth, it is the work of a qualified man according to God's standards (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1). Fifth, it is the work of a duly ordained man (Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23).

As we have seen, the normal scriptural pattern for church planting is for churches to start churches. That is the pattern that we see in Acts 13-14. The Holy Spirit called two men in the church at Antioch; the church ordained them; and they went out and started new churches in many places. This is the pattern for the entire church age.

If you don't have such a man or men to lead a new church, you can only wait and pray earnestly that such will come to your community. I have no doubt that God has oftentimes sent men in answer to the prayers of godly saints who were discouraged with the existing churches and were beseeching the Lord for a biblically and spiritually strong church. I personally know of such cases.

Conclusion

I can't emphasize enough the role of fervent, effectual prayer in this matter. If I were in a situation where there was no strong church within commuting distance and I could not move, I would attend the best church available and I would make the matter a matter of truly earnest, focused prayer. I would pray together with my wife. I would meet with any other concerned parties and pray about the matter. I would seek prayer partners who would pray with me about this, as Paul often did for situations in his life (e.g., 2 Th. 3:1). I would show fervency in the matter (Jas. 5:16). I would fast and pray one day a week (Mt. 17:21). I would plead with the Lord on the basis of His Word, arguing before Him that He is the One who established the church and He is the one who shows us its importance in Scripture and that my community desperately needs a strong church where souls can be saved and lives changed and marriages built and youth disciplined. I would persist in this business until the Lord answered (Mt. 7:7).

Having acknowledged and even emphasized that there are no perfect churches and that one must sometimes endure things that one considers to be wrong, let me give a warning about staying in a compromised church, and that warning has to do with your family. If you have children and you stay in a compromised, worldly church, you will very likely lose your children either to a worldly form of Christianity ("rock and roll Christianity," as I call it) or entirely to the world, meaning the children will reject Christianity entirely.

The bottom line is this: The church is the body of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27) and the members must be added by the Holy Spirit. You must earnestly pray that God will add you to the church of His choosing, and then be faithful to that church and serve Jesus Christ through it. Put your eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the church, not upon

sinful, frail, imperfect men. Seek to be the most fervent, fruitful Christian you can be.

Ultimately, the individual believer must make these hard decisions with the Lord's guidance.

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6). About Way of Life's eBooks

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.

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

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