

## Commit Yourself To A Church That Boldly Teaches The Bible

You need a church that is both *full Gospel* and *whole counsel!* “Jesus said, ‘Feed my sheep’” (Jn. 21:17), “*being examples to the flock*” (1 Peter 5:3). H.H. Halley said that each church should have a systematic, congregational plan for reading through the entire Bible—the whole counsel of God—and that the pastor’s message should be from the part of the Bible read the past week, thus connecting the pastor’s preaching with the people’s Bible reading. Just know there is still room for the Spirit to highlight what He wants emphasized in that text.

Sheep and shepherds need to check and measure the content of what they are hearing and giving-out in church. Preacher, ask yourself: Are my stories and observations helping to illuminate the Bible passage, or is the Bible there simply to help justify the importance of my stories. We don’t need any more *eisegesis* or *proof-text messages*—that’s a sermon in search of a text. That’s when you’re foolishly reading your own meaning into the text. Ask yourself: Is the Bible my swimming pool, where I spend the most time swimming around, or is it merely my diving board? I don’t like *taken text* messages. That’s where maybe only one verse is read, and the minister makes that verse a point of departure (like a springboard, never to return thereto). Their sermon might even be slightly about that verse. No, let the context interpret the text!

Measure your coverage minister. Ask yourself: If my church were a lawn and my Bible teaching/preaching the fertilizer, would my lawn be turning evenly dark green or would a weird pattern of stripes, checks or burn holes appear? We should be striving to preach the whole Bible in the power of the Spirit—as thoroughly as possible over the course of time. Paul said, “*Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers*” (Acts 20:26-28).

The Word of God is precious seed. Those who have properly received it are born again believers who also become God’s seed, which He scatters around in the World to change nations. This is the kind of ministry that God *sends out* from healthy local churches where the people actually see themselves as priests the way they should.

You need the encouragement and accountability of cool Bible believing friends (church-going Christians that you can identify with)! Don’t be a “church hopping kinda’ seed”—be fruitful! Let God supernaturally plant you in a local expression of His body that gives preeminence in each service to the worship of Jesus Christ and practical Bible teaching! Here’s what God says about Christians that are “**planted in the house of the Lord, they flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age**” (Psalm 92:12-15). Jesus told a story about a farmer once, who went out to sow some seed.

**READ:** LUKE 8:4-15.

**Jesus spoke of the seed of the Word and He tells us how to have a productive life in Him. If you are making a recommitment to Him, you will see why you fell away.**

## Pitfalls To Avoid

- Some seed fell by the wayside (along the path), was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. Jesus tells us the birds represent the devil's minions who steal the Word away before people really believe.
- Some seed fell on rocky ground, representing those who spring up eagerly (with great emotion v. 13) at first, but when trials and temptations come, they fall away because they have no roots.
- Some seed fell among thorns. Jesus says the thorns are the worries, riches and pleasures of this life that grow up with the seed, choking out the fruit of these individual's spiritual lives and witness.

## Rich Soil For God's Seed To Grow In

- Other seed fell on good ground! These people are those who hear the Word and keep it, bearing much fruit with endurance. The yield depends on the condition of the soil where the seed falls.

***IT'S UP TO YOU! YOUR COMMITMENT TO CHRIST IS REFLECTED IN ONE OF THESE FOUR WAYS. LIVE DETERMINED TO BE FRUITFUL SEED. ATTEND A JESUS-EXALTING CHURCH REGULARLY AND GROW IN THE RICH SOIL OF GOD'S LOVE!***

God's Word admonishes us not to forsake "the assembling of ourselves together" (Hebrews 10:25).

Even the Lone Ranger had Tonto. I've heard people use the misnomer; "Lone Ranger Christian," but this is a full-blown oxymoron. God wants to guide you to a Christ-honoring, Bible preaching church (one with expositional teaching, not merely token text sermons).

A heap of hot coals can burn brightly together, but if you put one chunk of coal aside out in the cold world, its fire soon goes out. That's how it is with your relationship to other on-fire Christians. Even though none of us are perfect, we still need each other!

If you don't have a relevant home church that preaches Christ, don't wait to be invited. Take the initiative and call around. Wherever God might lead you in this world geographically, you have the responsibility of seeking out a sound Bible church with a spiritual pastor who walks with Jesus. Make plans to attend regularly.

## THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST CAN'T BE HALF HEARTED!

Suppose you purchased a new midsize car and paid the full price for it in cash. You shook hands with the dealer as he had one of his lot workers go retrieve the car from the detailing garage. You signed

all the contracts and there you are—you're standing there waiting on this guy to pull up in your brand new car.

Then after some minutes here he comes. That lot worker shows up with a large box of mechanical parts for a midsize car. At this point, the dealer gets involved and really chews him out right in front of you, and then the lot worker says to you, *"Oh sorry, I guess I wasn't really paying attention."* So in a flash, he disappears again and some minutes later, that smiley-faced lot guy returns driving a compact car this time. Man, I know what you would probably tell him, *"Hey man, this wasn't part of the deal. I bought the midsize, and I mean the whole car. I paid the full price and I expect the full product!"*

In the same way, Jesus Christ has paid the full price for you and he is entitled to have ownership of the full product. Every area of our lives; not just some of the areas must be His and then remain under His control. He doesn't want any half-baked-potato of a commitment!

There's no room for any misrepresentation in His service. Lordship is a serious matter, because the Lord wants all to come into a righteous relationship with Him. He wants to make sure that the world has a clear picture and pure witness of the Father.

To reiterate, read about how it took two attempts for King David to bring the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem. The lesson for us? **It's imperative to do the will of God His way and in His timing.**

**"Then David and all Israel played music before God with all their might, with singing, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on cymbals, and with trumpets. And when they came to Chidon's threshing floor, Uzza put out his hand to hold the ark, for the oxen stumbled. Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against Uzza, and He struck him because he put his hand to the ark; and he died there before the God."**

**Then David said, 'No one may carry the ark of God but the Levites, for the Lord has chosen them to carry the ark of God and to minister before Him forever.'**

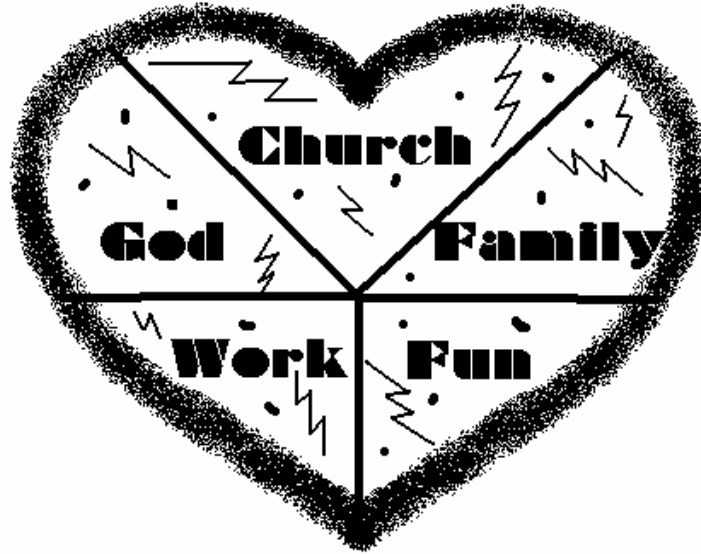
**"For because you did not do it the first time, the Lord our God broke out against us, because we did not consult Him about the proper order. "**

(1 Chronicles 13:9,10; 15:2-15).

**"Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty"**

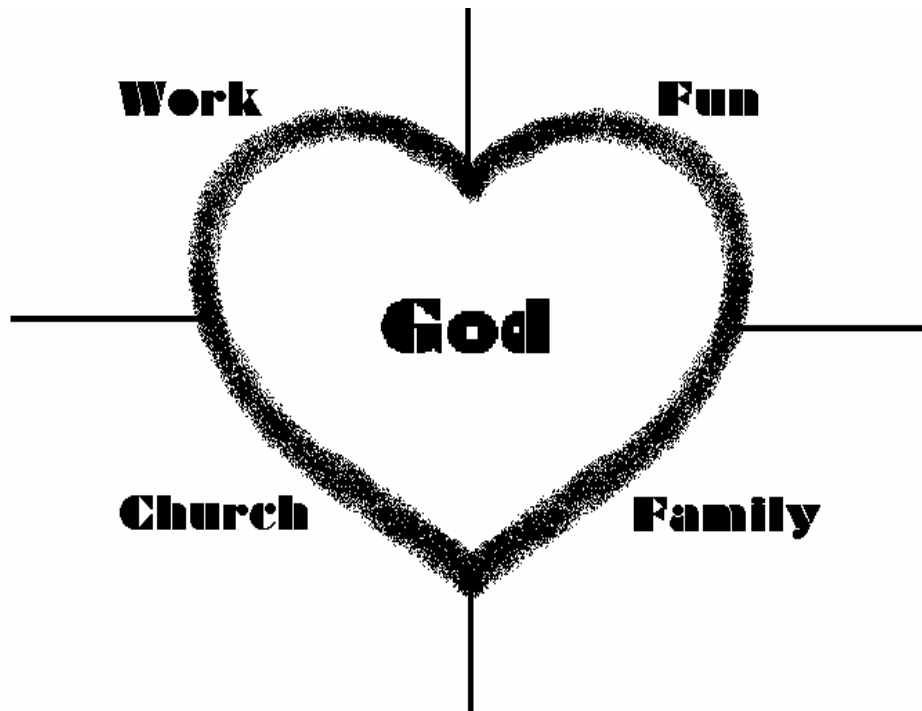
(Hosea 10:2).

*THE DIVIDED HEART HAS CONFUSION AND PROBLEMS*



**"Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart"** (Psalm 119:2).

*THE WHOLE HEART HAS PEACE AND STRENGTH*



**"But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus"** (Philippians 4:19).

**"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).**

Ask yourself, is God a liar or is He sufficient? You know He totally understands our needs: physical, emotional, spiritual, all of them. And as we yield to His control He has promised to supply all! If we are spiritually aggressively, seeking after Him, if we earnestly seek first the kingdom of God (God's rule without rival) in our lives, then one hundred percent of the good stuff we need to better serve God, He will provide. With precise timing too, God will never let you down, because He has always desired a holy people for His own possession.

## **Tend To Your Faith By Aggressively Sowing To The Spirit**

Dual sowing, both to the flesh and to the Spirit is one of the greatest barriers to spiritual maturation here in the western world. Let's zero in on this again. This type of diverse sowing literally makes us apathetic and depressed. This is when the Christian takes in as much (or more) worldly, de-edifying input as they take in of the edifying godly influences.

Both newborn Christians and urban heathen too, can sow to the wind. And I'm not saying that God wants us to have some hyper-strict regiment of "do's and don'ts." But you know what I mean, even too much of a good thing can force out the best thing. For instance, we all know how blessed we are with this technology and information explosion today. But we can get too busy with this stuff to know the Lord like we should.

It takes a lot of time to know the Lord intimately. How can you be best friends with anyone without spending a lot of time with them? The Bible prophesied about this computer age.

**"In the last days knowledge would increase"** (meaning exponential increase). I'm thinking about the countless, highly interesting, million dollar graphics flying at us everyday, it's become harder and harder to turn them all off and go spend a quiet hour with Jesus in His Word. Do you ever feel distracted from a really close walk with Jesus? I had to laugh when a Christian friend of mine moved here to Dallas from New Mexico. He told me, "Man, there is a spirit of busyness on this city." That excessive busyness can rob you from edifying fellowship and witnessing time?

**"They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind"** (Hosea 8:6). Of course we can do nothing to add to our salvation, but God's Word says there are definitely some things we can do to add to our faith **"Add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge..."** (2 Peter 1:5). Pure sowing, to build your faith, is a must if you want to live in a consistently high victory following Jesus!

Every weekend, you can see droves of them out there, fighting their way down the freeways with motor homes, pulling the waverunners by trailer and a motorcycle or two hitched on the front. They've got their beer chests packed and strapped on the top next to the mountain bikes. They are headed to the lake again to find life on the short two days off. There's certainly a lot right about exercise at the lake, but Sunday night as they head on back into the city, angrily honking at the traffic jams all the way, you begin to wonder. They look a little tanner sure, but they still feel so empty. Avoiding Jesus and the church is just sowing to the wind! All that frantic fun in the sun didn't fill that inner void; it just left them longing again.

Now, if you've lived a wild life in the world for the devil, I dare you to live full throttle for Christ, sowing to the Spirit with the same intensity. Go for it even more, committing your life one hundred percent

to the Son of God! Be radically zealous! Be fervent in spirit! Be spiritually aggressive and ravenously hungry for the things of God. Live sold out to Jesus Christ! YES WAY, lock stock and barrel!

I'm not saying there's never a time to watch the tube, but some Christians seem to maintain such a small appetite for The Word of God, prayer, fellowship and witnessing. They can pull off doing some spiritual disciplines for a little while and then the voice of the flesh just cries out so loud that they feel compelled to return to their addiction of media.

Other Christians sow to the Spirit more, perhaps a pretty good quantity, but then they sow to the flesh just as much, listening to their music with gnarly secular lyrics. **"Then said Jesus to His disciples, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me'"** [Matthew 16:24]. This speaks of dying, and doing what you might not feel like doing.

Think of what you would look like if everyday you ate three healthy meals and a can of rat poison? All the healthy intake would be nullified by the unhealthy intake wouldn't it?

The Apostle Paul talked about the conflict of these two natures, *"For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. I find the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin"* [Romans 7:14-25].

**Our Native American Indians friends that have become Christians explained this battle in a unique way. They likened this fight to two dogs within them, always fighting for blood—to the death. *"And the fight never ends as long as you're alive,"* they added. One dog was black, representing the flesh, and one dog was white representing the spirit in you. Here's the deal, they explained, *"The dog you feed the most will win. He'll dominate with strength over the other in the battle, retaining the victory position."***

*Woe, two natures are at war in me, and both of these I can not see,  
One from above and one from below, one I desire to see stay and one I want to go,  
One that builds and one that destroys, one that disturbs and one that joys,  
Yes, inside of me a nature I love and a nature I hate,  
But the one I feed will dominate. –KvS*

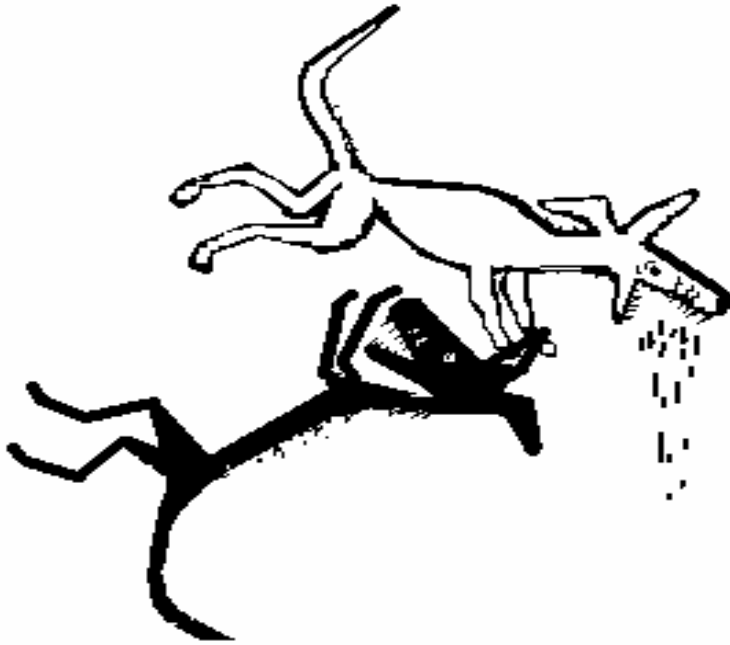
**“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to *its* lusts”** [Rom. 13:14].

Therefore, as a Christian, you want to feed the white dog T-bone steaks regularly and starve the black dog. How does one feed the flesh? What are the rations of the black dog? There's too many to count, but here's a few: Excessively entrancing yourself with entertainment on the tube. It's getting worse! America has been baptized in banal entertainment, perverted movies, filled with horribly foul communication encouraging rebellion. Things that were never allowed over the airways are now in demand. Steamy novels, suggestive love (lust) songs and lewd androgynous looking fashion magazines. Inordinate time spent listening to negative thinkers, those carnal minded people that can pull you down.

## Many Wonder Why They Live In Spiritual Defeat



Man, You Need To Feed The White Dog, And Make The Black One Anorexic!



Have you ever wondered why the Bible calls your spiritual experience a **good fight of faith**? Well, it is a good fight, because we win! Personally, I've never contended in a conflict that I lost, and then went away calling that a good fight!

## Here Are Four Hindrances To Faith:

1. **Sowing to the flesh, instead of walking in the Spirit will hinder your faith.** Among the works of the flesh listed in Galatians 5 are: adultery, fornication, idolatry, hatred, strife, murder, and drunkenness. **"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law"** [Galatians 6:7,8]. Now which to do you want and how much do you want? Jesus got up early to seek the Father. He didn't mess around when it came to edifying His inner man, but how about you?
2. **Neglecting your relationship with the Holy Spirit will hinder your faith.** **"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting"** [Galatians 6:7,8].
  1. Use it or lose it. We need to exercise our faith muscles so they will develop not atrophy. **"Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully"** (2 Corinthians 9:6).
  3. **Indifference to the promises found in God's Word will hinder your faith.** Is there a day in the past that you enjoyed reading the Bible more than you love it now? If so you are in danger of backsliding and making shipwreck your faith, **"Therefore we ought to give the most earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip"** (Hebrews 2:1).
  4. **Disobedience to the commands of faith that God has already given you will hinder your faith.** God wants to stretch us all when it comes to doing his will, because if we could do it easily on our own then we could say that we did it. But as we live in dependence upon the Spirit of God and do the directives that are beyond us, guess who gets the glory. That's right, God! Remember that "obedience in faith" is what this walk is all about. How can we expect God to give us any new assignment when we haven't carried out the ones He's already given us? Some mature fast, others slow. It's their choice. Some people can get 20 years of maturity out of 20 years of life and others one year of maturity out of 20 years of life, 20 times. The maturity test comes, when we've heard an authoritative command. The amount of time it takes us between hearing it and doing it is in direct correlation to how spiritually mature we are, and it's to that degree exactly. One must do what God shows him to do. **"Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead"** (James 2:17).

## Fellowship With Growing Saints In A Healthy Church With A Saved Spiritual Pastor

Snowflakes are very frail and vulnerable. You can stomp on them, crush them and melt them with one breath. But if enough of them stick together they can stop traffic on a large highway.

We need to stick together and have fellowship one with another in order to stop the enemy's traffic. The word fellowship means *"a joint participation of things held in common by both."* In Hebrews 10:24-25, it says:

***"Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more, as you see the day drawing near"***<sup>(NAS)</sup>.

**READ:** ACTS 2:42-47, EPHESIANS 5:2,19,30, HEBREWS 3:13, 1 PETER 3:8  
AND 1 JOHN 4:7

Be challenged to enlarge your circle of love to take in all people no matter their color, religion or background, until no one in the whole wide world is left outside! Be audio/visual representatives for God in witnessing to them (verbally and non-verbally) in a consistent manner.

There are different levels of friendship of course. Jesus sent out the seventy, He trained the twelve, then there were the three, Peter, James and John who received special instruction. Then closest of all found in His inner circle, was the one who rested his head on Jesus' heart, John the beloved. I call these concentric circles of Christ's concern.

At every level though, we all should show genuine concern for all, praying hard for our friends. You see, it's about choices. Whether you realize it or not, you are currently the sum total of the choices you've made up to this point. And daily, you choose how close you'll be in your relationship to Jesus and you choose how you'll represent Him every moment. The Lord doesn't play favorites—He never has. We Christians may have different ranks in the army of God, but He loves us all the same and values us all the same.

It's just normal for us to have different types of friends. And they will all require different amounts of our time and attention as we rightly prioritize these relationships according to God's order. But don't let anyone into your close circle of friendship that's not more on fire for Jesus than you yourself, (or at least they're really desiring to be). Gently but surely remove those who have, even after wise admonitions and tactful warnings from you, become carnal, worldly, lukewarm, backslidden, apathetic, mean-spirited or critical. I'm not talking about occasional slip-ups like we all make. I'm talking about those who have made a conscience choice to live with one foot in the Kingdom and one foot out, those with one foot in the church and one in the world.