

When Jesus Said, "GO"

My own memories of church. I remember going to church EVERY SUNDAY. The place was Grace Protestant Church, on 92<sup>nd</sup> street in Canarsie. I remember The church bell, which was rung by Uncle Henry reminding everyone on the block that it was time for church. I remember that after school, the boys attended wood shop in Pastor Watt's basement. I remember flying paper airplanes in the "fellowship hall" after church on Sunday night, waiting for dad to get out of his "board meeting."

I never struggled with going to church. I loved church. Our 3 children asked for many things that they knew they would never get. But they never complained about going to church. Today, our children and their spouses all love their church and are actively involved.

But for many others, the church has fallen under hard times.

Some are saying, The church won't survive.

Reggie McNeal: *"Unless the church in North America makes big changes we are facing "sure death"*

Neil Cole: *"American Christianity is dying. Our future is in serious jeopardy. We are deathly ill and don't even know it."*

George Barna: *"If the local church is the hope of the world, then the world has no hope."*

*"Local churches have virtually no influence in our culture.. The church appears among entities that have little or no influence on society."*

Or consider the book titles on the shelves of Christian book stores: *Life After Church, Divine Nobodies, Dear Church, Quitting Church, So You Don't Want to Go to Church Anymore, Pagan Christianity, They Like Jesus but Not the Church,*

Or consider just some of the titles of books by Emergent church leader Brian McLaren: *The New Kind of Christian, Finding our Way Again, Everything Must Change.*

Today, the family of Faith Bible Church will pledge a significant portion of our resources for a building for the CHURCH. So far, 28 pledges have been made, averaging more than \$8500 per pledge! That's a powerful commitment to the future of our church!

WHAT DOES GOD HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THE CHURCH?

The word used for Church is the word ekklesia. It is used 112x in 109 verses Most simply, it means an assembly. It is used of the Universal church (Matt 16:18) and the local church (Acts 13:1, Epistles, Churches in Revelation 1-3, etc.)

Jesus gave His GREAT COMMISSION to the disciples, after his resurrection. He told them to GO into the world. When He did, He was speaking about the CHURCH.

I. The BEGINNING of the Church

- A. TIMING of Matthew 28:19 *Therefore GO and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name ...*
  - 1. Not until after his death and resurrection
  - 2. His work was complete!
  - 3. *"When Jesus' work on earth was done, the churches work had just begun!"*
- B. He said, *"wait in Jerusalem"* (Acts 1:4-5)
- C. He said *"all power..."* (Acts 1:8)
- D. What happened next? The CHURCH (Acts 2:1-2)
- E. THE RESPONSE. Acts 2:41-42

II. The PROGRESS of the church

- A. Jerusalem/ Judea
- B. Samaria. Acts 8:14 *"when the apostles in Jerusalem heard..."*
- C. Gentiles. Acts 10:44-47 (Peter is there)
- D. Persecution spreads the message into ANTIOCH. Acts 11:22 *news of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem..."*
- E. ANTIOCH. The first truly GENTILE CHURCH. Acts 13:1-2
- F. The NEW Gentile churches (Acts 13-14)
- G. NOTICE PAUL and BARNABAS Acts 14:21-22
  - 1. Returned to the churches
  - 2. Appointed Elders
  - 3. Committed them to the Lord
  - 4. Reported back to Antioch (Acts 14:27)
- H. Where did these churches meet?
  - 1. Homes. Some homes were large enough for an assembly of up to 100 people (DeYoung, "Why We Love the Church, 120)
    - a. They met in homes because there was NO WHERE ELSE TO MEET.
    - b. Christianity was oppressed. Just beginning.
    - c. Buildings can be good or bad.
    - d. *"They didn't meet in homes in an effort to start the world's first nonreligious religion"* (DeYoung, 120)
  - 2. Solomon's colonnade. Acts 5:12 (NIV) *The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade.*
  - 3. Hall of Tyrannus Acts 19:9 (NIV) *He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus.*

4. Synagogue (James 2:2)

III. The ESSENTIALS of the church

- A. The Preaching of the Gospel. Galatians 1:9 (NIV) *As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!*
- B. Teaching that produces mature disciples. Mat 28:19-20
- C. Ministry through Spiritual Gifts. Romans 12:5–6 (NIV) *so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.<sup>6</sup> We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.*
- D. Faithful administration of the ordinances.
- E. God centered worship.
- F. Willing Followers. Hebrews 13:17 (NIV) *Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.*
- G. Godly Elders properly appointed.
  - 1. Titus 1:5 (NIV) *The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.*
  - 2. 1 Peter 5:2–3 (NIV) *Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; 3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.*
- H. *There are churches that meet in homes, but meeting in a home does not make you a church*
- I. *There are people that meet in buildings we call "churches," but meeting in a building with a steeple does not make you a church.*

IV. The CHALLENGES to the Church (Where God establishes TRUTH, Satan introduces a LIE)

- A. There is no church (Harold Camping)
- B. I don't need the church (disillusioned Christians. This is fueled by the spirit of rebellion, self centeredness, and individualism of our day)

1. Sometimes LONE RANGERS
  2. Sometimes PRIVATE HOUSE CHURCH. (*“organic church”*)
- C. Illus from Kevin DeYoung
1. Foundation without a BUILDING
  2. HEAD without a BODY
  3. GROOM without a BRIDE
- D. The internet is my church
1. (David Crowder)
  2. Virtual churches
- E. Dating the Church (smorgasbord Christianity - internet, multiple churches, “SERVE ME” mentality)
- V. The FUTURE of the Church
- A. Why are these difficult days for the church? DISILLUSIONED!
- B. YOU SAY *“There are too many sinners in the church”*
1. WHAT DID YOU EXPECT TO FIND?
  2. Isn't that why we are here?
  3. 1 Cor 6:9-11
- C. YOU SAY *“there are too many hypocrites in the church”*
1. Isn't that because we DO KNOW that we are to expect something different!
  2. Have you ever heard anyone say, “there are too many hypocrites in my office? On the police force? My bowling team???”
- D. Perhaps you are discouraged because of an ANNOYING person.  
*Did you ever think that they are in the church so that God might demonstrate patience in you?*
- E. Perhaps you are disillusioned because someone is always STRUGGLING  
*Did you ever think that they might be in the church so that God might demonstrate His strength in you?*
- F. Perhaps you are frustrated because of the person who is a TAKER  
*Did you ever think that they are in the church so that God might test you and provide the opportunity for you to be a GIVER?*
- G. Yes, there are STRANGE people in ever church!
1. Some are critical.
  2. Some are needy.

3. Some are in a constant financial struggle.
  4. Some are even somewhere on the OTHER SIDE of NORMAL!
  5. And don't be too critical, it just might be YOU!
- H. So there are no PERFECT churches.
1. Only ones that Jesus DIED FOR
  2. Only ones that Jesus LOVES
  3. Only ones that Jesus entrusted to carry HIS GOSPEL to the ends of the earth..
  4. Only ones that Jesus NOURISHES and CHERISHES (Eph 5)
  5. Only ones for whom Jesus has promised to BUILD MANSIONS in HEAVEN
  6. Only ones that will be RAPTURED INTO HEAVEN by Jesus when He comes!
- I. When JESUS SAID GO, he said it to His CHURCH
1. It is HIS PLAN
  2. HIS BRIDE
  3. HIS BODY
  4. HIS BUILDING
  5. HIS FIELD
  6. and if you have trusted Jesus as your Savior, you are a PART OF IT.
- J. He also said “I will not eat of this passover again with you until I eat it with you in my Father’s Kingdom” (Matthew 26:29)
- K. EVANGELISM and MISSIONS will continue through LOCAL CHURCHES until Jesus comes!
- L. Kevin DeYoung, Ted Kluck “Why We Love the Church...”
1. We want the Foundation without the Building
  2. We want the HEAD without the Body
  3. We want the GROOM without the Bride
- M. His church is worthy of your love, your service, your treasure, your attention, your patience, your commitment.
- N. By God's grace, THIS LOCAL CHURCH will continue to serve Him, along with all who call on Jesus. honor His Lordship and submit to His word . ... Until He Comes Again!