

Religion Vs. Relationship

By: Orean Brown

Many people today disparage “organized religion.” Instead, they simply desire a “personal relationship” with the Lord. However, this is not an “either-or” proposition. In our service to God, we have personal and corporate responsibilities. Notice what Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus: “*And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ ... from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love*” (**Ephesians 4:11-12, 16**). In the same chapter, Paul spoke of personal responsibilities (laying aside the old self and putting on the new self) and corporate responsibilities (being a functioning part of a self-edifying body). Clearly, both are involved in the life of a Christian. **In this article, we will discuss these responsibilities and notice what the real problem is with “organized religion.”** Brethren religion must be personal. Simply being recognized as a member of a congregation does not mean we are saved. Jesus described the kingdom of heaven as a field in which tares would grow among the wheat (**Matthew 13:24-30**). They would be left together until the harvest, then the tares would be gathered up and destroyed. The point we should learn from the parable is that not all who are recognized by men as being in the Lord’s kingdom will be saved in the end – some will be lost. The church in Sardis had “a few” who were “worthy” to walk with the Lord, even though the church as a whole was “dead” (**Revelation 3:1-4**). They had a reputation for faithfulness, yet many of them – despite being members of that local church – were spiritually

dead. We are individually accountable before the Lord. Paul wrote, “*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad*” (**II Corinthians 5:10**). Therefore, we must honestly examine our lives (**II Corinthians 13:5**) and discipline our bodies to keep from becoming disqualified from the reward of heaven (**I Corinthians 9:27**). Regardless of what others do or fail to do, we must do what we should. James wrote, “*Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world*” (**James 1:27**). The principle behind James’ instruction is that we must do good to others and avoid sin. This is our personal responsibility. Brethren religion must have a corporate element. Corporate means “of, relating to, or formed into a unified body of individuals” (Merriam-Webster). As it pertains to the New Testament, this means that our religion must include being part of a local congregation. While it is true that we are individually accountable, that does not mean that we are to be isolated. We have a responsibility to be part of a local body of Christians. This is why Saul tried “*to join himself to the disciples*” when he came to Jerusalem (**Acts 9:26**). Being part of a local church is for our mutual benefit as we can “encourage one another” and “stimulate one another to love and good deeds” (**Hebrews 3:12-13; 10:24-25**). In the local church, we are able to build up one another (**Ephesians 4:16**). There are also certain things we must do together as a local church: **Worship** – Luke wrote that the church in Troas “gathered together to break bread” and hear a message from Paul (**Acts 20:7**). Paul told the

brethren in Colossae to teach one another in song (**Colossians 3:16**). Togetherness is essential for these activities. **Giving** – Regarding the collection, Paul wrote, “*On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper*” (**I Corinthians 16:2**). Why was this done on the first day of the week? That was when the church assembled (**I Corinthians 11:33; Acts 20:7**). **Teaching** – Within the church, there are “evangelists ... pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints” (**Ephesians 4:11-12**). This equipping would primarily be done through teaching – a work that all of these would share in common. **Encouraging** – The Hebrew writer said, “*And 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*” (**Hebrews 10:24-25**). Giving and receiving encouragement necessarily requires togetherness. These things cannot properly be accomplished when one is not part of a local body of Christians. Therefore, we must be part of a group that has “organized” as a congregation of the Lord’s people. So, What’s the Problem? **False religion** – Often when people attack “organized religion,” it is not the Lord’s church that they are targeting. They falsely think that one church is the same as the other. You see the world does not make a distinction between them. Therefore, the problems that exist in man-made churches are projected onto the Lord’s church. To combat this, we need to be able to show the difference between the Lord’s church and all others. **Wrong Expectations** – many people have

the wrong expectations. There are many things that people have come to expect from churches today – social activities, political advocacy, general charity, secular education, and so on. Because of this, they judge churches based on those man-made expectations. However, these types of things are not what the Lord wants His church to do. The church is “*the pillar and support of the truth*” (**I Timothy 3:15**). **Imperfect people** – Christians are to be different from the world, but no one is perfectly sinless. John wrote, “*If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us*” (**I John 1:8**). Sometimes people attack the church because of the people within the church. We need to strive to give “*no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited*” (**II Corinthians 6:3**). While we must strive to keep from sin and be the example to others that we ought to be, we also need to make it clear that the church is for those who are imperfect. The solution to these problems is not to abandon any sense of “organized religion.” This only creates a new problem. The solution is to dedicate ourselves – individually and within our local churches – to carefully following what the Lord has instructed. In conclusion as we have noticed in this article, we have certain responsibilities as individuals in our service to the Lord. We also have responsibilities collectively within our local churches. Organized religion is good when it is the organization the Lord established – His church (**Matthew 16:18**) – functioning according to His will (**Ephesians 5:23-24**).

No One Came

Selected Article

Suppose you planned a community party. You invited all of your friends and neighbors to come and enjoy an afternoon of food and fun. On the week of the party, you began to prepare by cleaning the house and the yard. You rented tables and chairs, even a big portable awning so your guest would be comfortable in the shade. You cleaned the ice chest and grill, then headed off to the store to pick up the food and supplies. On the day of the party, you got up early and began to get ready for your guest to arrive. You’ve got meat on the grill, made plenty of iced tea, and all the side dishes. You’ve set up the sound system for music and placed the yard games out. You’ve worked hard and now everything is ready and your guest should begin arriving at any minute. But then, your phone begins to light up with messages from your guests who begin making excuses to why they won’t be coming to your party. As time for the event to begin comes and goes, no

guest arrive with the exception of a couple of elderly neighbors who sit quietly sipping their iced tea. “No one came,” you say to yourself as you think about all of the time, preparation and cost that went into the party that wasn’t. How would you feel? Each and every week our bible class teachers and preachers work diligently preparing lessons, visuals, class material, and devotionals for you and your family’s spiritual benefit. If you choose without reason not to attend church services, they are disappointed and can become discouraged. Jesus told a similar story of a man who prepared a great supper, yet when it came time for the feast, the guest began to make excuses as to why they could not come. (Luke 16:14-24) So the next time you decide that it’s not important or that you won’t be missed at the next church service, think about that person who has spent considerable time preparing spiritual nourishment just for you!

Upcoming Events

TODAY: Youth devo after evening worship services at the home of Ron and Mary Jo White. Boys bring drinks, girls bring desserts.

Fri March 31: Game night at the building 6:30pm

Area Events (More info on the bulletin board in the hallway):

April 16-19: Spring Gospel meeting at Schertz church of Christ.

Prayer List

Prayer Requests:

The Family of Pat Atkinson. Funeral services begin at 10am here at the building.

Ken & Nancy Dorries granddaughter Hadley.

Sterlin Graham, friend of Jack Jobes, who was in a 4-wheeler accident.

Members

Jeff Cannady, Les Daltry, Kin and Sandra Marie, Ann Pantel, Veronica Serenil, Clark Withers, Dee Gilpatrick.

Service Roster

Week of March 12, 2023

Sunday Morning
Scripture Reading.....Jack Jobes
Song Leader.....Rick Bass

Opening Prayer.....Ken Dorries
Closing Prayer.....Steve Randle

Lord's Supper & Offering
Bread..... Doug Jobes
Cup.....James Cammock
Offering.....Jeff Cannady
Assist.....Mike Atkinson
Assist.....Jake Jacobs
Assist.....Luke FitzSimmons

Sunday Evening
Song Leader..... Doug Jobes

Opening Prayer..... Will Burleson
Closing Prayer..... Clifton Rutherford

Lord's Supper & Offering.....Kirk FitzSimmons/
Will Burleson

Wednesday Evening
Adult Class..... Brandon Starling
Song Leader.....Ken Dorries
Devotional.....Bryant Siegel

Other
Prepare Communion.....

Congregational News

Birthdays
Manny Flonnory.....Mar. 20
Billy York.....Mar. 23

Anniversaries
Jeff & Kelly Cannady.....Mar. 12

Food Helpers for the month of Mar. - Team A.

If you have any prayer requests or upcoming events to be announced, please contact our secretary, Nina Siegel, at (361) 573-0030 or email office.midtownchurch@gmail.com

There will be an additional class beginning TODAY in the old auditorium. Fundamentals of the Faith will be taught by James Cammock.

Evangelism Table

Our evangelism table is back up and running! It is located in the main entrance of the church building. The main purpose of the table is to provide us with tools to effectively conduct personal Bible studies. Over the next few weeks a brief summary of each tool will be included in the weekly bulletin. Please feel free to check it out and to see James Cammock if you have any questions.

Our Elders

Mark FitzSimmons
Ron White

Our Deacons

James Cammock—Evangelism
Lupe Escojido— Benevolence
Bryant Siegel—Education and Finance

Our Preacher

Brandon Starling

Weekly Reading

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word
was with God, and the Word was God.”
John 1:1

Service Times

Sunday Morning Bible Class.....9:00 A.M.
Sunday Morning Worship.....10:00 A.M.
Sunday Evening Worship.....5:00 P.M.
Wednesday Bible Class.....7:00 P.M.

Attendance Records

Week of March 5, 2023

A.M. Bible Class.....76
A.M. Worship.....102
P.M. Worship.....65
Wednesday Bible Class.....74

*Financial information is located on the bulletin
board in the hallway.*

Supported Works

John & Carla Moore *Bible Land Passages*

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