

Why can I not be a member of THAT church?

That church has some nice, friendly people in it. They do a lot of good things. They believe in God and Jesus and read the Bible. They have a nice building, several worship services, and a number of activities. Why can I not be a member of that church? What difference does it make as long as I am going to a good church?

2021, Mar 14 – May 30 (Sundays)
Auditorium class - all ages in class

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Will of God / Truth versus ...

1. **Mark 7:1-9,13** - Would you participate in all the things they do to worship God in that church? If not, why not?
2. **Col 2:20-23** - Would you have a problem with being a member of a church that had these “decrees” (NASB) (“regulations” NKJV; “rules” NIV), and IF so, why? See **2:8-10**.
3. **Acts 17:1-5** - Is the church of **1Th 1:1** the same church as the one in **Ac 17:1**? If *not*, why was this new one started? Note **1Th 2:13-16**; **2Th 2:15**.
4. **1Co 4:16-17**; **1Co 7:17,40**; **1Co 14:37-38** - Let’s say someone in the 1st century did not like what was taught in the Corinthian church on marriage and divorce (**1Co 7**), or on charismatic gifts and order in the assembly (**1Co 14**), could he go to the Ephesian church or the Thessalonian church and expect the teaching to be different? If not, why not?
5. **Gal 1:6-10** - Is it ever “Christian” to criticize what is being taught in a church? Why?
6. **2Tim 1:13 (1Tim 1:3)** - What does this “standard” (NASB) or “pattern” (NKJV, ESV) include teaching about in the Ephesian church...?
 - a. **1Tim 2:11-12**
 - b. **1Tim 3:1-4**
 - c. **1 Tim 5:16**
7. **2Jn 1:9-11** - John indicated one might find himself participating in evil by being a member of a particular church—how? (Be sure and note the context from **v4f.**)
8. **Rev 2:12-17**; **Rev 2:18-25** - What are the dangers of being a member of either of these churches?
9. **Rev 3:1-5** - Would being a member of this church insure one’s name was in the book of life (**v5**) - or - vice versa? What would make the difference?

God

Can I be member of THAT church? A very important consideration is what they teach about God. Is it the TRUTH about the true God? If not, the religion that church practices is built on a fantasy.

1. **Gen 1:1; Ex 3:14; Dt 6:4,13-14; Psalms 90:2; Isa 44:6-8; 45:4-7, 17-18; 1Co 8:5-6** - Sum up what these scriptures say about God.
2. **Eph 2:4-5; Heb 4:14-16** - What do these verses say about the nature of this God?
3. **Mt 28:19; Rom 15:30; 2Co 13:14** - How many persons, and who are they, that are spoken of as equals, deserving of respect and worship as God?
4. **Mk 12:28-30; Rom 1:18-20; Ac 17:24,27-30** - To this God, and to no other, men owe ultimate reverence and obedience.

We will consider the contrast between this God and the God/gods of various religions or churches—for example ...

- New Age
- Hindu
- Unitarian Universalist
- Church of Jesus Christ of latter Day Saints (Mormon)
- Jehovah Witnesses
- Oneness Pentecostal

If there is one of these churches in your vicinity, in view of what they believe and teach about God, *can you be a member of THAT church?*

Question for parents: Do your children know these things about God, and are they aware of the different views of other churches, or religions?

Jesus Christ

Can I be member of THAT church? Is what they believe and teach about Jesus Christ the TRUTH? Jesus said, “If you continue in my word, then you are truly disciples of mine; and you will know the TRUTH, and the TRUTH will make you free.” **Jn 8:31-32**. It is critical that we know and believe the *truth* about Jesus, for He said it is the TRUTH about him that will set us free from the bondage of sin.

1. **Isa 9:6** - What terms are used to describe the Messiah (Jesus Christ) here?
2. **Isa 40:3-5** - What term is used to describe the Messiah (Jesus Christ) here?
3. **Jn 1:1-3,14** - Who is the “Word” and what is His nature?
4. **Jn. 8:23-24** - What does Jesus claim about himself here?
5. **Jn 8:56-58** - What does Jesus statements here imply about his existence and nature?
6. **Jn 6:26-40** - Contrast this Jesus with the “Jesus” of the social gospel.
7. **Jn 5:24-29; 11:25-26** - What does Jesus say he has the power to give, and to whom?
8. **Ac 1:10-11; 1Th 1:10** - What is affirmed about Jesus in these scriptures?

We will consider the contrast between the Jesus Christ of the historical records, the gospels, and the “Jesus Christ” taught by various religions or churches—for example ...

- New Age
- Hindu
- Unitarian Universalist
- Church of Jesus Christ of latter Day Saints (Mormon)
- Jehovah Witnesses
- Oneness Pentecostal

If there is one of these churches in your vicinity, in view of what they believe and teach about Jesus Christ, *can you be a member of THAT church?*

Question for parents: Do your children know these things about Jesus Christ, and are they aware of the different views of other churches, or religions?

Holy Spirit

Can I be member of THAT church? How important is teaching about the Holy Spirit, his nature and person, and his work in our salvation? If a church defamed the Father or the Son and undermined their work in our salvation, could you support that church? If a church defames the Holy Spirit and undermines His work in our salvation, could you support that church?

1. **Jn 16:13; Rom 15:30; 1Co 12:11** - What actions in these Scriptures indicate the Holy Spirit is a rational being?
2. How do the following Scriptures show that the Holy Spirit possesses Deity, or Godhood?
 - a. **Gen 1:2**
 - b. **Mt 28:19; Rom 15:30; 2Co 13:14**
 - c. **Ac 5:3...4**
 - d. **1Co 12:7-11**
3. **Jn 16:8,13-14** - How does the Holy Spirit convict men of their error and bring them to know the truth about Jesus (note who the “you” is in the text, e.g. **14:26; 15:27; 16:2,4**) - [k](#)
4. **Eph 6:17; Heb 3:7; 2Pt 1:19-21** - How does the Holy Spirit influence men to live righteously?.
5. **Ac 1:1-8** - Who was promised baptism in the Holy Spirit and for what purpose?
6. Did being “filled with Spirit” result in speaking in tongues or uncontrollable emotional display in either of these passages? If not, what did it result in?
 - a. **Lk 1:67** -
 - b. **Eph 5:18** (see **Col 3:16**) -
 - c. Do you know of *any* passage in the New Testament where being “filled with the Spirit” resulted in uncontrollable emotional display?
7. **Eph 2:22; 3:17; 5:18** - Who is said to “dwell” in the Christian? Does *either one of these* literally enter the human body and abide there?
8. **Ac 8:12-18** - How was the power of the Holy Spirit given to people?

We will consider the contrast between the Holy Spirit of the Scriptures, and the “Holy Spirit” taught by various religions or churches—for example ...

- Roman Catholicism
- Calvinistic churches
- Charismatic churches
- Church of Jesus Christ of latter Day Saints (Mormon)
- Jehovah Witnesses
- Oneness Pentecostal

If there is one of these churches in your vicinity, in view of what they believe and teach about Holy Spirit, *can you be a member of THAT church?*

Question for parents: Do your children know these things about the Holy Spirit, and are they aware of the different views of other churches, or religions?

Bible

“Bible” means “book.” We call the collection of 66 books beginning with Genesis and going through Revelation, “The Book,” or The Bible. It is The Book among books, with no equal. In the Bible, the books that comprise it are called “Scriptures.” “Scripture” refers to what is written. “Of making many books, there is no end” (Ecc 12:12), and, indeed, we cannot know all that has been written or will be written, but of all these, it is The “Scriptures” contained in the Bible that serves as a solid foundation for faith and life, for all people, for all time. Churches may give some attention and even propose to honor the Bible, when in fact they undermine its completeness, sufficiency, accuracy, and authority.

1. **Mt 23:2** - If you were a Jew in the first century and went to church on Saturday, who might you hear teaching and from what would they be teaching?
 - a. **Mk 7:1-13** - In practice, what did Jesus say they did? (**vv8,9,13**)
 - b. **Mt 15:12** - How did the Pharisees react to Jesus’ criticism?
 - c. **Mt 15:13-14** - What was Jesus’ response?
2. **Mt 22:23-28** - The Sadducees used Scripture to uphold their belief in arguing with Jesus. What was this core belief they held? (**v23; Ac 23:8**)
 - a. What did Jesus say their problem was? **Mt 22:29-30**
 - b. To what did He direct them for a correct view? **Mt 22:29,31-32**.
3. The Scripture quotes in **Ac 1:20** are attributed to what three sources? **Ac 1:16,20**
4. **2Pe 1:20-21; 1Co 2:10-13** - What do these Scriptures affirm about how they are written?
5. **2Th 2:2** - The false message disturbing the Thessalonians was based on what?
 - a. What did he tell them to rely on? **2Th 2:15**
 - b. What is the purpose of the statement in **2Th 3:17**? **s**
6. **Gal 1:6-12** - What did Paul say about those who preached a gospel different from what have been revealed and confirmed?
7. **Jn 16:13** - To whom was the promise made? See **14:26; 15:27; 16:1-2,4-6,12**.

Question for thought: If you make a promise to a specific man or woman to be their mate for life, and someone else claimed your mate owed them their life’s devotion, how would you feel about that?

We will consider the contrast what has been said in the Bible about the Scriptures, how to revere and treat them, and the teachings of various religions or churches—for example ...

- Roman Catholicism
- Calvinistic churches
- Church of Jesus Christ of latter Day Saints (Mormon)
- Jehovah Witnesses
- Seventh Day Adventists

If there is one of these churches in your vicinity, in view of what they believe and teach about the Bible, *can you be a member of THAT church?*

Question for parents: Do your children know these things about the Scriptures, and are they aware of the different views of other churches, or religions?

Who saved

Is everyone saved? Are babies *born in sin*? Are *only those elected by God before and without any choice of the individual* the only ones who will be saved? Or, is salvation *offered to all, but made conditional* on a person's response to the gospel?

1. Who will NOT be saved? **Rom 3:23; Jn 8:21,24; 1Co 6:9-11; 2Pe 2:1,20-22**

2. **Mk 16:15-16**

- a. Who was the gospel to preached to and for what purpose?
- b. Do you know of *any* cases in the New Testament of the gospel being preached to children and children being baptized? Why not?
- c. What will happen to those who do not believe the gospel?

3. **Ac 2:14,21-23,36-41,47**

- a. Who did Peter preach to and for what purpose?
- b. What method did Peter use to accomplish this?
- c. Who were baptized? **v41**
- d. Those baptized were “added” to what group? **v41...47**

4. **Lk 16:19-31**

- a. After death, what is the destiny of man? (two choices)
- b. What does the man in torment request but is denied?
- c. If this man's brothers are going to be saved from torment, what must they do?
- d. **Heb 9:27** - what comes after death?

We will consider the contrast what has been said in the Bible about who is lost and who can be save, and compare that with the teachings of various religions or churches—for example ...

- Universalism
- Roman Catholicism
- Calvinistic churches
- Church of Jesus Christ of latter Day Saints (Mormon)
- Jehovah Witnesses

If there is one of these churches in your vicinity, in view of what they believe and teach about the Bible, *can you be a member of THAT church?*

Question for parents: Do your children know some churches teach they were born in sin, and may have NO opportunity to be saved, or that *everyone* will be saved regardless of how they lived?

How saved

In our last class we looked at *who* can be saved. In this study, we consider, *how* are they saved? What does THAT church teach?

1. Sum up from the following scriptures why *what* one believes and practices relative to his/her relationship with God is important? **Ac 22:3; 26:5,9 23:1; 24:16; 24:16; Pro 14:12**
2. **Mk 16:16** - How did Jesus say men are saved?
3. The record of the first 30 years of church history provides examples of how men were saved during that period.
 - a. **Ac 2:14,22,36-41,47**
 - What did these people experience that led them to salvation?
 - What were they told they had to do to be saved?
 - b. **Ac 8:35-39**
 - What led this man to salvation?
 - What was required of him to be saved?
 - c. **Ac 16:25-34**
 - When this man asked “What must I do to be saved?” he was told he must “Believe,” but before he could do even that what had to take place? (v32) **A.**
 - After hearing what was taught to him, what did he do, and when did he do it?
 - *After* doing all this, he “rejoiced greatly”—how does Luke describe what he had done? (v34).
4. 22 letters follow the book of Acts, written to people who have been saved.
 - a. What are they warned about? **2Pe 2:1-3...9-10...20-22; 3:18**
 - b. What are they strongly encouraged to do to be saved? **Col 1:22-23; Heb 3:6; Rev 2:10**

We will consider the contrast what has been said in the Bible about how people are saved, and compare that with the teachings of various religions or churches—for example ...

- Roman Catholicism
- Presbyterian churches
- Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, and other churches
- “Non-denominational”
- Church of Jesus Christ of latter Day Saints (Mormon)
- Jehovah Witnesses

If there is one of these churches in your vicinity, in view of what they believe and teach about how people are saved, *can you be a member of THAT church and support their teaching?*

Question for parents: Do your children know what some churches teach about how men are saved, and that once you are saved you cannot be lost?

Worship

1. **Mark 7:6-9** - How did Jesus describe the worship of these religious people?

Why was their worship unacceptable to God?

2. **1Co 14:37-38** - What did Paul say about the instructions he gave the Corinthian church about how they conducted their worship assemblies?
3. **1Co 14:34-35** - What did Paul forbid in the assemblies of the church in Corinth?

Do you know of any exceptions to this in the New Testament?

4. **1Co 14:5,17,26,33,40** - The instructions in chapter 14 were designed to produce what kind of assembly in the church of God in Corinth?
5. **Eph 5:18-20; Col 3:16-17** - How did Paul instruct both the Ephesian church and the Colossian church to express their joy and thanksgiving when together in worship?

Who in each church was encouraged to engage in this practice?

Do you know of any exceptions to this in the New Testament?

6. **1Co 11:23-26; Ac 20:7** - What was an important feature of the worship on the first day of the week in the early churches?
7. **1Co 16:1-2; 2Co 8:1-5** - When an authorized work of the church needed to be funded, how did the churches in Galatia, Achaia, and Macedonia provide those funds?
8. **1Co 4:17** - What did the apostle say about what he taught in churches?
9. Do you find any churches in the New Testament engaging in social (birthday celebrations, holiday activities, etc.) or political (political figures brought in to speak; efforts at government reform), activities in their worship assemblies? If not, what does that indicate?

We will consider the contrast what has been said in the Bible about how Christians are to worship, and compare that with the teachings of various religions or churches—for example ...

- Roman Catholicism
- Various denominational and “non-denominational” churches
- Pentecostal churches
- Some “Churches of Christ”

If there is one of these churches in your vicinity, in view of what they believe and teach about how people are saved, *can you be a member of THAT church and support their teaching?*

Question for parents: Do your children know what how churches worship, and why it makes a difference?

Organization

By “organization,” we are referring to “2b an administrative and functional structure (such as a business or a political party) // The new president plans to make changes to the company's *organization*.” merriam-webster.com. We will be focusing on the “administrative” aspect, or government, oversight, of churches.

1. **Ac 14:23; 20:28; 1Pe 5:1-3**

- a. What kind of oversight did God appoint in churches?
- b. Were these men “pastors,” or were they separate from the pastor? Explain.
- c. Which church or churches did each body of men oversee?
- d. Three terms are used of these men, or six if you include the equivalent term that pairs with each. In the following, write the equivalent term to the word listed.
 - Elders (**Ac 20:17**) - _____ (see **1Tim 4:14**, NASB footnote)
 - Overseers (**Ac 20:28**) - _____ (compare ASV)
 - Shepherds (**Ac 20:28** NASB, NKJV) - _____ (see **Eph 4:11**; compare ESV)

2. **Jn 10:16; Eph 1:22-23** - Who had oversight of the church as a whole (all Christians)?

3. **Titus 1:5-6** - What do these instructions indicate about these men so far as

- Character?
- Gender?
- Age?

4. Women were important and were honored in the early churches, e.g. **Rom 16:1-2,3-7,12,15**. However, in what way was their role was limited? **1Tim 2:11-12; 1Co 14:34-35**

5. A group of churches working under one administrative man or group of men ...

- a. Is that arrangement found in the New Testament, and is so, what is it called?
- b. There is a term that describes that arrangement in our language today. What is it?

We will consider the contrast what has been said in the Bible about how churches were governed, and compare that with the practices of various churches today—for example ...

- Roman Catholic Church
- Southern Baptist Church
- Methodist Church
- Pentecostal; Assembly of God churches
- Some “Churches of Christ”

If there is one of these churches in your vicinity, in view of what they believe and teach about how churches are organized, *can you be a member of THAT church and support their teaching?*

Question for parents: Do you know, and can you instruct your children, in God’s plan for church government and why it makes a difference?

Work

1. **1Tim 3:15-16** - What is the local church designed to be?
2. What is it designed to provide in its assemblies ...
 - a. **Ac 11:26** -
 - b. **Ac 20:7; 1Co 11:20...23-25...34** -
 - c. **1Co 14:26** -
 - d. **Col 3:16** -
 - e. **1Co 16:1-2** -
 - f. **Ac 2:42** -
3. Who was said to comprise a “church of God” (**1Co 1:2**), or, “church in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (**1Th 1:1...2-5**), or, “church of Christ” (**Rom 16:16** - see **v23**; **Ac 20:4**)? Are these people also “neighbors,” “citizens,” “fathers” and “mothers”?
4. What does it mean to call a church “of Christ” (**Rom 16:16**) or describe it as “in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (**1Th 1:1**)?
5. **1Tim 5:16** - What limitations were put on the work of the church of Christ in Ephesus?

What was Timothy instructed to do (**2Tim 1:13**) and would this include teaching the church about what it’s work was (**1Tim 3:15**) and was not (**1Tim 5:16**)?

We will consider the contrast what has been said in the Bible about what kind of work the churches under apostolic guidance engaged in, and compare that what kind of activities churches today are engaged in and you would be supporting if a member—for example ...

- social activities - outings to amusement parks; entertainment; sports teams; birthday celebrations; host super bowl parties; etc.
- political activities - political speakers brought in to address political issues, seek votes; sermons directing the members which political party, candidate, or issue to support; badges, literature, concerted efforts at political reform, etc.
- secular educational activities - schools for children from kindergarten up teaching reading, math, social studies, etc.; adult learning (sewing, cooking, other skills); health and fitness classes; financial classes; promoting school policy, board members, etc.
- community outreach activities - providing hospitals; commercial homes for aged and orphans and homeless; clothing, food drives for the community; day care for working mothers; beautification, clean-up and improvement of the physical area of the community; etc.
- holiday activities - Christmas, Easter, New Year, Halloween, etc. celebrations and special services focused on these holidays
- dating activities - “singles” events encouraging people to meet other singles for a potential relationship
- financial activities - bake sales; renting the parking lot, building; having a commercial business, etc.

If there is one of these churches in your vicinity, in view of what they consider their work, *can you be a member of THAT church and support their activities?*

Question for parents: Do you know, and can you instruct your children, in God’s plan for the work of a church “of Christ”?

Charismatic Gifts

“charismatic” - “2. designating or of any of various religious groups or movements that stress direct divine inspiration, manifested as in glossolalia, healing powers, etc.” *Webster’s New World Dict.*

“characterizing Christians of various denominations who seek an ecstatic religious experience, sometimes including speaking in tongues and instantaneous healing.” *dictionary.com*

1. What are the gifts listed in **1Co 12:8-10**?
2. According to **1Co 14:37-38**, those who claim to be a prophet or spiritual need to recognize what?
3. What was the overriding rule for assemblies where true spiritual gifts were exercised? **1Co 14:23,26,33,40**.
4. The gift of “tongues” is often the focus of advocates of supernatural gifts today.
 - a. **1Co 12:7; 14:4-5** - Tongues, along with the other gifts, were for whose benefit?
 - b. **1Co 14:28** - What was a requirement for this gift to be exercised in their assemblies?
5. Compare **1Ki 18:26-29** with **1Co 14:26-33,40**. Which activities resemble those of modern charismatic assemblies?
6. **Col 2:18-19,23** - What is the appeal of the apostasy Paul here warns against?
7. Who was given supernatural spiritual gifts ...
 - a. **Ac 2:43; 2Co 12:12** -
 - b. **Ac 10:24,44-46** -
 - c. **Ac 8:12,14-18** -

If there are any others who received this power or were promised this power under the New Covenant, write the scriptures here:
8. What was the Divine purpose in providing these gifts to early Christians?
 - a. **Mk 16:20; Heb 2:4** -
 - b. **Ac 10:44-46; 11:15...18; 15:7-9** -
 - c. **1Co 12:7; 14:5,12,26** -
9. **Ac 8:16-19** - If you were not an apostle or of the household of Cornelius, what was essential to receive a supernatural spiritual gift?

We will consider the contrast what has been said in the Bible about supernatural spiritual gifts and compare that what kind of activities churches today are engaged in.

If there is one of these churches in your vicinity that teach supernatural spiritual gifts are for Christians today and claim to practice those gifts in their assemblies, *can you be a member of THAT church and support their activities?*

Question for parents: Do you know, and can you instruct your children, as to the purpose and duration of supernatural spiritual gifts?

Morality

“Morality” has to do with “principles of right and wrong behavior” *Oxford Dict.* It is a wide field; our study will focus on sexual immorality. The concepts that promote immorality, and the practices of immorality, are permeating our society, our schools, and even churches. As strange as it may seem that immorality would be an issue in choosing which church to join, in fact it is an area that deserves consideration in making such a serious choice.

1. **1Co 6:9** - What sexually immoral practices are clearly condemned (see **v10**) in this letter to the church of God in Corinth?

Note: these practices were widely practiced and accepted in Corinth, and sometimes used in religion, thus “idolatry” is found in the list.

- **1Co 5:1-2,9-11,13** - What was this church instructed to do with one who persisted in these practices?
 - **1Co 5:1-2** - What was this church’s attitude about the sexual immorality in their midst.
2. **1Co 7:10-12** - What did Paul teach in his letter to this church about divorce and remarriage?
 - **1Co 7:17** - What did he say about his teaching on this subject in other churches?
 - **1Co 7:40** - By understatement, what weight did Paul put behind these instructions?
 - Compare what he wrote to Corinth with what he wrote to the church in Rome on this subject: **Rom 7:1-3**.
 3. **Eph 5:3-4** - what conduct is absolutely forbidden in the church at Ephesus?
 - Why?
 - **v5** - What did Paul assure the members of that church?
 - **v6** - What danger did he warn about?
 - **v7** - What practice did he encourage them to follow?
 4. **2Tim 4:1-5** - What is the evangelist’ responsibility and would this change if the church and its leaders approved of immoral practices?

We will consider the contrast what the Bible about morality and what churches should do in regard to immorality and compare that to the teaching and activities of churches today.

If there is a church in your vicinity whose teaching and practice condones and even defends immorality, *can you be a member of THAT church and support their activities?*

Question for parents: Do you know what your children will be exposed to in the church you choose to attend? What will they hear taught, both from the pulpit and in classes? What kind of influences will they be exposed to - leaders, peers, members?