is the church important?

Over the years there have been a variety of statements (or mottos) expressing an ideology espoused by those who want Jesus “but not the church.” The newest of these is that one can love Jesus but hate religion.

In my experience those who profess such views are in reality just looking for an easy way out of what they see as an oppressive way of life. They want the grace of God that has been extended unto all men (Titus 2:11) but don’t want to be told what to do by God or anyone else.

Now, if by religion or “church” one means a denomination or man-made organization or institution I am in full agreement. The problem is two-fold created by those who have perverted the gospel and religion and those who are tired of the hypocrisy, ignorant of the truth, or just simply rebellious and self-serving (Romans 16:18).

So the question is, “Is the church important?” “Can we hope to go to heaven without the church or religion?” Well let’s not suppose we know what God would say, let’s listen to His Word.

Jesus didn’t come to destroy religion but to build His church and establish a one true religion for all mankind. Read and study Ephesians 2:11-22. In order to accomplish his mission to reconcile all men to himself he promised, “I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). Is the church important? It was important enough for Jesus to die on the cross and purchase it with his own blood (Acts 20:28).

In giving His life for us, and establishing the church, the Father gave Jesus all authority (Matthew 28:18), placing “all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church” (Ephesians 1:22). “He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent” (Colossians 1:18). For us it means that we must do what He says. In fact He said that if we truly love Him we would do what He says (John 14:15). Is the church important? If we want the head of the church to be the head of our lives it will be.

Jesus is not only the head of the church he is “the Savior of the body” (Ephesians 5:23). The church and the body are the same thing. The body is where the blood is and where we are cleansed (1 John 1:7). It was the church to which the Lord added the saved (Acts 2:47). And when one is saved he is translated out of darkness and into the kingdom (Colossians 1:13). Is the church important? If we want to be saved it is!

You cannot go to heaven if your name isn’t written there and if you are not in the kingdom. It is the names of those who are in the church that are written in heaven (Hebrews 12:23). And when Jesus comes again it is those who are in the kingdom that will go to be with Him in His home (John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:24).

Is the church important? The more pertinent question is, “Is the church important to you?” It will be if we want to be reconciled to God, if we are willing for Jesus to be the head of our lives and truly love Him, and if we want to be saved and go to heaven. If it is important to us we will not forsake the services of the church (Hebrews 10:25). We will put the church first in our lives (Matthew 6:33). We will let our light shine (Matthew 5:14-16). We will practice pure and undefiled religion (James 1:27). If the church is important to us we will be obedient and faithful!
Several decades ago, the question “What would Jesus do?” was a big fad. Jesus, along with all those in the first century, lived when the Romans were in power. Even several centuries preceding this, we know that the world was ruled by dictators (Babylonian, Medo-Persian, and Greek). However, if Jesus and the apostles lived in a democracy, what would they do? For those who live in such countries (such as the USA), we have a luxurious privilege and blessing that many citizens of other countries do not possess—we have a voice! Yes, even Christians have a voice when it comes to the election of our political leaders! Totalitarian governments do not allow people to express their choices at the polls, but countless individuals in the past literally have given their lives to make this freedom possible. God has blessed us to have a “government of the people, by the people and for the people” (as President Lincoln addressed at Gettysburg). Inherent within this privilege is a responsibility as citizens—to inform ourselves of the issues and the candidates. Thus, voting is a choice of people who enjoy civil freedom!

How to deal with the government has always been a problem for the people of God. When the Pharisees attempted to trap Jesus regarding the subject of taxes—a quite sensitive issue among people both then and now—he asked for a coin and responded, “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matt. 22:15-21). Unfortunately, it seems that there has been, and will always be, tension between our obligation to God and our obligation to our country. While we are citizens of a heavenly country (Phil. 3:20), and the kingdom of God is not of this world (John 18:36), we are still to view our governmental rulers with respect (Rom. 13:1-7). Regrettably, some Christians do not exercise their right to vote. From a civic perspective, they become apathetic. Alexander Tyler, a Scottish historian, wrote about the fall of the Athenian republic and stated that most nations progress through a specific sequence from rise to power and then to collapse. Detailing such, he itemized these stages as follows: bondage to spiritual faith, spiritual faith to great courage, great courage to liberty, liberty to abundance, abundance to selfishness, selfishness to complacency, complacency to apathy, apathy to dependency, and dependency back to bondage. As a nation, where do we fall in this sequence? As a Christian citizen, where do we fall in this sequence? Do we personally care?

How tragic that very few Christians have undertaken the duty of serving in a public office! Many Christians are crest-fallen when it comes to seeking civic leadership positions, because they believe the corruption within would quite literally choke any godly influence out from the good-hearted child of God. Yet, the quandary lies in the fact that while the general attitude among Christians is negative toward politics and politicians, it is equally true that our democratic nations need men and women of faith in leadership positions now more than ever! We need good people who will exercise godly wisdom to bring about reformation (Prov. 14:34). How will we ever reach this point if we choose never to voice our opinion or cast our vote? If God could act through human kings of days gone by (often influenced by godly men, such as Daniel and Nehemiah), why could He not act through His own people today when they serve in leadership positions?

William James (1842-1910), a renowned philosopher and spokesman, once said, “There is but one unconditional commandment, which is that we should seek incessantly, with fear and trembling, so to vote and to act as to bring about the very largest total universe of good we can see” (“The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life”). He also stated,

*The deadliest enemies of nations are not their foreign foes; they always dwell within their borders, and from these internal enemies, civilization is always in need of being saved. The nation blessed above all nations is she in whom the civic genius of the people does the saving day by day, by acts without external picturesqueness; by speaking, writing, voting reasonably; by smiting corruption swiftly; by good temper between parties; by the people knowing true men when they see them and preferring them as leaders to rabid partisans or empty quacks. (“Memories and Studies”)*

Therefore, Christians ought to desire to be good citizens and exercise their freedom to vote according to principles of character and morality. Indifference and apathy are truly the worst enemies in the civic arena—may they never be demonstrated by the people of God! It is time to stand boldly against the sins of our nation and the issues that affect morality! May every Christian exercise his or her right and privilege to vote, and accompany such with fervent prayers (1 Tim. 2:1-2)!
**bible classes**

**Sunday 9:30 AM - 10:15 AM**

**Little Learners**
- 0-1 yr old: Bible, Families
- 1-2 yrs old: Bible, Families
- 2-3 yrs old: Jesus and His Helpers

**Children**
- 3-4 yrs old: Jesus’ Friends - Better Citizens
- Kindergarten: Christ’s Church Today
- 1st - 2nd Grade: Last Days of Jesus
- 3rd - 4th Grade: Singing About God’s Word
- 5th Grade: Christ to Corinth

**Teens**
- Jr. High/HS Boys: Leadership Training
- Jr. High/HS Girls: Leadership Training

**Adults**
- Outreach Center: Christians w/ Grown Children
- Chapel: Christians w/ Children @ Home
- Red Room: Spanish-Speaking Class

**Wednesday 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM**

**Little Learners**
- 0-1 yr old: Church, Prayer
- 1-2 yrs old: Creation
- 2-3 yrs old: Stories From Genesis

**Children**
- 3-4 yrs old: God’s Prophets
- Kindergarten: God’s Prophets
- 1st - 2nd Grade: Following New Leaders
- 3rd - 4th Grade: New Home for Israel
- 5th Grade: The Kings of Israel & Judah

**Teens**
- Jr. High: Why I Am a Member of the Church of Christ
- High School: Denominationalism

**Adults**
- Auditorium: No One Left Behind - Paul O’Rear
- World Bible School: World Bible School - Michael Jones

**Mission Statement:** Our Bible classes will assist people in developing a deeper knowledge and understanding of the Holy Scriptures, stress the importance of correctly applying the scriptures in everyday life, and strengthen personal faith before others in order to edify the Kingdom of God.

**leadership**

**Elders**
- Don Ivy - 903.875.1483
- Paul Slaughter - 903.872.1228
- Paul Stewart - 903.872.3464
- Darwin Thomas - 903.695.0176

**Deacons**
- James Ainsworth - 903.872.1390
- Scott Barham - 903.641.0133
- Terry Barrett - 903.875.4469
- David Baumgartner - 903.654.4057
- Zach Drain - 903.521.6055
- Dan Gibson - 903.641.9587
- Joshua Haden - 903.602.9645
- Micah Haden - 903.673.1177
- James Horn - 903.599.9114
- Michael Jones - 903.875.8652
- Roy M’Cullough - 903.872.2069
- Percell Milton - 903.673.1819
- Eddie Moore - 903.673.2803
- Greg Olsen - 903.654.1406
- James Olsen - 903.874.8918
- Rusty Owens - 903.695.0095
- Billy Roughton - 903.872.9427
- Dickie Russell - 903.874.4457
- David Shastid - 903.695.0108
- Brent Stewart - 903.641.9052
- Justin Williams - 903.872.2794

**Ministers**
- Sam Dilbeck - 903.229.8415
- Russell Haffner - 903.467.8895
- Andy Chavarrilla - 903.354.4078

**Westhill Works**
- Benevolence Program - Percell Milton/Dickie Russell
- World Bible School (WBS) - Michael Jones
- House to House, Heart to Heart - Percell Milton

**Local Works**
- Cherokee Children’s Home - Delton McGuire, Director
- Ferris Church of Christ - Mike & Terri Roberts
- Preaching Student - Joshua Moore

**Prison Works**
- Tennessee Colony Prison Ministry - Steve & Carrie Handley

**Foreign Works**
- New Milford, Connecticut - David & Paula Tarbet
- New Zealand Harvest Missions - James & Emily Cammock
Among the Ill: Alyce Barnes will not have surgery at this time, but will begin chemo treatments again Tuesday. Janice Elder will have an operation at the local hospital this Wednesday, Aug. 22. Austin Johnson, the Slaughters’ great grandson, had his surgery. One ear just had fluid and pressure, but the other had some scarring. He will go for a hearing test on Sept. 26 to see if any hearing was restored. Dick James is having some trouble swallowing and is also battling pneumonia. Bob Stapleton, director of the Brown Trail School of Preaching, was taken to the hospital last week with stroke-like symptoms. Helen Rizzo, George Schmidt’s sister, fell and fractured her arm and wrist. She is recovering from surgery at her daughter’s home. Continue to Remember: Johnnie Thompson, Marshall Mahoney, Eula Parrish, Alyce Barnes, Dianne Stewart, Vicki Ivy, JoAnn Chambers, Meagan Gould, Nancy McAnally, and Gus Fry.

Remember in Prayer those serving in the military, especially those associated with Westhill: John Jennings, Robert Johnson, Andy McDougald, Josh Moehring, Ryan Payne, Devin Peterson, Douglas Ramsey, Ryan Stewart, David Tapia, Morgan Weaver, Payton Weaver, Kye White, and J.D. Williams.

Our Heartfelt Love and Sympathy are extended to George Schmidt and his family at the passing of his sister, Hertha Wright, last week. Keep them in your prayers as they face this loss.

3rd Sunday Benevolence Program this afternoon from 4:30 to 5:30 pm. Anyone who would like to help give out food is welcome.

High School Devo tonight at Joshua & Laura Haden’s home. Girls bring snacks, boys bring drinks.

Our Last Days in the S.O.N is this Tuesday 10:00 AM to noon. All the kids are invited to participate in this time of service to Westhill and our community.

Youth Group to Go Ice Skating this Saturday at North Park Mall. We will leave the building at 10:00 AM.

Kids for Christ Devo this Saturday, August 25 at 6:00 PM in the Outreach Center. All kids 5th grade and younger are invited.

Greeter Training Class Sunday, August 26 at 4:30 PM. If you are currently signed up as a greeter, are interested in becoming a greeter or are just curious about our welcome and wanted ministry and want to know what it’s all about, this meeting is for you. Please, mark your calendars and plan to attend.

Our Gospel Meeting, After God’s Heart, featuring guest speaker, Michael Light, is coming up September 9 - 12.

The Ladies Retreat needs ladies shoes (all kinds) and shoe boxes. If anyone has any shoes or shoe boxes that you no longer want, please take them to the office.

We Rejoice with Donna Brooks as she begins a new job at the Sunset Bible Institute in Lubbock. She feels very blessed to have this opportunity and thanks you all for your prayers.

Special Request: Mike & Michelle Chennault are looking for a rent house in the Corsicana school district. If you have or know of one, please contact Mike with the details. He can be reached at: 972.351.3161

Benevolence Needs: Our shelves are bare again. Anything you can bring would be greatly appreciated. We also need boxes to hand out the groceries in.

If you know of anyone needing food, put their names in the white box at the back of the auditorium on the west side. The church will deliver them a box of groceries.

Birthdays This Week
August 19 - Carol Barham
August 20 - Sandra McCullough
August 21 - Dee Haffner, Keith Howard, Jan Ross
August 24 - Christine Howard, Darlyn Olsen

Records for August 12, 2012
Bible Class..........................................................178
AM Worship ........................................................287
PM Worship......................................................173
Wednesday PM ................................................189
Contribution......................................................$9,647.37

Privileged to Serve

Song Leader .........................................................Zach Drain
Opening Prayer ................................................Justin Williams
Communion Leader ........................................George Schmidt
Communion Servers
James Ainsworth ......................................................Melba Bower
Joshua Haden .........................................................Seth Haden
Brian Hand ..........................................................Keith Howard
Oliver Jackson .......................................................Larry Jayroe
Buck Murphy .........................................................Rusty Owens
Billy Roughton ......................................................Justin Williams
Closing Prayer .....................................................Darwin Thomas
Nursery: ..............................................................Sherri Bayes & Donna Drain
PM Song Leader ...............................................Russell Haffner
PM Opening Prayer ........................................Dan Gibson
PM Closing Prayer ........................................Willie Winters
Wednesday Song Leader ...............................Jimmy Horn
Soldiers of Christ Summer Series ..........................Paul O’Rear
August Contact Elder: .......................................Paul Slaughter - 903.872-1228