

Light and Life

The Spirit and The Letter

The religious leaders of Jesus' time placed great emphasis on following the rules, but neglected the spiritual lessons those rules were supposed to teach. Jesus said of them, "You pay tithes of mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone" (Mt. 23:23).

The actions of obedience to the law were important, but the character qualities the law pointed to were "weightier"! The Pharisees may have fulfilled outward law-keeping, but they failed to learn lessons of inward character. Emphasizing the letter of the law, they did not recognize the spirit.

The Sermon on the Mount also showed Jesus' condemnation of this attitude. He began by highlighting the spiritual qualities of a disciple (Mt 5:3-16). Then, He quoted passages about murder, adultery, divorce, oaths, revenge, and love (Mt. 5:21-48). Each of these passages was interpreted by the Pharisees in a way that allowed them to look for loopholes, or to get as close to 'the line' as they could without crossing it. Rather than having an attitude of humble submission to God – and love for His people – they had the attitude of seeing what they could get away with.

The Pharisees' religion was a matter of reputation, rather than building and maintaining a relationship with God. Their focus was more on material things (Mt. 6). Jesus ended His sermon by admonishing the audience to focus on their own spiritual betterment, to not follow the crowd to destruction, and to base their lives on His authority (Mt. 7).

If we want our righteousness to exceed that of the Pharisees (Mt. 5:20), we must not have such a physical mindset of 'the rules' but rather allow those rules to have a spiritual effect on our character!

- Sam Bunyard

Another Perspective

Institutionalism & The Church

When young disciples ask, "What is institutionalism?", how should we answer them? A simple definition is that institutionalism is seeing God's church as a network of congregations with its traditions and organizations. **Biblically**, of course, God's church is simply His saved people whose names are written in heaven (He 12:23). Only He knows who they are.

The historical divisions over institutionalism in the 1950's had to do with whether congregations should financially support organizations and projects associated with the network – at first orphanages and national radio broadcasts – later, colleges, clinics, ranches, camps, and other brotherhood establishments.

Apologists for church-supported institutions considered many who opposed them to be pharisaical, binding laws on congregations (especially the use of their funds) that are not in the scriptures. They called them 'antis' – and considered them disloyal. Often, the heat and smoke of the controversy covered up the fundamental, underlying issue: 'What is God's church?' That fundamental question remains.

So then, how do we see 'church' – especially Christ's church? Do we see it 1) organizationally, as a network of congregations that comes from a historical movement (the "Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement")? Or do we see it 2) relationally, as individuals whose names are written in heaven? Even among congregations known historically as 'noninstitutional' the organizational concept (#1 above) still rears its head. It's so hard to erase it! It is easy to see 'church' as a network of congregations roughly defined by church directories, and even by the schools, the bookstores, and the publications we like. That **concept** is institutional – whether church funds are involved or not.

- Gardner Hall (edited for space)

ASSEMBLY TIMES

Sunday

Morning Bible Class 9:30
Morning Assembly 10:30
Evening Assembly 5:00

Wednesday

Evening Bible Class 6:30

RADIO PROGRAM

The Bible Speaks



Sunday 9:00–9:30a.m.
Thursday 11:30a.m.–noon
KURM 790AM

Downtown Church of Christ

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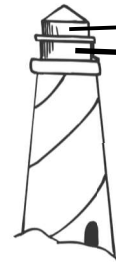
**The enemy didn't tempt
Eve to commit murder,
but to question God.**

ELDERS:

Otis Hardin
Perry Johnson
Ken Parker
Alan Revier
GW Walsh

DEACONS:

TJ Burleson
Scott Hale
Jason Hill
Chris Johnson
Brock McKeel
Randy Potter
Tim Roberts
Randy Shell



DOWNTOWN GOSPEL BEACON

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ROGERS, ARKANSAS**

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50 Years of Marriage

The word is out – The Woman and I celebrated 50 years of marriage earlier this month. While that might sound like bragging, let me assure you, it is not. Many in this church have gone longer – far longer. And the feat itself is (in my mind) more a testament to the character of the woman I married than it is to me. But for those who are curious about how to reach the golden anniversary – listen up.

One fellow suggested – in jest – that the key to a long marriage is to just not die. Some truth to that, but not as much humor – especially to those who have lost a spouse on the road to their 50th. This points to the role

of God's providence in marriage (as in all areas of life). Neither The Woman nor I had anything to do with that. We hit 50 by God's grace.

But with that said, here are a few suggestions: 1) Marry someone who wants to go to heaven as much as you, and who is willing to do what it takes to help you get there. 2) Put God in the middle of your marriage (study, prayer, etc.). Every decision, big or small, He is in on it. 3) And forgive, as Jesus said, 70 times 7.

There are others, but these are big. And **both of you** must be devoted to these goals. May God bless **you** in this worthy effort!

- *WKing*

FAMILY NEWS

PRAYER LIST –

Preachers we support: Japan, Philippines, Vietnam, Canada, Mexico, Peru, & U.S.

Sick: Fletchers, Swims, JMarshall, RStarr, MiBader, ADosier

Shut-ins: Billie Pennington, Shirley Cole, Susan Wiese, Virgil Carter

Military: Kyler Sullins, Sean Potter

2024 EVENTS – Mar 10-13 (Don Truex); Apr 14-16 (David Fiddament);

Apr 19 (Stevens & Shepard); Jul 21-25 (PJ Anderson); Aug 2-4 (Ben Hall)

SENTENCE SERMON – “If you believe what you like in the gospels and reject the rest, it is not the gospel you believe, but yourself.” -Augustine