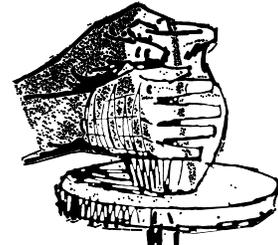


His Workmanship at Westside

*“For we are His
workmanship, created in
Christ Jesus for good works.”
—Ephesians 2:10*



Isaiah 64:8

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Overcoming Four Church Myths *by Michael Svigel*

Many Christians approach the local church in ways that conform more to the patterns of the world than to the pattern of God's Word. Like mad scientists piecing together a monster from countless incompatible pieces without a clear pattern or guiding principle, many Christians today have re-created the church after their own imaginations, according to their own likes and dislikes. Clustered around this mutant creature falsely called "church," proponents propagate four common myths that help keep the beast alive—four untruths that have become so accepted by many that they believe them without question. But the time has come to refute the myths and slay the monster, replacing it with a body reflecting marks and works of authenticity and created according to God's image for the church.

Myth 1: The church is merely a human organization. Though comprised of humans, the church itself is not a human organization. Jesus Christ is the head of the church, and the church is His spiritual and physical body on earth, Eph 1:22–23; 5:23; Col 1:18. While we may distinguish the spiritual and physical as-

pects of the church, we must never separate them. Too often Christians have divorced the spiritual, heavenly, and eternal church (universal church) from its physical, earthly, time and space, historical manifestation (local church). The result has been to treat local churches as mere human organizations rather than as unique conduits through which God works his heavenly, spiritual purposes in history. Such separation has allowed Christians to treat their churches as they treat other human organizations—like a political party or a club. In the world's political realm, if we don't like what our party stands for or if we lose confidence in its candidates, we just run against them, vote them out, or change the platform. If things get too bad, we can join another party or start our own. But Paul reprimanded the church for taking sides and forming parties (divisions), 1 Cor 3:3–4.

Neither should we treat the church like a club, with members who direct the organization according to the will of the majority. These Latin words are engraved in the Minnesota state capitol building: *VOX POPULI, VOX DEI*—"The Voice of the People Is

the Voice of God." Nonsense. Many Christians act like the church should be run by majority rule. However, after Israel demanded a king "like all the nations" to rule over them, 1 Sam 8:20, God told his prophet Samuel, "Obey their voice and make them a king," 8:22. By listening to other nations, Israel ended up with just what they asked for: a king like the nations' kings rather than a king of God's own choosing. In the case of King Saul, the voice of the people was not the voice of God.

The church was built by Christ's supernatural power. It's made up of people who have otherwise nothing in common. It's not united by political constitutions, culture, common interest, language, or corporate bylaws. It's united by the Spirit of God around the person and work of Jesus Christ pursuing a common purpose in the world, Eph 4:1–6.

Myth 2: The church is a supermarket for spiritual groceries. In the world of supermarkets, we like options, variety, and freedom to choose. Sadly, we often treat the church as if it were just one of many supermarkets that provide us with

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“I write so you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” —1 Tim 3:15

spiritual groceries. Consequently, we’re living in a culture that regards church shopping, hopping, and dropping as normal.

Our supermarket mentality and the plethora of differing churches make our modern situation both unique and dangerous. We never seem to find just the right church, and this dissatisfaction can lead to a never-ending church shopping spree. I once knew a student who, after six months of living in Florida, still hadn’t settled down at a local church. Each Sunday he would try out a different church, then move on to another the next Sunday. He began following a well-known preacher who preached at a different church each week. So, like a groupie following a rock band, this wandering lad followed that celebrity preacher from church to church. His example is of an indefinite church shopping spree turned into an extreme case of church hopping. This stunts our growth as Christians. God intends us to bump against each other in order to learn to get along with diverse brethren and to love them. We cannot build relationships without time together and time to learn to love people whom we may not initially like, Eph 4:11-16.

Church dropping is most disturbing. This is the practice of quitting church altogether, staying home Sunday mornings to watch preachers on TV or to listen to worship services by radio or podcast. This believer has not learned the basic principles of the church and tries to live a life in Christ outside a living local, physical church. We see this trend in the so-called “virtual church,” where phony relationships are forged in simulated online communities without real,

physical, body and soul commitment.

Our relationship to a local church is like our relationship to a family. It’s a covenantal relationship designed for the purpose of building each other up and exhorting each other to love and good works, Heb 10:24-25; Rm 14:19; 1 Thes 5:11. If we look at our commitment to the local church through the lens of a covenant oath, the picture isn’t pretty. The solution? Start treating the local church less like a shopping mall and more like a family, less like a convenience store and more like a covenant to God.

Myth 3: The church is just a gathering of a few believers. Several years ago when some of my friends and I prayed over our food at a fast-food joint, two scraggly men approached from across the restaurant and introduced themselves as a church. They explained that, after visiting all the churches in the area, they decided that none of them was preaching the true gospel, so those two men got together and decided, “We’ll be our own church.” There they stood, like the Lone Ranger and Tonto, grinning triumphantly in the bright fluorescent light, obviously proud of their do-it-yourself church. Today some Christians have dropped out of local churches in favor of “home churches” or “family church.” While the concept of a church meeting in a home has Biblical and historical precedence, Rm 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19, many times an organization that calls itself a “house church” today is not a church at all, but just a bunch of disgruntled believers who couldn’t (or wouldn’t) make it work in an established local church.

Let’s be clear. A Bible study is not a church. It’s a Bible study. Getting

together in the home for prayer is not a church. It’s a prayer meeting. A chorus of Christians who meet to sing hymns is not a church. It’s a sing-along. A man opening the Bible and preaching to a willing crowd is not a church. It’s an exercise of free speech. A gathering of saints for eating and gossiping (often misconstrued as “fellowship”) is not a church. It’s a party. From a Biblical, historical, and theological perspective, an authentic church must consist of certain marks and works. Essential marks of a local church include:

• **Sound doctrine:** the proclamation of the central truths of the faith regarding God, the person and work of Christ, and salvation, Jn 7:17; Ax 2:42; 14:22; 16:5; Rm 6:17; 16:17, 26; 1 Cor 16:13; 2 Cor 13:5; Phil 1:27; Col 1:23; 2:7; 1 Tim 1:3, 10-11; 4:1, 6, 13-16; 6:1-5, 10; Tit 1:13; 2:1, 7, 10; 3:15; Jude 3; 2 Jn 10.

• **Order:** well organized, orderly worship and work; the positions of Biblically qualified and properly appointed leaders, 1 Chr 15:13; Ps 37:23; 50:21; Is 9:7; 1 Cor 14:40; Col 2:5; Tit 1:5.

• **Entrance and communion:** baptism into Christ and His body as entrance into His covenant, and the Lord’s Supper as sustained fellowship between God and among Christians, Rm 6:3-11; Gal 3:16-17, 26-29; Mt 26:28 (Mk 14:24); 1 Cor 11:25; Heb 8:6-13; 9:11-22; 10:14-18, 12:22-24; 13:20-21 (cf. Deut 29:12). Besides these three marks, four essential works of a church include:

• **Evangelism:** gathering others to God by the gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, Mt 24:14; 28:18-20; Lk 24:47; Ax 4:29; 5:42; 8:4, 12; 10:36, 42; 13:38; 14:2, 15; 17:3; Rm 1:15-17; 16:25-27; 1 Cor 1:18-23; 15:1-4; Gal 1:6-9; 1 Thes 2:9; 1 Tim 3:16;

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Psalm 133:1



Fill your can-teen in 2013
“...filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord.”

4 Church Myths, from p. 2

Tit 1:3; 1 Pet 1:25.

• **Edification:** equipping believers to grow toward maturity in Christ through teaching and discipline of a genuine community, Ax 9:31; Rm 15:2; 1 Cor 14:3, 12, 26; 2 Cor 12:19; Gal 5:13; Eph 4:12-16, 29; 1 Thes 5:11; 1 Tim 1:3-4.

• **Exaltation (worship):** glorifying God through adoration and praise, Jn 4:21-24; Ax 2:46-47; 11:18; 20:19; 21:20; 26:7; Rm 12:1, 11; 15:6-11; 1 Cor 6:20; Eph 1:12; Phil 1:11; 3:3; 1 Thes 1:9; Heb 2:12; 9:14; 12:28; 13:15; 1 Pet 4:14-16.

• **Extending help to the needy (benevolence):** helping the poor, especially needy Christians; relieving the afflicted, Mt 25:31-46; Ax 2:45; 4:35; Rm 12:13; 15:26; 2 Cor 9:12; Gal 2:10; 6:9-10; Eph 4:28; 1 Tim 6:17-18; Tit 3:14; Jas 2:16; 1 Jn 3:17.

These marks and works not only place a church firmly on the foundation of the New Testament, but they also connect every true local church historically to the first church of Christ, founded by the apostles in Acts 2. All true churches worldwide are united in glorifying God through building towards God and building out and building up the body of Christ. True local churches are part of something bigger than themselves.

Myth 4: The church is optional.
You've probably heard the words

Discipleship Here At Home

“church is optional” said about (or by) a person who has confessed Christ but who is not part of a local church. Individual stories vary. Some people were beat up by an abusive church. Others were forced into church by their parents and finally got out from under their thumb when they left home. Some slid into a sinful lifestyle, and the church was too convicting in its teaching. I don't know many Christians who would neglect involvement in a local church to such an extreme, but most people I know place a much lower value on the local church than the Bible does.

Part of the problem is our mystical, individualistic view of the spiritual life. Many of us have been misled into thinking that our spiritual health depends entirely on a direct personal relationship with God—that the key to spiritual growth is a private quiet time that somehow summons the Holy Spirit and washes away our sins.

While we should accept the importance of personal spiritual disciplines, they are only part of God's plan for spiritual health and growth. To grow in Christ, believers need each other. In fact, God gave us our individual spiritual gifts for the growth of the local church, 1 Cor 12:7. As radical as this may sound to those participating in an individualistic, me-theistic cultural evangelicalism, we must reject the idea that God-directed spiritual growth can occur outside a covenant commitment to an authentic local church. We should prayerfully consider each decision we make regarding our local churches—from joining with, assembling, and working with a church to our level of involvement and decisions regarding departure. If we seek to honor Christ and demonstrate genuine love for our brothers in Christ, the Lord will guide us in wise, prudent, and godly decisions regarding our participation and fellowship in a local church.

PRAY FOR healing, protection, help, and comfort here & away

Mark Campbell—at St. Anthony's after hitting head on concrete in a fall; pain management for headaches, ear aches
Matt Reames—had spinal tap last Tues to drain fluid from his brain (hydrocephalus) which causes headaches, blurred vision; waiting for VA to insert shunt; had accident that totaled his truck mid-Feb
Madge Wallace—lung cancer spreading
Gary Boyd's sister Gail Storatz—cancer; in hospital Tues for transfusion (low platelets) and to drain fluid in her lungs
Brittany Tope's mother Gayle Shrull—return of breast cancer; radiation
Rocco Sangellino Jr., Brielle Kosik, Christian Savarese, Logan Corry—breathing better, but still low oxygen; Rocco isolated because of low immune system

CHRONIC CONDITIONS

Logan Corray; Rocco Sangellino Jr; Addison Tope; Pat Wilkes—asthma
Autumn Hadders—epilepsy
Pearl Chapman—leg pains; pancreatitis
Nell Free—heart; spinal pain
Kirk Johnson—worsening MS; house-bound in cold weather and needs help
Menards—age; **Lloyd**, diabetes;
Virginia, BP; now legally blind from rapid macular degeneration
Sandra Perry—neuropathy from diabetes
Cheryl Reames—diverticulitis; fibro

Rejoice The Reameses have a new grandson, **Gabriel Wilson**, born 2/18. **Cheryl** is in FL with the Wilsons for one more week.

Mina Gonzalez has a new grandson, **Ezana Fedencio**, born 2/22.

Job concerns Andrew Tope and **Frank Savarese** are seeking jobs. **Menards' son** is out of work.

Expecting Marie Carlson—July 1 girl
Travel Justin Hambrick is in CA.



Exposing current thoughts & trends

Hunter College Students Play "Abortion Game"

If you want to see the depravity of the American people, turn your attention to some students at Hunter College in New York City. Founded in 1870, Hunter College is now the largest college in the City University of New York (CUNY) system. Located in the heart of Manhattan, its current enrollment runs around 22,000 from all different backgrounds.

Recently, some of those diverse students gathered in a cafeteria and began playing a game that they called "Abortion Battles." Students, mostly male, placed a balloon under their shirt and then would square off against another balloon-bellied student and try to pop each other's balloon with a plastic fork.

When you think about the implications of the game, it's chilling. Popping balloons is a fun kids' game; however, in this case, the students are mocking and trivializing abortion and the killing of unborn innocent babies. One male student who saw the video of the game described it as "funny" and "weird."

In one part of the video, at <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/kill-baby-vid-pulled-youtube-article-1.1275676>, you can hear a bystander shout, "Kill the baby, kill it." Sadly, more and more Americans believe there is no real difference between popping a balloon and murdering an unborn child. The actions of these college students clearly demonstrate it.

America is becoming desensitized to the horror of abortion. With all of the violence on TV, movies, and video games, they are numb to assault, murder, and pain inflicted on people—and on children in the womb when they have their limbs ripped from their tiny bodies. Popping the amniotic sac and emptying out its contents to them is no different from popping a balloon and emptying out its contents of air. The Bible clearly condemns shedding innocent blood, Deut 21:8-9; Ps 106:37-38; Jer 2:34; 19:2-6. By these actions, the entire land is defiled, Is 59:1-4; Lam 4:14; Ezek 22:4; 36:18; Hos 6:8.

Surely our time of judgment as a nation is coming, and perhaps it's already here. God gives nations rulers that they deserve, and because America has murdered nearly 60 million unborn children since 1973, our leaders could be just what the Lord wants us to have as part of His judgment. The judgment might include the fall and collapse of America as we knew it, because we turned away from God and embraced a hedonistic religion that thrives on the blood of unborn children, compare 2 Kg 21:1, 6, 16 and 24:4.

Westside church of Christ

meets at

13789 W. 8th Avenue
Golden, Colorado 80401
(303) 233-5683

Pastors

Larry Campbell
(303) 462-4987

DeWayne Howell
(303) 973-7283

Preacher

Jim Reingrover
(303) 973-5102

Assembly Schedule

Sunday

Bible classes	9:00 am
Morning assembly	10:00 am
Afternoon assembly	1:30 pm

Wednesday

Bible classes	7:30 pm
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Grounded in Authority Series

this afternoon at 1:30 PM:

"The Church and Human Organizations" by Caleb Howell

GOALS: Did you pray for our upcoming gospel meeting March 10? Have you picked up a business-sized card to give to people you see this week? Will you hand out the cards and invite people to come next Sunday morning? Are you praying for 5 people who need the gospel? Will you invite the 5 people on your list who need the gospel? Are you praying for workers for God's harvest of souls? Did you mention the resurrection and your hope in Christ to anyone this week?