

BROAD MINDEDNESS

-L. R. Wilson

**WHY I AM
A MEMBER OF THE
LORD'S CHURCH**

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Front Cover

BROAD MINDEDNESS

- L. "I hate to see one denomination always jumping on another."
- W. "Yes, indeed."
- L. "I don't think one denomination is any better than another, anyway."
- W. "No; neither do I."
- L. "No denomination is going to take you to heaven."
- W. "Well, I should say not."
- L. "I think we should let everybody believe what he wants to believe. After all everybody has a right to his own opinion."
- W. "Yes, everybody has a right to his own opinion; but I'm not so sure about letting everyone believe what he *wants* to believe. One has to have some evidence before he can believe a thing. I'd like to think there will never be another war, but I can't, because I don't have any evidence of such."
- L. "Well, maybe not; but if others want to think so, then what difference does it make?"
- W. "It might make quite a bit. If all of our government officials should decide there will never be another war, and should set out to destroy all of our war equipment, it would not be long before we would be convinced that it does make a difference what we believe."
- L. "Oh, that's different. What our public officials believe concerns us all, but what a private citizen believes is nobody's business."
- W. "I'm not so sure of that. After all, society is composed of individuals, and what concerns one concerns all to some extent."
- L. "Well, of course, in a limited way, that's true; but I believe in freedom of thought and freedom of doctrine."
- W. "There are some who do not believe it necessary to send their children to school but we have laws to compel them to do so."
- L. "People like that are irresponsible."
- W. "I thought your were in favor of letting everybody believe what he wants to believe."
- L. "I didn't have in mind irresponsible people."

- W. "It looks as if you want to measure other people's corn in your half-bushel. Those who believe like you believe are intelligent, but those who do not are irresponsible."
- L. "Everybody knows that our children should be educated."

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- W. "Well, what do you think of those among us who refuse to salute the flag?"
- L. "They are a menace to our government and shouldn't be allowed to perpetuate such teaching. But I was really thinking of religious doctrines. What a man believes about our government may make a difference to the rest of us, but what he believes about religion concerns nobody but himself."
- W. "You overlook the fact that some of those who refuse to salute the flag do so for religious reasons. They contend that all human governments are wrong and have no right to exist."
- L. "They are just a bunch of fanatics. We can't allow a few religious dupes to disrupt our whole government."
- W. "Aren't you still trying to determine the intelligence of others by your own way of thinking?"
- L. "No, of course not. We've always had fanatics who would destroy everything we have. We can't turn everything over to them. Let's forget about such people and talk in terms of reason. I've always been very broad-minded in matters of religion, and have argued that everybody should be allowed to believe and practice what he pleases, as long as it does not interfere with the rights of others."
- W. "At first you said you thought everybody should have the right to believe what he wants to; then you limit it to the field of religion only. Now, you say a man should be allowed to believe and practice what he wants to as long as it does not interfere with the rights of others."
- L. "Of course, we should not interfere with the rights of others."
- W. "Then it's all right for me to preach and practice anything I want to, and nobody should try to change me, as long as I let everybody else alone."
- L. "That's right."
- W. "Well, I must admit that this sounds better than your first assumption. The only trouble with this is, it can't be done."
- L. "Why not?"

W. "You just can't preach the gospel and leave everybody else alone. In fact, you can't preach any doctrine and leave everybody else alone. If you preach that Jesus Christ is the Son of God you get on somebody's toes. Many religious people do not believe this. Indeed, there are many who do not believe the Bible at all."

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L. "Well, you can preach what you believe without jumping on other people."

W. "I'm not so sure of that. I believe that all denominations are unscriptural and a hindrance to the unity and peace of God's people. Since I honestly and sincerely believe this, how can I preach it without being accused of jumping on somebody?"

L. "Just go ahead and tell people what the Bible says and say nothing about anybody else."

W. "Ah, there's the rub. Speaking of religious sects, Jesus said, 'Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted' (Matthew 15:13). The apostle Paul severely condemned the sectarian spirit in the church in Corinth, and urged them to speak and practice the same things. Now, how can I tell people what the Bible says about these things without causing them to think I'm jumping on them?"

L. "Well, others have as much right to their belief as you have to yours."

W. "Oh, yes, to be sure; but if one is in error and I know it, do you think I'm treating him right if I don't tell him about it? According to your reasoning I should make no effort to preach the gospel to the heathen. Since they have as much right to their belief as I have, and since their religion suits them, then why should I try to teach them any better?"

L. "That's different. Everybody knows the heathens are in darkness and need to be taught."

W. "Just how do we know it?"

L. "Why, look at their standards of living. You certainly don't think we should allow the people of Africa, India and other heathen lands to continue in blind ignorance without making any effort to teach them."

W. "No, I think we ought to teach them the gospel of Christ; but if we have nothing more in mind than to teach them to read and write and to improve their material and social standards I doubt if its worth the effort. In their state of ignorance they have fewer worries and fewer wars than we have."

L. "Yes, but there is more to it than this. They are lost in their present condition."

- W. "Why do you say that?"
- L. "Because of the Bible teaching. Jesus told us to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; and Paul

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tells us that when Jesus comes again it will be in flaming fire to take vengeance on all who know not God."

- W. "Yes, you are right. But why don't you go on and quote all of these passages? Jesus said, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved ...' (Mark 16:15, 16). And Paul informs us that Jesus is coming again 'in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who *do not obey* the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ' (II Thessalonians 1:8). The apostle Peter said, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins' (Acts 2:38). Not only is it necessary for men to hear and believe the gospel to be saved but they must also repent and be baptized. Since all of these acts are commanded in the Gospel, then one must comply with them; otherwise he *has not obeyed* the gospel; and Paul says those who do not obey the gospel 'shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power' (II Thessalonians 1:9)."
- L. "You think a person has to be baptized to be saved, but most religious people disagree with you on this point."
- W. "What if they do disagree? Should I preach what I read In God's word, or what appears to be the most popular?"
- L. "It's more reasonable to suppose that the majority are right."
- W. "It seems you want to determine truth by popular opinion. If this is your measuring stick, then why not let the heathen alone? There are more who do not accept the Bible that there are who do."
- L. "Yes, but we know they are wrong."
- W. "Very well then, since we agree that those who have never heard the gospel, or who have never obeyed the gospel, are wrong and should be taught; what about those who reject only certain portions of the Bible? Aren't they wrong also?"
- L. "Just what do you mean?"
- W. "There are a great many who accept what the Bible has to say about the necessity of faith and repentance, but they reject what it says about baptism."
- L. "Oh, everybody believes in being baptized."

- W. "Yes, I know. Most of those who profess Christianity practice what they call baptism; yet many deny that it has anything to do with man's salvation."
- L. "They don't think the Bible teaches that a man has to be baptized to be saved."

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- W. "I can't see how the Bible could have made it any plainer. Let me remind you of just a few passages: 'He who believes and is baptized will be saved' (Mark 16:16). 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized ... for the remission of sins' (Acts 2:38). 'Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins' (Acts 22:16). '... baptism which now saves us' (I Peter 3:21)."
- L. "Not many people understand these scriptures like you do."
- W. "Its not a question of how people understand them. They are still a part of God's word and cannot be altered by the interpretation of men. We must either accept them or reject them."
- L. "Well, as I said in the beginning, I'm very broad-minded. I think everybody should be allowed to believe and practice what he pleases."
- W. "I'm glad that everyone has the constitutional right to believe and practice what he pleases in religion, as long as it does not interfere with the rights of other people, but the fact that we have this right does not mean that God is pleased with our religion."
- L. "If it suits others and they are happy in their religion then why disturb them?"
- W. "It looks to me as if you are courting the favor of the most popular and powerful religious sects in the land where you live, and have but little concern about what other people think, or what the Bible says. If this is broad-mindedness, then I'll have to confess that I am not very broad-minded. Then, which had you rather risk, what the popular religious bodies teach, or what the Bible says?"
- L. "Of course, I believe what the Bible says; but all religious people in this country claim to do the same."
- W. "If they all believe what it says, then why don't they all teach and practice the same thing?"
- L. "They don't all understand the Bible alike."
- W. "If they don't all understand it alike, then somebody misunderstands it."
- L. "I wouldn't say that."
- W. "If one religious body believes and practices one thing and another something

entirely different how can they both be right?"

- L. "Just what do you mean?"
- W. "Well, to illustrate, one religious body teaches that you can be baptized any way you like; another says immersion only

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will do. One group teaches that you may be baptized at any age, from infancy up; another group says only believers can be scripturally baptized. One group says it is impossible for a child of God to be lost; another says God's children may be lost."

- L. "Of course, they can't all be right about all of these things. They all teach some error."
- W. "Then how are we going to determine who teaches error?"
- L. "By the Bible, of course."
- W. "Then why did you reject what the Bible said about baptism as it pertains to man's salvation and start talking about what other religious people think of it?"
- L. "Well, I must confess that I can't answer your arguments; but I know I want to do right, and I plan to study these matters further, and if I'm not right then I want to get right."
- W. "I'm glad to hear you say that; and I believe you mean it. But you can't accept the general idea of broad-mindedness and what the Bible says at the same time. Yes, it makes a difference what one believes, but it does not necessarily follow that one denomination is any better than another. Since there is no way of measuring the value of a denomination except by the likes and dislikes of people. And this would take us right back to the idea of popular opinion. It all resolves itself into the question, what shall be our measuring rod? If popularity and public sentiment is our standard, then we will have to count noses, and then one will be better in one community and another in another community, but if the Bible is our criterion then one religious denomination is no better than another, because the Bible knows nothing about any of them."
- L. "Do you mean to say that no denomination is scriptural and right?"
- W. "Well, what do you think?"
- L. "I'd hate to think that they are all wrong. That would upset our whole system of Christianity. All religious people belong to some denomination."
- W. "Oh, no, they don't. But suppose they did. Would this make it right? I thought you'd given up the idea of determining truth by counting noses."

- L. "This is getting more complicated all the time. I thought I had a pretty clear conception of what's right, but I am not so sure now. In our previous discussion I said I didn't like

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to see one denomination always jumping on another, and you agreed; but now you're jumping on them all."

- W. "Yes, but I am not a member of any denomination. If I were I'd have no right to jump on any of them."
- L. "Do you mean to tell me that you're not a member of any denomination?"
- W. "That's right."
- L. "Then, you're not a member of any church?"
- W. "Oh, I'm a member of the church, but I'm not a member of any human denomination."
- L. "How can you be a member of the church without being a member of some denomination?"
- W. "How could Paul, or Peter, or any of the early Christians be in the church without being in some denomination?"
- L. "There were no denominations then, such as we now have."
- W. "That's right. All of our modern denominations have come into being since the death of the Apostles."
- L. "Well, suppose they have; does that make them wrong?"
- W. "If they came into being centuries after the scriptures were given then they certainly cannot be scriptural."
- L. "Maybe not; but all Christians are members of some denomination."
- W. "No, they are not. There are many Christians in the world today who are not members of any denomination. In fact, the denominations argue that a man should be a Christian *before* he joins a denomination."
- L. "Oh, I understand that a person becomes a Christian when he is converted, but he usually joins a denomination right away."
- W. "Even though I admit that this is *usually* true—which I do not—even you wouldn't argue that it is *always* true. Often people wait for months before

making up their minds to join any particular denomination.”

- L. “Yes, I know they do sometimes.”
- W. “Well, now, if a person could live a Christian life for six months without joining a denomination, then why could he not do so for six years? And, if he could do so for six years, then why could he not do so indefinitely?”
- L. “He could, I suppose.”
- W. “If he could, then why not do so?”
- L. “Well, a man wouldn't want to be selfish, and cut himself loose from all other Christians. Every child of God ought to

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associate himself with some religious organization when he can work for God and do the most good.”

- W. “Now you're getting down to real fundamentals. God wants His people to associate themselves together to work for him and to worship him. This is why he gave us the church.”
- L. “Then what's wrong in being a member of some particular denomination?”
- W. “God wanted all of His children to be associated together. He didn't want them to be divided into hundreds of little groups, all fighting to build up their own organization at the expense of others.”
- L. “Real Christians shouldn't do that. As I said in the beginning, one denomination ought not to jump on another.”
- W. “That's right, but they do, and they always will as long as we have denominations.”
- L. “Oh, I don't know about that. We've had a good many men in nearly all denominations talking union and cooperation for a long time.”
- W. “Yes, I know; but wouldn't it be much better if they'd all drop their denominational names and titles and actually all be one—as real brothers in Christ—rather than just talking about it?”
- L. “Perhaps so; but you'll never get all the people to do this.”
- W. “I'm not so sure of that. Jesus prayed that we might all be one, and Paul urged the Corinthians to be of the same mind and the same judgment (I Corinthians 1:10-14). Do you think they were utopian dreamers?”

- L. "Jesus once said, 'Therefore you shall be perfect' (Matthew 5:48). Do you think any of us will ever be able to reach this ideal state?"
- W. "Well, at least we can try. Even though we never reach it one hundred percent we should strive with all our might to do so."
- L. "A great many are urging a closer union of all denominations today."
- W. "Yes, but how hard are they trying to do away with all denominational barriers and be one in Christ Jesus?"
- L. "I don't know, but I suppose they are sincere."
- W. "A man might be sincere in what he does and yet not put forth a very strong effort to accomplish what he would like to see accomplished."
- L. "Yes, I realize that's true."

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- W. "Two or three times a year the religious bodies have a union service in which most of them participate. If they can lay aside their denominational differences for two or three services a year, why couldn't they do so indefinitely?"
- L. "Well, of course they could, if they really wanted to do so."
- W. "That's it. They could if they *wanted* to do so. But they prefer their denominational names and human organizations to the unity for which Jesus prayed and for which Paul labored."
- L. "I see your point there all right, but I don't know what can be done about it, except to let everybody decide for himself."
- W. "If we are not going to let the Bible decide it then this is all we can do. But this brings us right back to where we started. If we are *not* going to follow the Bible as our guide, then we should not only allow every big group but every little group to believe and teach what it wants."
- L. "Oh, we can't do that. We went over all that the last time we talked."
- W. "Yes, I know we did, and when you were not willing to do this, then I urged that we accept the Bible as our infallible rule in matters of religion, and you backed up on it. Then, when I charged that you were seeking religious popularity and prestige among those whom you regard as popular and powerful, you didn't want to admit it. Now, let me ask, just what do you believe? You refuse to let every man do as he pleases; you will not accept the Bible as final; and you don't want to admit that you are being influenced by popularity and prestige."

- L. "Well, I must confess that this has me confused, and I don't know all the answers, but I do know that we should all follow the Bible."
- W. "That's fine, if you'll only stick to it. Right here let me call your attention to a matter that often occurs. A popular evangelist who likes to play up to all the denominations goes into a city to hold a meeting for all of them. Maybe he spends four or five weeks with them, during which time all the denominations drop their differences and work together without any mention of their denominational peculiarities. Then, at the end of the meeting, they divide the converts among themselves and take off, away from all others, and indoctrinate them with their individual peculiarities."

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- L. "Yes, I've seen such."
- W. "Now, if it's good for all the denominations to meet together for a month and just preach the gospel, without any mention of their differences, then why wouldn't it be good to do so all the time?"
- L. "Personally, I think it would."
- W. "When we began this discussion you suggested that after becoming a Christian one should join some denomination so as to be associated with other Christians, because he could do more good that way."
- L. "Yes, so what?"
- W. "Let us suppose that ten different denominations take part in one such meeting as we've been talking about. During which time they just preach the gospel and say nothing about their denominational difference. Let us further suppose that one hundred and fifty people are converted and none join any denomination till the revival closes. Now, after they're converted and before they join anything, what are they?"
- L. "They're Christians, of course."
- W. "All right. Now, when the meeting is over and they're divided, with fifteen going to each of the ten denominations taking part, what are they?"
- L. "They're still Christians?"
- W. "Is that all?"
- L. "They are denominational Christians."
- W. "What caused them to be? Was it the gospel that made them something else?"

- L. "No, certainly not."
- W. "If they had followed the Bible, and it alone, would they have ever been divided and separated one from the other unto ten different groups?"
- L. "No, of course not."
- W. "Now, which do you think would be better: to divide and confuse the people whom we convert, or to encourage them to continue to live by the gospel and it alone?"
- L. "Well, it seems to me that they should have a church home."
- W. "I thought you were going to stick by the Bible as your guide instead of following popular sentiment."
- L. "Well, what would you do in a case of this kind?"
- W. "Instead of dividing them into denominational groups, I'd urge them to stick together and all be one. I'd tell them all

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that since they had become Christians, to continue to live the Christian life, to follow the plain teaching of the gospel by which they were saved from their past sins. I'd urge them to wear no denominational name, accept no denominational peculiarities, and just be one in Jesus Christ as He so fervently prayed and Paul so perseveringly labored. If all Christians would do this it would wipe out denominational barriers. Then, we would not have one denomination jumping on another; we would not have any little groups trying to outdo each other. We would all be one big family working and worshiping together and getting ready to go home to God, the Father of us all, where there will be only one big family, living, loving, and laboring together for evermore."

- L. "That certainly is a beautiful ideal, and one that every Christian should desire—if it would only work."
- W. "The only thing to keep it from working is our own opposition to it. It will work if we want it to do so. In fact, it is the only plan that will work. It's God's divine plan and if we do not accept it now, we'll be poorly prepared to meet God in judgment where there will be but one big family without any division whatever."
- L. "Do you think you'll ever be able to get all religious bodies to give up their human names and practices here and just be Christians and nothing more?"
- W. "Of course, I don't think I, personally, will ever be able to do this."
- L. "Well, do you think that the time will ever come when this will take place on

earth?"

W. "I can't answer that. But, at least, I can do all I can toward that end. God does not expect impossibilities out of any of us, but He does expect all of us to do the best we can."

—L.R. Wilson and *A Truth Lover*

WHY I AM A MEMBER OF THE LORD'S CHURCH

The facts that are presented are *my* reasons for being a member of the Church of Christ. If the evidence is strong enough to merit your accepting the conclusions reached, I pray that you, too, may become a non-denominational member of the Lord's church. If the evidence is too weak, reject the conclusions and seek stronger evidence from God's Word. Accept only the Bible as divine authority, since it is the only God-given blueprint of His true church.

First, We Must Study God's Word

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15). There, then, is the division that must be made at the right place.

What part does the Old Testament play in salvation or where shall we "rightly divide" the Bible?

"Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ; that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24).

"Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Colossians 2:14).

"Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace" (Ephesians 2:15).

"You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by the law, you have fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4).

Therefore, I cannot find any binding reasons for what I do regarding salvation in the old law. Where, then, shall I look?

"But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as he is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was estab-

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lished on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says, 'Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, *Know the Lord*, for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.' In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away" (Hebrews 8:6-13).

"And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives" (Hebrews 9:15-17). Christ had to die before His new will was binding.

"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself. This he said, signifying by what death He would die" (John 12:32, 33). The lifting up, of course, is on the cross.

"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2).

This is, then, what ultimate salvation means, the inheriting of one of these prepared mansions for a prepared people.

"Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' " (Matthew 25:34).

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If we are to inherit this prepared mansion where there will be no sin, we must find out how to become sin-free or "set apart."

"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (John 17:17). So we are not made free by some "feeling" we received at a mourner's bench, or while "down in the corn field," but by God's eternal truth.

"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (I Corinthians 10:12). I, then, must look to the New (Law) Testament for my reasons.

Let Us Explore How God's Word Teaches

1. By *Specific Command*. Such as the Ten Commandment Law which contains "thou shall" or "thou shall not."
2. By *Approved Example*. Such as in I Corinthians 11:1: "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." Jesus left us the perfect example (I Peter 2:21).
3. By *Necessary Inference*. Such as in Genesis 6:14—"Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch." This surely infers that absolutely nothing but gopher wood was acceptable.

We might reflect here on the argument presented by some that "the scriptures do *not* say specifically *not* to" (the underlying thought being, if not specifically prohibited it is allowed). This line of reasoning is beyond my comprehension.

When God told Moses to speak to the rock—"Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals" (Numbers 20:8), there was not specific "thou shall not strike" it. But, I believe all agree, anything but speaking was prohibited by *necessary inference*.

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To see how severe God's punishment was for this going beyond that which was commanded, read number 20:12: "Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.' " And Numbers 27:14—"For in the wilderness of Zin, during the strife of the congregation, you rebelled against My command to hallow Me at the waters before their eyes. (These are the waters of Meribah, at Kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin.)" *Adding* something to where God's Word is *silent* is therefore called "disbelief" and "rebellion." Many other examples of this principle could be given if space permitted.

We therefore have a responsibility to (1) do what God commands us, (2) abide by scriptural examples, and (3) observe inferred instructions.

Just How Important is the Church?

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25).

"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). (My wife wears my name.)

"Greet one another with a holy kiss. The church of Christ greet you" (Romans 16:16). The church can scripturally be referred to as the bride of Christ. The church was important enough for Christ to die for it.

Let us observe these important facts in summary of what has been said:

1. I cannot depend on "feelings" for salvation. "There is a way that seems right" (Proverbs 14:12).
2. I cannot look to the Old Testament for my pattern for living and worship. (Ephesians 2:15—it was abolished).
3. I cannot depend on tradition (Matthew 15:9—in vain they worshipped him, doctrine of men.)
4. I cannot have my "good old . . . religion." (I Peter 4:17—what will the end be if they obey not the gospel.)

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5. I must depend on God's book, specifically the New Testament, for my reasons for what I do religiously (John 12:48-50). We are to read the Old Testament for learning (Galatians 3:24, Romans 15:4).

My Reasons For Being A Member Of The Church of Christ

I want to be saved—become an heir to salvation. Saved people are God's children; God's children are "in Christ" (in the church); if "in Christ," then we are baptized into Christ.

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:26-29). So, the Church is the saved and, if I am a member of the church, I am "saved."

There are too many people that have a *building* in mind as the Church. The "called out" of every nation are the Church. If we would quit using the term "go to church" and use "go to church services," maybe this could become clearer. Let me assure you that I am not a member of a building. I am a member of the Church of Christ because it is:

1. Scriptural in **Name**. "Salute one another with an holy kiss. The Churches of Christ salute you " (Romans 16:16).
2. Scriptural in **Organization**: (1) Has elders that meet scriptural qualifications, over the local congregations. The term pastor, elder, or bishop is the very same office. "So when they had appointed elders, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed" (Acts 14:23). "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine"

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(I Timothy 5:17). An unmarried person, or one who had not proven his ability by ruling his children does not qualify. See Titus 1:6-9. (2) Has deacons serving under elders (I Timothy 3:8ff). (3) Has preachers serving under elders and called scriptural names. Can be called a minister (Romans 15:16); preacher (I Timothy 2:7); evangelist (Acts 21:8); or possibly a pastor (if the qualifications specified earlier are met). "He has sent redemption to His people; He has commanded His covenant forever; holy and awesome [reverend] is His name" (Psalm 111:9). This is the only time reverend is mentioned and it refers to God.

Scriptural in **Worship**. (1) Have *prayer*—"Pray without ceasing" (I Thessalonians 5:17). "I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (I Timothy 2:8). (2) *Singing* unaccompanied (no instrument used, see No. 3, page 3). "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives" (Matthew 26:30). "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19). I cannot find where a choir can obey the command "sing" for me.

(3) *Giving* (on the first day of the week). "On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that their be no collections when I come" (I Corinthians 16:2). "So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver" (II Corinthians 9:7). I cannot find "tithing" taught in the New Testament.

(4) *Lord's Supper*—"Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight (Acts 20:7). This surely did not represent a "common meal" for this is condemned in I Corinthians 11:34: "But if anyone is hungry, let him eat as home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come." (5) *Bible study*—(preaching or teaching doctrine). "And they continued

steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

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4. Scriptural in **Terms of Entrance into the Church**. One must: (1) *Hear* (the preaching of God's Word). "For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in who they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of who they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:13-14). (2) *Believe* (that Jesus is the Christ). "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). "But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24).

(3) *Repent* (turn away or turn again) of past sins. "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). (4) *Confess* (that Jesus is the Christ). "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before my father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32). "Also I say to you, who ever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God (Luke 12:8). "That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

(5) Be *baptized* (before saved from sins). "Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' " (Acts 2:38). "There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (I Peter 3:21).

The Lord adds us to His church when we comply with His conditions. We cannot "join" His Church. "Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). Nowhere can a verse be found that we believe *into*, confess *into*, repent *into* (all are *to*, *unto*, or "pointing toward"), but we are *baptized* into Christ.

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Summary

We have a responsibility to know God's way:

"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

All those who do not “obey the gospel” shall suffer eternal punishment (I Peter 4:17; II Thessalonians 2:8).

Yes, I am a member of the Church of Christ because:

1. It recognizes the Bible only as authority in religious matters (John 12:48-50).
2. It looks only to the law now in effect for what God expects of us today (Hebrews 7:12).
3. It is scriptural in name, organization, items of worship, and conditions which we may enter the Church.
4. It pleased for unity of all religious groups on the basis of the Bible only (John 17:17-21).

Conclusion

1. If you cannot find the name of the church you belong to in the Bible, will you reject its name?
2. If you cannot find the organization set-up of the church you belong to in the Bible, will you reject it?
3. If you cannot find the items of worship in the church you belong to in God’s Word, will you reject them?
4. If you find the church you go to allowing preachers to base salvation on anything other than the total of what God commands, will you reject it?
5. Will you be just a plain New Testament Christian that God may add you to His Church?

—Tirey G. Samsill
Businessman

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