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# Lakeland Hills Leader

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## What is church for? – Part One

*By Chuck Richardson*

I read an explanation of this question recently, and agreed in the main with the authors answer. The author said, I heard someone say a few days ago, “See, that just goes to show you that you can raise your kids in church all you want to, but.....” “and it literally shattered my heart. All because that kid had made a mistake. All because that kid’s sin was brought to light.” The author extolled the virtues of raising children “in church” in the article. No apologies were made for “raising my children in the church”. Likewise the article continues to explain it is more than a song and a sermon, stressing relationship, especially when there is a physical or spiritual need, and I say amen to this as well. But I believe we miss the relationship altogether because our perspective of church is a place to go to perform some designated religious rites.

In other words, many do not appreciate that church is **who**, and not **what**, so the author expresses her pain over the dismissal of church as an antidote for mistakes. May I suggest a correction to the reality of church? Since church is who and not what, we must learn who they are and what they do, if we’re going to correct any attitude of ineffectiveness. When church is impersonally institutionalized, the inevitable outcome is inadequate to combat harmful conduct, resulting in the disgust and rejection of the religion of God, spiritual activities, even of God altogether. Therefore, I want to describe the church and its function as God intended, and I am confident that if you embrace the design and purpose of the church, then you will no longer endure frustration in its inadequacies, because the church will fulfil all your needs and show you the way to everlasting peace.

The first observation is that the church is the body of believers that Christ Jesus built

{Ma. 16:18; Ac. 2:47}. Therefore, we, not being the architect, builder, or originator, are not privileged to modify or tinker with the form or function. We are the body which Christ established for His good pleasure {Ph. 2:13}, and that is built upon God granting Christ Jesus, by His good pleasure, for all the fulness which dwells in Him {Co. 1:15-19}. Likewise, we learn that this design is due to our need for reconciliation {Co. 1:20-21}, so that through reconciliation we may be presented blameless and beyond reproach {Co. 1:22}. This is only true if our “faith is firmly established and steadfast and not moved away from the hope of the gospel” {Co. 1:23}. Do these passages give me a permit for building, designing, or in any way changing the church?

The second observation is that Jesus is the author of my faith. And He is, because of His redemptive work {He. 2:9}, thus the writer says, “For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.” {He. 2:10} This observation is very much connected to the previous, only it moves the understanding of the church from the builder to that which was built, in that we have the One who is the author and perfecter of our faith {He. 12:2}. Friend, we cannot perfect our faith; only He can! But how does He do it? Jesus says, “you are to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” {Ma. 5:48} We don’t need to think this means we will achieve this by our own will and volition.

Though this declaration comes at the end of instructions on acceptable practices that continue through chapter seven, all of these are contingent upon the righteousness God dictates by authority (Matt.7:28).

It is “none of self and all of thee”! Even to this extent, “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.” {Ma. 10:37-39} Believing in Jesus, which entails keeping is commandments is the process of being perfected, and thus never dying {Jo. 11:25,26; 12:25; 14:15,21}. Even Jesus, led by example, submitting Himself to His Father’s will {Jo. 14:10}, and yet Jesus says, “Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves.” {Jo. 14:11} Therefore, James will tell us faith without works is dead {Ja. 2:17}, indicating that the author and finisher of our faith intends to perfect us through His faithful works.

Since Christ is the head of the church, being the Savior of the body {Ep. 5:23}, and the body is made of many members of one another {Ro. 12:5}, then why would we think we have a say in what or who the church is? Christ was foreknown before the foundation of the world {1Pe. 1:20} and He has chosen us before the foundation of the world {Ep. 1:4}, then let us defer to Him who and what we are and even what we will be.

We will explore the later statement in our next article in order to appreciate the church in its fulness.

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- \* **"The mighty oak tree was once a little nut that held its ground!"**
- \* **"The tongue must be heavy in deed because so few people can hold it!"**
- \* **"Sorrow looks back, worry looks around, and faith looks up!"**
- \* **"It isn't difficult to make a mountain out of molehill, just add a little dirt!"**