

*In
Search
of...*

Truth & Right

Tim Henderson, Editor

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“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.” Phil. 4:8 (NASB-U)

A publication of the
**Wellsburg
church of Christ**
Which meets at:
112 Sunset Ave.
Wellsburg, WV 26070
304-737-1422

We appreciate so much your presence here with us today. We would like to extend an invitation to join us at any of our other times of worship.

1st Century Christianity in the 21st Century

*Mark E. Larson
via— The Charlottesville Beacon*

TIMES OF SERVICES SUNDAY

Bible Classes* 10:00 AM
AM Worship 10:45 AM
PM Worship 6:30 PM

WEDNESDAY

Bible Classes* 7:00 PM
(* Bible Classes for All Ages)

Today's Sermons:

*AM: How Will Your
Story End?*

PM: Test Yourself!

*Audio CD's are available
free of charge in the foyer.*

*Please visit our website:
www.truthandright.org*

*If you have any questions regarding
what we teach and practice, please
feel free to ask*

To practice 1st century Christianity in the 21st century seems like “mission impossible” to many people today. Some have doubts that the ancient practices of Christians can be repeated in modern times. Others question whether we should even try, as if it wasn't important. The New Testament writings that record the beginnings and history of the church (e.g., the book of Acts) and the beliefs and teachings of the church are often belittled as “out of date” and too archaic to apply to the people of the 21st century.

The attitudes described above explain, at least in part, the reason why there are so many different churches and denominations with different beliefs and practices today. When people do not follow the original pattern or example of Christianity as revealed in the New Testament, division and a multitude of religious groups inevitably follows. When people doubt the original “blueprint” (i.e., the New Testament) and put their confidence instead in man-made creeds, traditions, and the wisdom of men, something other than genuine Chris-

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tianity will be established (Colossians 2:8; Matthew 15:14; 16:18).

Let us all be encouraged to know from the word of God that 1st century Christianity can be practiced in the 21st century! 1 Peter 1:24-25 should remove all skepticism: *"For, 'All flesh is like grass, And all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, And the flower falls off, But the word of the Lord abides forever...'"* The Scriptures are timeless, applying to every generation. Rather than a dead or stale document, the Scriptures are just as *"living and powerful"* today as they were in the first century and thus very relevant to our modern age (Hebrews 4:12). The Scriptures still have value today of helping *"the man of God"* to be *"perfect"* or complete spiritually in every way (2 Timothy 3:16-17).



The best and only way to know how people became Christians in the first century is to study the New Testament. Belief in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God was the first essential step (Acts 16:31). Next, people were required to repent or turn away from their sins (Acts 2:38; 3:19) and confess their faith in Jesus (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9-10). Finally, people were then ready to become Christians by being baptized into Christ (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27). Baptism clearly requires an immersion in water (e.g. Acts 8:37-39; Mark 1:10). For centuries, immersion has been viewed as a radical, disgraceful, and improper practice that goes against the tradition of sprinkling. An immersion in water may seem strange to people in modern times, however, immersion (baptism) it is only way to be *"buried with Jesus"* (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12) and as a result, gain forgiveness of sins and salvation (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21). Once a person is baptized into Christ, they are now a part of the Lord's church (Acts 2:38, 41, 47; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Hebrews 12:22-23).

Christians, according to the New Testament, organized into collective, local bodies of Christians or churches of Christ (Romans 16:16). Each local church was to have a plurality of elders (not just one, Acts 14:23) who provided oversight and leadership (Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:1-7). The rule of elders (also called pastors or bishops, Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 3:1) was limited only to the specific local church they were a part of (1 Peter 5:1-2). Also, each local church was to have deacons who served the church (Acts 6:1-6; Philippians 1:1). Evangelists, otherwise called preachers or ministers, simply preached God's word (Ephesians 4:11; 2 Timothy 4:2, 5). Each and every member was to contribute their talents in the work of the Lord (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Romans 12:4-8).

The organization of local churches in the first century was very simple compared to the often complicated structure and dangerous arrangements that men devise today. Compare the New Testament pattern with, for example, the system of Catholicism in which there is only one pastor or "priest" that rules over a local church. These priests are then subject to a higher office called a bishop who is in charge of many local churches. The bishops then submit to just one man called the Pope. "Protestant" denominations also deviate from the New Testament plan by having only one pastor over a local church. Each local church submits to the decisions and decrees made by the leadership of the denomination. These man-made organizations and positions of leadership (e.g., church associations, general conferences, councils, church presidents, etc.) take away church autonomy and independence. This deviation from the New Testament Scriptures has led to widespread error in churches and an abuse of power and authority. If only people would follow the New Testament model for the church, then every local church will be set up the way the Lord intended, thus bringing glory to God,

not men.

The work of the church in the first century was also much more simple than what typically takes place in modern times. The three major works of the local church were: (1) Evangelism or teaching the lost (Matthew 28:18-20; Philippians 4:15-18); (2) Edification or building up one another through the word of God (Acts 20:32; Ephesians 4:16); (3) Benevolence toward needy Christians only (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35; 11:27-30; 1 Timothy 5:16). In contrast, men today want to add to the work of the church and broaden its mission. Many churches today are engaged in all kinds of works that God did not assign such as a "ministry of recreation," world or community benevolence, maintaining orphan homes, and political crusades. Such works were not the work of the church in the first century, though certainly these types of works individual Christians could do (Galatians 6:10; James 1:27). By keeping the work of the church simple in conformity to the New Testament Scriptures, we not only please God, but we eliminate works that distract us, allowing us to remain focused on the spiritual, on what is most important for us to do as a congregation.

The place of assembly for the church in the first century was also simple and certainly possible for us to repeat today. Since Christians are commanded to assemble themselves together (Hebrews 10:24-25), there must of necessity be an adequate place for assembly. Contrary to popular belief, a church does not have to meet in an official "church building" or some kind of fancy, cathedral with stain glass windows. A church may assemble in a variety of places, provided it is lawful and expedient (1 Corinthians 6:12). In the first century, and even the second, it was common for local churches, for their members to meet together in private resi-

dences or in a member's home (e.g. Romans 16:3-5, 23; Colossians 4:15).

Christians in the first century assembled together on the first day of the week to engage in several major acts of worship: Partaking of the Lord's supper, prayer, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Ephesians 5:19), and the giving of their means towards the work of the Lord (1 Corinthians 16:1-2) - *spiritual* sacrifices unto God (Hebrews 13:15-16; Philippians 4:18; 1 Peter 2:5). In worship, they did not burn incense, light decorated lamp stands, or use mechanical instruments like some churches do today. Such practices passed away with the Law of the Old Testament (Colossians 2:13-16; Hebrews 8:6-13). Some churches try to "improve" worship by providing entertainment such as concerts, bands, theater, and the like. Yet, to please the Lord, only worship that is according to the New Testament pattern or the truth of God's word will do (John 4:23-24). The spiritual simplicity of worship during the first century most certainly can be practiced today.

To simply be Christians, in character, in conduct, and in everything we do, we must be willing to "go back to the first century" - to the original pattern for Christianity as found in the New Testament Scriptures. Our aim should be to please the Lord as well as honor Him by



respecting His authority: *"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father"* (Colossians 3:17). To be genuine Christians, let us demonstrate our faith in Christ and our love for Him by doing what He says as recorded in the Scriptures (Luke 6:46; John 12:48; 14:15; Ephesians 3:3-5;

James 2:14-26). May we who live in the 21st century always demonstrate ourselves to be real Christians like those of the 1st century.

Those Serving This Week

Sunday AM

Class Prayer	Ed Roberts
Announcements	Chuck Isinghood
Song Leader	Harold Marshall
Scripture	Matthew 6:16-34
Reader	Ken Prager
Prayer	Don Coen, Sr.
Speaker	Tim Henderson
Lord's Supper	
Bread	Tim Henderson
Fruit of the Vine	Earl Miller
Serve	Matt Ferrell
Serve	Chaz Schaffer
Closing Prayer	Don Coen, Jr.

Sunday PM

Announcements	Chuck Isinghood
Song Leader	Ken Prager
Scripture	Matthew 7:1-12
Reader	Harold Marshall
1st Prayer	Dave Harless
Speaker	Tim Henderson
Communion	Dan Marton
Closing Prayer	Earl Miller

Wednesday

Announcements	Chuck Isinghood
Class Prayer	Ken Prager
Song Leader	Tim Henderson
Invitation	Dave Harless
Closing Prayer	Ed Roberts

Please inform the one in charge of announcements if you are unable to fulfill your responsibilities.

News N Notes

Please continue to remember these in your prayers:

- Zeda Goddard is staying with family while she recovers from double pneumonia
- Zeda Goddard's sons, Dallas and Terry, and her daughter Tammy Garrison
- Blake Headen, Alberta's husband
- Jerry & Dottie Henderson are in Yakima, Washington
- Betty Isinghood will be having knee surgery Tuesday, May 18th.
- Ronald Lancaster is in Weirton Medical Center—room 886
- Virginia Malick, Peggy Miller's mother
- Alfred & Mary Jane Myers
- Jimmy Roberts, Ed & Marie's son
- Jim Roberts, Ed Roberts' father
- Marie Roberts
- Kris Shane
- Gabriel Taylor, 4 year old great grandson of Don & Phyllis, dealing with cancer.

Don't forget our Shut-ins

Valley Haven:

- Ethel Mahan
- Pauline Sellers

Ann's Retreat:

- Josephine Clow

At Home:

- Mabel Fleming
- Zeda Goddard
- Betty Hunter
- Pauline Midcap
- Ann Rudolph

Send them a card—give them a call—let them know we are thinking about them.

If someone needs to be added to this list, please call:
304-914-2262 or 304-914-2263