

“Questions That Keep People Away From Church”

Question: “Why would anyone want to take their time to study the Bible and find answers as to why people stay away from Church?”

There are probably lots of reasons and answers we could give. Each one would be just as significant as the one before, and it would do us well to know them all. But are there some key answers which make a time like this vital to our living faith in Christ Jesus?

First: Let me ask you the question again – “Why would anyone want to take their time to study the Bible, and find answers as to why people stay away from Church?”

“May I share with you three reasons why I think this time is very important!”

1. The Great Command...

" One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: **‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’** The second is this: **‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’** There is no commandment greater than these.” “Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.” When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions." **(Mark 12:28-34, NIV)**

"“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”" **(John 13:34-35, NIV)**

"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you." **(John 15:12, NIV)**

- a. Loving obedience to our Savior and Lord is first.**
- b. This has to be our highest priority.**

2. The Great Commission is the next answer.

" Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."" **(Matthew 28:16-20, NIV)**

"He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."" **(Mark 16:15-16, NIV)**

"He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."" **(Acts 1:7-8, NIV)**

- a. It is really hard to go when we don't know the facts.**
- b. It is hard to go when our motivation is anything less than the specific commission of our Commander and Chief.**
- c. It is hard to go in the face of a world set on destroying everything we hold as truth and near and dear.**

3. The Great Community is the third answer we need to know.

" "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'" **(Matthew 25:31-40, NIV)**

- a. ***“People really don’t care how much we know, until they know how much we care.”***
- b. ***Faith at work provides opportunities for us to tell others about Jesus.***
- c. ***Faith that never works speaks louder than we would ever want to acknowledge.***
- d. ***Providing a cup of cold water in Jesus’ name allows each of us the opportunity we need to answer the tough questions people ask that keep them out of Church.***
- e. ***I think we all can see the great need of a study time like this.***

“What are some of the questions that keep people away from Church?”

“Who is Jesus and why would I want to follow Him?”

“Is church really important in my life?”

“What’s involved in Church membership?”

“I’m a good person why do I need forgiveness?”

“What is a Christian?”

“What’s so special about the Lord’s Supper?”

“There are so many different churches, how do I know who is right?”

“Do I have to give if I go?”

“Isn’t church just a bunch of stuffed shirted hypocrites?”

“A long time ago a church really hurt my family, how am I supposed to forgive them?”

“Aren’t preachers just after our money and our wives?”

“How can I live a perfect life, I know “me” better than anyone?”

“How could an almighty God let bad things happen to my family if He really wanted me to go to church?”

“Are there other questions you know that are serving to keep people away from church?”

The First Question: “Who is Jesus and why would I want to follow Him?”

1. Jesus is a reality in history.

- a. We mark time by the birth of Jesus – B.C./A.D.**
- b. We celebrate His birth, death and resurrection...**
- c. Non-Biblical historians attest to the reality of Jesus...**
- d. The Encyclopedia Britannica uses 20,000 words in describing this person, Jesus.**
- e. Jewish historians verify the reality of one Jesus of Nazareth.**
- f. To say there never was a Jesus of Nazareth is stand on sinking sand.**
- g. The world of today would have us think and believe that Jesus was nothing more than a legend.**
- h. Reality tells us exactly the opposite.**
- i. The Apostle John wrote it this way.**

" That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete." (1 John 1:1-4, NIV)

2. Jesus of Nazareth is the answer to hundreds of Old Testament prophecies written over a period of 1,500 years.

- a. Why would God give us so many prophecies concerning Christ and His coming?**
- b. So we would be able to recognize Him when He comes.**
- c. Jesus constantly referred the people to the Old Testament writings.**

1.) Matthew 5:17; Luke 24:27; Luke 24:44; John 5:39,40,46,47; Matthew 21:42; Matthew 26:56; Luke 4:20-21; John 15:25

- d. Jesus wanted us to know for sure that He was the One spoken of by the prophets.**
- e. The New Testament writers used the same Scriptures to show us that Jesus really is who He said He was.**

1.) Acts 3:18; Acts 10:43; Acts 13:29; Acts 17:2-3; I Corinthians 15:3-4; Romans 1:2; I Peter 2:5-6; Matthew 2:4-6...

- f. Josh McDowell gives four very profound reasons why predictive prophecy is important for you and me.**

- 1.) We can be assured there is a Divine Intellect behind the Old and New Testaments.**
- 2.) It establishes the fact of God.**
- 3.) It Authenticates the Deity of Jesus.**
- 4.) It declares the inspiration of the Bible.**

- g. The Old Testament contains over 300 references to the Messiah that were fulfilled in Jesus – How much more proof do we need?**

3. Jesus is the Only Begotten Son of God declared by signs, wonders, and miracles He preformed.

"Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know." (Acts 2:22, NIV)

"Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." (**John 10:37-38, NIV**)

"You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life." (**John 5:39-40, NIV**)

"Philip said, 'Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.' Jesus answered: 'Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves." (**John 14:8-11, NIV**)

"Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written." (**John 21:25, NIV**)

"Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (**John 20:30-31, NIV**)

4. Jesus is the only Messiah who has conquered both death and the grave.

Question: If you are going to trust your eternity to a Savior would you choose one who was alive or one who was dead?

a. Again from Josh McDowell – "Jesus has three basic credentials attesting to His claims."

- 1.) The impact of His life upon history.**
- 2.) Fulfilled prophecy in His life.**
- 3.) His resurrection.**

Quote: Josh McDowell – “A student at the University of Uruguay said to me, ‘Professor McDowell, why can’t you refute Christianity?’ I answered: ‘For a very simple reason, I am not able to explain away an event in history – the resurrection of Jesus Christ.’”

b. The foundation of Christianity stands or falls with the reality of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

" Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born." (1 Corinthians 15:1-8, NIV)

c. How many witnesses does it take for us to believe that an event really took place?

d. In every year of His earthly ministry Jesus told His followers what was going to happen when He went to Jerusalem.

" From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." (Matthew 16:21, NIV)

"No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father." (John 10:18, NIV)

"He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself." (Luke 24:25-27, NIV)

"When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit." (John 19:30, NIV)

"A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:26-29, NIV)

5. Jesus is the only sacrifice sufficient to pay the debt for your sin and my sin.

- a. Part of the difficulty we have with accepting Jesus is our inability to understand how great was our need of a Savior.**
- b. Sin entered the world in the Garden when Adam and Eve disobeyed God.**
- c. From our first parents we inherited a sin nature.**
- d. The Bible tells us that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.**
- e. Our relationship with God has been broken.**
- f. We needed a way to return to God.**
- g. By our own power and our own merits this was never going to take place so that no man or woman could boast.**
- h. We needed a sacrifice for the sin in our lives.**
- i. This sacrifice had to fulfill the requirements of God because He was the One who had been offended.**
- j. Jesus is the only one to fulfill the requirements of God to pay the debt for your sin and my sin.**

"But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:20-21, NIV)

" The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29, NIV)

"In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." (Hebrews 9:22, NIV)

"The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God. And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: 'You are a priest forever.'" Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever." (Hebrews 7:18-28, NIV)

" Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (Hebrews 4:14-16, NIV)

Remember this: "We owed a debt we could not pay. Jesus paid a debt He did not owe."

"My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:1-2, NIV)

6. Jesus the only name under heaven by which all people may be saved.

- a. In this age of political correctness this is not popular.**
- b. In this age of tolerance to all this is not good.**

- c. ***But when we see just how true this statement is we will understand the urgency in telling others about Jesus.***
- d. ***Contrary to popular preaching and teaching there are not many roads to God.***

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." (Matthew 7:13-14, NIV)

- e. ***We are told it doesn't matter what god you serve because there are many gods and many ways to heaven.***

"And God spoke all these words: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. "You shall have no other gods before me. "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments." (Exodus 20:1-6, NIV)

- f. ***We have one hope in eternity, and that hope is based in finding Jesus as Savior and Lord in this life.***

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God ; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." (John 14:1-7, NIV)

- g. ***The Apostle Peter summed our need for Jesus as clearly as it can be done for us.***

"Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his

descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, “The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.” “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”” **(Acts 2:29-36, NIV)**

"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: “Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is “the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.’ Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”” **(Acts 4:8-12, NIV)**

- a. **Jesus is the Lord...**
- b. **Jesus is the Christ...**

“These are just some of the answers available to help people who want to know, “Just who is Jesus and why would I want to follow Him?”

