

THE BIBLE VIEW

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Theme: Church Members

Every Church Has Them

Bill Brinkworth

Every church has its good and bad members. The church that John was writing to in III John had several of both categories, I am sure. However, the apostle wrote of three members in his letter.

Two of the members were good representations of what a Christian should be. Gaius was the “well-beloved” (III John:1). He was most likely a friendly person who many loved. Many reports from the church told John how Gaius was a blessing to the church family (III John:3, 6) and how the man attended to the needs of other Christians (III John:5). It was evident by his concern for the brethren that he truly loved the members of his church.

Another blessing in the church was Demetrias. John also heard good things said about him (III John:12). These two were an encouragement to the apostle’s heart. It is always good and encouraging to hear how people get saved, get their hearts and lives changed by the Holy Spirit’s work, and do much for the cause of Christ and the people of God.

People like those two encourage others by their proof of love for the family of God. They are sometimes part of the reason many stay faithful in church. However, even if we are saved, we still have sinful flesh to contend with, and there will often be “stinkers” in every church. In this church, there was one like that. His name was Diotrephes.

Diotrephes had a terrible testimony in the eyes of others. Instead of showing the spirit of meekness the other two good members showed, this man exhibited improper Christian behavior. He was known for always wanting recognition (III John:9).

I can imagine Diotrephes was one of those that always had something to say. He was the one that got much of the attention and the glory. He refused to accept John the Apostle and any missionaries John sent to the church (III John:10). This discontented man did all he could to talk poorly of John and his work. Diotrephes even had people kicked out of the church that showed charity to anyone Paul sent to the ministry.

This type of man ruins the testimony of any ministry. When man tries to get the glory, which Diotrephes was attempting to receive, the Holy Spirit is grieved. The work for Christ in a ministry can come to a screeching halt. That is one reason many once-thriving churches are now spiritually dead and doing little for the cause of Christ. Men like this man, unfortunately, often become an excuse for many leaving a church.

In every ministry, there are two types. The good workers are the light in this dark world. They make the church a Christian family. The evil (III John:11) should be ignored and not be the

reason anyone leaves a church. If one quits because of a “Diotrephes,” one can be assured that the Holy Spirit is not involved in the decision. If you have one or more of “Diotrephes” in your church, do not leave. Get your eyes and ears off them, and keep them on the Saviour. He will never let you down, and He is the reason you should attend anyway!

“You are not too bad to go to church. You are not too good to stay out!”

— Author Unknown

What Can Keep People from Church

Bill Brinkworth

“Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” Ephesians 6:11

Daily the Christian must prepare himself to ward off the wiles, or tricks, the devil has for him. Satan’s stratagem is to do all he can to keep us from obeying God. One area he prompts us to be disobedient in is for us not to attend church. However, we cannot blame all our disobedience on him. Our pride, laziness, and sinful nature also keep us from being faithful in attendance.

Some of the popular excuses in keeping many from faithfully attending church are:

Church “hopping”: Church attendance is a must for Christian growth. God has raised up a pastor of a local church to minister to your needs. When you miss church, you miss what God had for you that day. When you are a church member and go to this church today and another one next week, your “hopping” around keeps you from attending the church God has for you.

Discontentment: If God originally pointed you to that church to join and attend, you need to stay there until He tells you to move! “I’m not happy with the preacher” or “That church is too cold” are not excuses not to attend. The question should be, “Does God want me to attend there?”

Hurt feelings: All churches are made up of humans. All humans are sinners. Therefore, there is no perfect church! People will accidentally or purposely say the wrong things. Everyone gets their feelings hurt sometimes. I am sure you have hurt other’s feelings. Again, the question should be, “Did God call me here?” If He did, hurt feelings are not a legitimate reason to leave a church.

Sin: When people are purposely sinning against God, they most often do not want to be reminded of it. Where will they be reminded of it? In church. That is often why they will not attend. However, to get one’s freedom back from the control of sin, one should hear the Word of God, not avoid it.

Conviction: When the Holy Spirit of God urges people to halt their sin, instead of obeying His small “voice,” they avoid it by keeping out of church. Sometimes they even join another church, where watered-down preaching does not remind them of what God has already spoken to them about.

Lack of understanding of the things of God. Since they do not read their Bible and do not know what it teaches, when they hear hard, convicting preaching from the Bible, they stay far away from it. Ignorance of the Word of God keeps many from attending a strong, Bible-believing church.

Legitimate reasons, such as sickness, vacations, or work. Sometimes good excuses keep people from attending church for a week or so. That is understandable and happens. However, because they miss, it is easier to miss twice, then three times, then it is months since they attended the ministry. Breaking a routine of consistent church attendance is a subtle way of stopping faithful attendance.

Pride: “No one shook my hand,” “They are such an unfriendly church,” or “No one is going to tell me what to do.” These thoughts and others reflect that the sin of pride is involved. Pride keeps many out of church.

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” Hebrews 10:25

“Don’t wait until six strong men have to carry you to church in a casket. Go when you can walk in.” — Author Unknown

The Church of His Own Opinion

Bill Brinkworth

“Well, I need to get up. It is Sunday. I need to go to church,” he thought, as he rubbed his eyes. He struggled to make the first move of the day out of bed.

“But then again, why do I have to go? God is everywhere. So why can’t I worship Him here or on the lake? I know, I can take the boat and go fishing. It will be okay with God. I’ll just talk to Him out in the boat and admire all He has made.”

The convicting voice of the Holy Spirit whispered, *“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is...” (Heb. 10:25a).*

That fleeting remembrance of the verse soon left as the half-slumbering sluggard drifted in and out of sleep. Minutes later, he again awoke and continued his thoughts. “Besides, the preacher is not always right anyway. He thinks the Bible is the only source of knowing God’s way. Why, it’s just a book and probably has a lot of mistakes. What does he know? Besides, I’m a good person, and I think I know what is right. I don’t think you have to go to church every time. I don’t think God wants me to stay away from everything bad. I know He wants me to have fun sometimes. He probably doesn’t expect me to be perfect.”

Again the soft voice of the Holy Spirit put in the contemplator's mind a verse that was preached the last time he was in church, *“The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.” (Isaiah 40:8)*

The fleeting reminder of the verse did nothing to change the opinion of the dozing man. Another thought was chased around by the man’s logic. “Yeah, I’m a good person. I don’t need the

preaching and Bible reading like those other folks. I do a lot of good things, and God knows about them. As long I'm not as bad as the others, I'm sure it's okay with God."

The Holy Spirit wanted to shout, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" (Rom. 3:23), but He did not think the man would listen. He decided He would try one more time to speak to the hardening heart, "... There is none righteous, no, not one:" (Rom. 3:10b).

The verse was received in the half-slumbering mind, but it, too, was ignored. "Well, if I don't go to church, I can save some money by not putting it in the offering plate. Besides, the preacher just wants my money. That church has got more than enough."

Immediately, the Holy Spirit thought of the verse about how not tithing is robbing from God (Malachi 3:8-10). Still, He reasoned, "Why should I tell him. He's ignored everything I tried to tell him already. He will just rationalize it somehow. Probably the old excuse, 'Well, that's just an Old Testament verse and not for today.' He has decided to do what he wants and will not obey anyway." The Holy Spirit was silent to the slumberer and spoke no more.

Ten more minutes of dozing continued until finally, the man made another move to get out of his bed. He already had formulated his plans for the day. He would walk the dog, get breakfast, and hook up the boat and head out to the lake.

One more local Church of My Own Opinion had just let out, but there would be millions of them meeting all over the world. It was the most popular denomination. As with most of the meetings, the Holy Spirit's voice was not wanted to be heard, so He was likewise silent in most of their "services". He was very grieved (Eph. 4:30).

"I wonder why people change churches all the time. What difference does it make which one you stay home from?" — Author Unknown