

What is church? :



or



What's the 'church'? And why is there a decline in US attendance?

Hello brothers and sisters in Christ, and friends,

Here in central Florida when I'm out working to pay bills, I get asked one question very, very often. That question is - where is a good church? It's asked in a number of different ways. And it is typically spurred by the Biblical and history conversations that we were having and enjoying. It seems many people love history and current events subjects because they are trying to figure out what's going on and like comparing notes with others who are paying attention and aren't settling with the lies of the 'official story'. Many people we talk to are trying to find what's going on in the real world and are getting tired of the corporate-controlled 'mainstream news' because they cannot figure out what's going on. And many we talk to are also getting tired of their dead 501c3 corporation and don't know where to go.

Over the past number of years, I have been typically able to tell them where my family was attending and/or several church-gatherings that were spiritually alive. Now in the last year or so, being aware of most of those same church-gatherings that I once recommended and having seen their spiritual decline... my list continues to grow smaller and smaller. So, seeing that dilemma, I started to study into other ideas and converse with my brethren (and sisteren) locally (and across the US) on churches that teach all of the Word of God, and not just the parts that tickle itching ears. Sadly, here in central Florida, I'm finding it **very** hard to recommend all but a few, because the leaven of worldliness and popularity has crept in and washed out their salt. Many so-called 'pastors' in this area can quote the favorite football team (or other idol/sports), scores & players, and the latest perverse movies or TV shows, but cannot even explain clearly what the gospel is or the narrow road and cost of discipleship that Jesus taught. Many here have become apostate - which God warns of some severe judgment on them in Matthew 18, Hebrews 6:4-6, and many other similar passages). Now I expect that some (if not many) of you who are reading this are probably thinking 'hey Steven, that sounds like this area around here too.'

understand. Many people tell me this, so I'm not surprised. So, yes I see and hear this pattern all across the US - which is why I'm writing this article/Bible study. =)

These details I just mentioned show why attendance has dwindled - the whole of God's Word is not taught most places anymore, and many teachers either lean toward legalism or lawlessness, rather than the balanced and health fear of the Lord that continually teaches us to depart from sin and walk more in His ways, which grows into a richer deeper fellowship with Him and those who follow Him. [There's a good solution/conclusion here - hope you'll stick with me =)].

So, as the title suggests, there are 2 reasons for this article and I hope to cover both of them well (though briefly) -

1> What the 'church' is according to the Bible, and

2> Why (I believe) main-stream 'church' attendance is dropping dramatically.

So, let's start with question 1: 'What is the church, according to the Bible?' To understand this subject, we need to first start by looking at the Biblical definition of the word 'church'. The subject of translations from the original Bible languages to modern culture is a continual study for me, and I think many would be surprised what all is not translated well. And, the more I study, the more I find we have okay translations, but not ones that are clear and accurate to the original complex and mathematical texts (Hebrew and Greek). So... sorry for the little side-trail, back to the word 'church'... The English word we find in our translations for the gathering of believers is called the: 'church'. And it is translated from the Greek word: 'ecclesia' (also written 'ekklesia'), meaning: 'called out ones' or a/the gathering of believers, and sometimes it's used to talk about a little gathering in one area, and sometimes the whole body of Christ. And from what I see in studying the Word, the subject of 'church' or 'gathering of believers' first showed up in Jesus' teachings when He said "**... and upon this Rock, I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.**" (Matthew 16:18, *my emphasis added*) That's a pretty clear and very good promise right there! ~ Around the world we see that this 'gathering of believers' takes different forms, has different sizes, and is organized differently according to their culture. Some of the worldwide gatherings of believers are strong in one area and not strong in others. Yet, as is often the case - sadly wolves like Rick Warren, Joel Osteen, Joel Hunter, Benny Hinn, Joyce Meyers, etc. are also mass-exporting their lies, including 'Purpose-driven Life' etc. So, we are seeing a growth of repeats of the old lies. But aside from that - there are also real home-churches (also called 'house-churches') world-wide, and some are turning to One True Messiah and Savior (despite satan's many attempts to stop or distract from that).

Another way to see this... you know it when you see it. That sparkle in the eyes of the church members as they're discussing the Word that they studied this week, and comparing notes on how they can follow God. And they are excited to hear another seed of God's Word planted in the heart of a family member or stranger who God sent across the path of another believer... it's something so sweet yet so different from many other places. You know - the kind of places where people just sit around taking

up time talking about things that will not matter in 100 years... chitchatting about what the world calls important. The richness and encouragement gained in genuine Biblical fellowship is totally different from the fakeness of this world. It can't be faked... and neither can a genuine gathering of believers. That genuine gathering of believers who desire to fellowship, understand and share more of God's Word - THAT is a 'church'.

Now let's look back to the US, when you think of 'church-gatherings' here in the US - what's the first thing that comes to mind? Probably the mega-'churches', right? And then the next thing you probably think of (if you're like me) is the not-very-big 'common churches', the places that have a bit of friendliness, the essence of Scripture, but no real spiritual life, Biblical fellowship, or content. You probably have noticed that the ones that you can remember seem to operate like businesses too - putting tremendous pressure on people to promise how much they will give that year, and list of little rules including - arrive on time (or else), listen and laugh along, and stay involved in their light and frivolous activities, etc. It's busy-ness, but not much real spiritual life.

Why does what we see around us and what the world calls 'churches' look so far different from a gathering of believers to fellowship and grow together in the Word? Well, that's because the majority of the places called churches, are not called 'churches' by God - just men.

A Biblical church doesn't need a building or a budget. A Biblical church doesn't need an entertainment program. A Biblical church doesn't need a visitations committee, or most other committees. A Biblical church doesn't need a age-divided setup either. In the book of Acts, they all gathered together - as a family... A Biblical church just needs the Bible, and at least one leader who is an active growing follower of Christ and diligent Bible student (who is also hopefully training up others to do the same). The gathering of believers may also want to include a hymnal or book of Scriptural-based lyrics for songs - but even that isn't required. You may remember that the early church was started house to house, with the conversations and fellowship being breaking bread and discussing how to change and leave sins behind and how to follow Christ in a culture that hated truth. Look around - doesn't that sound like today? Let's look at Acts for a minute. **"Then those (new believers) who gladly received his word (Peter's teachings) were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them (on Pentecost). And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."** (Acts 2:42-47) ~

All of the details you see right there in that last passage *are necessary* in any Biblical 'church'. Now, with that said, let's also remember 2 other very important passages: 1st Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11.

"And God appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, variety of tongues..." (1st Corinthians 12:28)

"And He Himself (*Christ*) gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Ephesians 4:11-12)

>> When you pull those two passages together, you have the Biblical structure of the church: 1) apostles, 2) prophets, 3) evangelists, 4) pastors-teachers, and then the rest from there. Now, the *apostles* referenced here were 12+ (Judas replaced by Matthias and the later addition by God of Saul/Paul as an apostle) - Jesus' closest companions. No modern day 'apostles' exist today. *Church-planters*: yes. *Modern-day apostles*: no. *Prophets* have existed from the beginning. Jesus even noted that Abel (the brother Cain murdered) was a prophet. This next passage shows Jesus strongly and loudly rebuking the hypocritical religious leaders of His day. **"Therefore the wisdom of God also said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,' that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation (*hypocritical scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees*), from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes I say to you, it shall be required of this generation."** (Luke 11:49-51) And in Scripture there are many other real God-appointed prophets mentioned, including in the book of Acts. - *Evangelists*, according to God's Word, have more authority than pastors, which means they can also appoint or reject pastors with God's authority, when they are actively growing in the Word. The role of evangelist is pretty much just to share the gospel with those around us. All of us who are genuinely saved need to be sprinkling the seeds of God's Word and being active in training up disciples for Christ - so whether you feel like you fit in this category or not, we still are supposed to be active in calling and drawing men to Christ. *The pastor-teacher* have a clear role to accurately teach and explain the Word of God, and that does not include them trying to dominate the 3 categories above them - apostles prophets or evangelists, or control them. Sadly many who claim to be 'pastors' today very often do try to dominate those who are genuine evangelists with a Biblical gospel, but that's because many who claim the title of 'pastor' aren't obeying God's Word, otherwise there would be harmony. Pastors have no right to tell an evangelist that he cannot share the gospel at/with the church, or must do it the way the 'pastor' says is right. As for the Biblical qualifications of a pastor/teacher, the qualifications from God are specific and have to do with their life-patterns, heart-motivations (fruit), and these are clearly explained in 1st Timothy 3 and Titus 1 and 2. You will notice that a degree or commendation from an 'accredited school' are not included in these Biblical requirements. Pastors/teachers do need to be making sure they are actively keeping themselves as under-shepherds under Christ, shepherding the flock in God's Word, not man's traditions or the 'norms' of the culture. And from the pattern of Scripture, you will also noticed that most of the effective

pastors/teachers came from their own hometown and continued to maintain that good testimony - not imported from somewhere else (or hiding from other scandals in other places).

~ If the gathering of believers just has those passages, and those very simple understandings from Scripture, and if they are working together to follow that Biblical pattern, then they are doing what God teaches that a 'church' should do. Teach the whole of God's Word, do not compromise with the world, guard against idols, rebuke when necessary (according to the situation), together grow in becoming graciously accountable, growing together in following the footsteps of their Master and Savior, and actively share God's Word and the gospel with those around them. If they are doing those, God recognizes them as a gathering of believers or 'church'.

Secondary passages to study:

1st Timothy 3 and 4

Titus 1 and 2

Acts 15

Romans 14

Matthew 18

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So, with that reminder of what a Biblical church is, let's next look at some reasons why the 'mainstream' 'church' attendance is declining.

The top people with money that are pushing for the one-world gov't (Rothschilds, Rockefellers, Bill Gates, the Bush family, the Clintons, Brzezinskis, etc...) are also making it impossible to run any medium to large church and teach *all* of the Bible. You add onto that fact, that through our 'seminaries' since the 1950s, the majority (if not all) of the new trainees are all freemasonry-compliant and many of them are masons themselves. I know of three to a dozen prominent 'pastors' here in central Florida that are masons - which is the 'ecumenical' gospel and not the gospel of Jesus Christ. You add onto that fact this - when a religious gathering wants the approval and permission from the gov't/European mafia's 'approval' (from the illegal corporations: Federal Reserve and IRS), they sign papers that say that they will not teach the most important parts of the Bible, and they get regular updates (last we heard every month) of what they can and cannot teach. This means that they are in clear violation of God's Word, but they also become clouds without rain - preferring their sins and idols and man's approval rather than God's approval. **"Preach the Word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up [pile, gather] for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."** (2nd Timothy 4:2-5) ~ And, that then sets these rebellious men behind the

pulpits to chase their foolish rebellions and favorite sins, which then makes them: 'clouds without rain' (2nd Peter 2:17). " **These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.**" (2nd Peter 2:17) ~ and there are many more verses that describe teachers who present themselves as Bible teachers, but lie, twist God's Word, comfort the rebellious in their rebellion, and turn many from the narrow road through the narrow gate - the only way to Christ (Matthew 7:13-14; John 14:6). Have you heard of an ecumenical religion called 'freemasonry'? If you are not aware of that or are only vaguely aware of that, then you probably are also not aware that 90%-95% of recognized clergy are involved in masonry, or have made agreements with the Jesuits (Vatican, 'church' of Rome) or Yale's Skull and Bones. From my studies and conversations with a wide variety of people, most of those behind pulpits that are corrupted or compromised seem to be often a mason, or secondarily a Jesuit-trained clergy. If you know anything about the secret oaths that are taken by the followers of Ignatius Loyola ('founder' of the Jesuits), and/or the secret oaths and pledges made inside masonic lodges, then you also know that these types of men cannot be trusted because their loyalty is to something else much more than the Scriptures. They either hold to the Scriptures and run from those past agreements (usually with loud apologies for their allegiances to these satanic groups) or they are still tied to them by past secret oaths and pledges. *[Many who attend seminary start in freemasonry then, because we have many professors at these 'seminaries' who are masons too. How does one find out which ones are involved in freemasonry? Prayer and asking good questions till the truth comes out.]* Masons acting as clergy cannot be trusted in any leadership position in the gathering of believers because they are going to lead many away from obedience to the Bible and toward the lies and sin-traps of satan. Their private life is not consecrated to following Jesus Christ. Paul talked about this type: "**For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.**" (Philippians 2:21) If you see the masonic square and compass or other symbols on the building or logo or decorations or on the leaders' vehicle(s), or pictures of strange crosses, etc - then you need to ask God to help you to find out if there are masons in leading your church, and how to chase them off, or to lead the genuine believers away from these liars. ~ If you'd like to know more details about the masons and see a gospel tract written for them, here's a link that you can read and share:
<http://www.incpu.org/ms-tr-darker.pdf>

Another key problem: Have you heard that there are FEMA-clergy? What does that mean? Simply put - there are pastors, rabbis and imams who are on the gov't payroll, and who are leaders in helping the people be okay with martial law and getting them ready for the next false flag attack and the push of the New World Order and the one-world-government. A few years back it came out publicly that at least 80,000 of the clergy had gone through classes to work with this martial law and the lies of false gospels and false religions. I have seen confirmation that there have been many more trained, but I don't know how many. I do know that 33rd degree mason Billy Graham's 'The Cove' is involved in these trainings, and the 'Emergency Relief' is a cover for gov't training (really elite training to pacify the public in time of 'martial law'). Ask God to help you see this subject deeper - He'll give you what you can handle in a way that

will draw you closer to Him.

The last subject to be aware of on the subject of fake 'pastors' who have gone apostate - is when they become CEOs of a 501c3 corporation. All of us have heard of 501c3 corporations - it's a business with tax-exempt status, meaning they can bring in money and not pay the so-called taxes. But, what's the big deal about this type of religious organization? That's a good question that needs a good answer. Let's start back at seminary. In most (if not almost all) seminaries in the US, the students are prepped to work with the government controls on religious speakers (they just don't realize that). They are geared to get a certificate of accreditation from the gov't or a school that can give that. They are also taught in these classes the importance of setting up a 501c3 organization so that they can receive donations and grant their donors a tax benefit... but what's wrong with that system? Below I have 3 vids you need to see concerning the 501c3 organizations. But, I can explain a bit more to help this really make sense first. How many of you have ever made a contract that involved you paying someone back a loan until you paid it off? Many of us probably have - and that is something like the legal cloud that hangs over every pastor and so-called pastor who is the head guy at a 501c3. You see, they may start out well-meaning to teach God's Word fully and whole-heartedly... but you know those school loans never go away... and attendance seems to drop every time the pastor talks about growing in obedience and taking up our cross and following Christ and sharing the gospel with others... so, to keep money flowing in and stay in business, he either has to make and hold his agreement with God, not caring about the snare of men... or he slowly but surely falls and crumbles under the weight of the 501c3 rules, corporation agreements, and bylaws and says less and less, till he has nothing important to say anymore. Just nursery rhymes and fairy tales. That my friends is what has happened to many pastors... including some ones that I know personally, and whom I love dearly. If you get under the extreme burden of the 501c3 corporation status, you will find God's Word especially true: "**A righteous man regards the life of his animal, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.**" (Proverbs 12:10) And again: "**The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.**" (Proverbs 29:25) And Jesus' rebuke to the religious hypocrites of His day: "**And Jesus said to them, 'You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.'**" (Luke 16:15) And back to the church in the book of Acts - model: "**So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.**" (Acts 2:46-47) - God created the church to be a body of believers, not an organization to care about money.

Churches are Illegal if 501c3 Non Profit Tax Exempt
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8tEVNABNT40>

501(c)(3) Government Takeover of the Church Pt 1 of 2
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4MF4FgXpS3o>

501(c)(3) Government Takeover of the Church Pt 1 of 2

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LSdiH2W_h2A

Pastors, I plead with you - if you have gotten the accreditation of a school or some gov't recognized organization or website, I urge you - don't go further to an official organization. You don't need man's approval to meet in homes and study the Word of God. And you need to make sure that money is **not** any subject or as little a subject in the gathering of believers. Just keep it a Bible study - please. You'll save yourself and your gathering of brethren much pain and heartache that way. Thankyou for at least letting me mention it to you.

Now, to the rest of us - If you want to see if your 'pastor' is genuinely following Christ and have found that he's in one of the above evil agreements, consider talking to him to plead with him to completely break his evil agreements with those that are pulling him from Christ. If he becomes hostile instead, or never quite repents, you know he has not right to be your pastor. If he stays with the evil agreements he's made rather than breaking them and just following Christ, you know he cannot be trusted - he's a hireling and a wolf. And, if he's a hireling and a wolf, you need to find somewhere else to go... which leads to my next point =)

This was the newest article I could find on the subject, so I'm using it to highlight a significant issue - regular church attendance is declining. In 2006, George Barna's poll showed that 9% of US adults attended a house church (home church) rather than the traditional 501c3 corporation. Here's a clip from that article:

"Briefly stated, we're right about halfway between the Catholic Church and the Southern Baptist Convention (which is the second-largest denomination in the U.S.)..."

<http://housechurchesinamerica.blogspot.com/>

So, what are the numbers today? You know, I cannot tell. I've looked - I've studied, I've asked others... The numbers could look really low, but that's not been the trend. So, what's up? Well, this next trend starts to give a good clue:

Pastor Arrested for Holding Bible Study

<http://www.newsmax.com/Newsfront/pastor-arrested-bible-study/2012/07/15/id/445419/>

Attention Christians! Texas Pastors Ordered to Turn Sermons over to Gov-and You Won't Believe Their Stunning Response...

<http://vineoflifefews.com/attention-christians-texas-pastors-ordered-to-turn-sermons-over-to-gov-and-you-wont-believe-their-stunning-response/>

My personal guess is that the growth of home-churches (also called house churches) has increased exponentially in the last number or years since 2006. My very few clues include being personally aware of more than a half-dozen house church gatherings in the US and having been asked the question over a dozen times concerning house

churches or what the Bible says on them, etc. Not much to go on as far as clear data. But, I have another good clue on this - why are mainstream 501c3 'church' attendance and 'giving' (really donations to a 501c3 registered corporation) dropping so fast? I believe the answer is simple. And why are some abusers in power attacking pastors (especially home-churches and Bible studies) so hard if there really isn't a movement that they are trying to stop? Why are they doing this? To probably use religion as a tool for something soon? It's a good question... that needs a good answer and lots of prayers. But, it's a question I can't answer... yet. If you have info and want to share it - please email me or message me or call me. ~ Steven.H3@gmail.com. Thankyou.

>>> last tips:

So, try to completely avoid collecting money, just sharing as there is need and asking God for wisdom. Do not let a person of high influence or lots of money into your leadership, or it will hurt you later on. Let them serve humbly - and watch out for all medium to large gifts (sometimes even small gifts) with strings attached. If the gift comes with a promise of a return favor, it'll be a noose on the person's neck who accepts it. -- Learn Biblical evangelism - practice it. The only way to get good at teaching people how to follow Jesus and helping others get to Heaven through Christ is practice.

>>> *One final request that is very important to my family:*

If you anyone reading this has access to the regular mandates from the 'govt' of what pastors can and cannot say, would you please contact us? We would like to see even one (or some) of those first-hand so we can better educate believers and stand in prayer with Biblical pastors/teachers.

Thankyou to each of you who read this. I think we are just about to see a harvest of many getting genuinely saved, and it's going to be important that we are doing what we know to be doing, praying, and getting ready for it. I pray it's been a blessing and is some sort of a tool to help the growing number of little home-gatherings so they can avoid the pitfalls of those who have fallen before us. ~ May God bless you as you study His Word and teach others to do the same. ~ praying for you - please pray for me and my family ~ a growing brother and fellow laborer, SH