What Most Churches Don’t Teach Their Members

After many years of attending “Bible-believing” churches and after being a member of a couple of these churches, I have come to the realization that most conventional churches (from the leadership on down) are not aware of what it means to make disciples. There are some very basic, fundamental issues that all believers should be taught and yet most churches do a very poor job of teaching – if they even teach these things at all. “Why is that?” you may wonder. Perhaps they think that these fundamental issues are really just the concern of the leadership or perhaps they are just ignorant of these issues. My exposure to various seminary graduates has shown me that many church leaders are mistaught or not taught these things by the seminaries they’ve attended. Also, in the interest of fairness, I would have to say that many members of congregations are pitifully ignorant of various important biblical issues and could certainly do a much better job of learning biblical truths if they wanted to.

What are these fundamental subjects? Simply:

1. Bible Versions – Where is the word of God?
2. Hermeneutics – How do you properly interpret the Word of God?
3. Ecclesiology – How do you properly ‘do’ church?
4. Calvinism – What exactly are the doctrines of grace?
5. Christian Education – Whose job is it to educate children?
6. Evangelism – What is the believer’s role in the great commission?
7. Holidays – Should Christians celebrate secular holidays?
8. Sunday or Saturday Sabbath – On which day should the saints gather together?
9. Should churches be incorporated?
10. Giving and tithing?
11. Does God care what name we use for Him?
12. What about church membership and attendance?

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1. Bible Versions – Where is the Word of God?

A believer can’t make a disciple if they don’t know whether or not they really have the Word of God. They need to have confidence in the accuracy and inerrancy of the Bible that they use. They need to be able to tell others if any of the Bibles we have today represent the literal, inerrant Word of God, not that they just ‘contain’ the Word of God. They need to know whether or not the Greek text that the older Bibles (KJV, YLT) are based upon is a corrupt text that contains extra words or if there are words missing from the Greek text that the modern Bibles (NIV, NASB, etc.) are based upon.

Sadly, church leaders don’t always consider this to be a critical issue.

However, they often believe that the NASB is the most accurate English translation because that is what the seminaries say is the most accurate. Some church leaders have done their own independent studies of this issue but even those studies are likely to be biased because many of those studies rely on research done by people who were trained in a seminary environment where, like it or not, they have probably been influenced by liberal ideas of unsaved liberal scholars – scholars who are either teachers at seminaries or authors of books used in seminaries. When it comes to studying the original texts of the Bible, we need to be very concerned about the modern Bible societies and the translators and editors who are associated with them. Many people put far too much trust in those folks and their manuscript research and yet what is the fruit of all their research other than confusion and uncertainty?

The number of English translations in use today is causing confusion in churches and Bible studies in a way not unlike God's curse on the builders of the tower of Babel… "MY Bible says this."… "Well, that's not what MY Bible says!"… "So let's all use the NASB. After all, that's what the scholars recommend." … If people do rely on the NAS Bible (the 1995 version of course) and the underlying Hort-Wescott Greek text, they simply cannot say they have the preserved Word of God. They can only say that what they have **contains** the Word of God, but they cannot be sure what parts are the Word of God because their Greek text keeps changing. The text editors are currently up to the 27th edition of their Hort-Wescott Greek text, known as the "Nestle/Aland 27" or NA27 for short. Next year, perhaps they will find more of the Word of God somewhere or will determine that some words in the NA27 need to be removed, resulting in the need for the NA28 version of the Greek. Until you have time to do your own research on this matter (which I would urge you to do eventually), I would recommend using the KJV or the Modern KJV (not the New KJV) and find a church whose leadership teaches from one of these versions so that when they read the Bible in your church meetings you don't have to wonder if something was changed or left out. Keep in mind that translations are not inspired so they can and do have translations errors, which is why it is so important to have access to the original Greek and Hebrew texts (via an interlinear Bible or lexicons). For more information on this subject, please check out the articles on Bible Versions.

2. Hermeneutics – How do you properly interpret the Word of God?

Once you know where to find the Word of God, how do you find out what a passage really means considering how many different ways people interpret things? How do you find out which interpretation is the right interpretation that God intended for us to know? Is it OK to go to secular historical writings to interpret the Bible or will I be led astray? Does the Bible tell us how we are to interpret Scripture?

Churches usually never teach you how to interpret the Bible properly – or

even improperly. It seems as though they expect you to leave that to the pastor to worry about when he prepares his sermons. Pastors and church teachers typically use commentaries, history books, contemporary study guides, and denomination-oriented reference materials (among other things), rather than just sticking to scripture alone to interpret scripture. They expect you to simply listen to what they say the Bible means and will not take kindly to you asking them questions while they are giving their sermons. Much of this one-way communication is a carry over from the churches of the reformers and even from Roman Catholicism. When we look at the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament, it is quite clear that much of the teaching that Jesus did and NT church leaders did was very interactive and was focused on the scriptures (the law and the prophets – i.e. Old Testament), not on extra-biblical writings. One-way communication in the form of "preaching" was typically used in giving evangelistic messages (such as when Paul preached in synagogues and on Mars Hill) and was not meant to be the primary method of discipling the saints. Interactive teaching is essential for the health of the local church because it ensures that error is corrected, correctly promptly, and corrected in the hearing of all those who heard the erroneous teaching. It is extremely dangerous and unbiblical to elevate a church leader to the position of someone whom we are afraid to promptly correct, confront or question. Also, relying on commentaries and other outside sources is very likely to perpetuate error just as the catechisms in Catholicism have helped Rome to perpetuate her false doctrines that are so contrary to scripture. For more information on the subject of Bible interpretation, please check out our articles on Hermeneutics.

3. Ecclesiology – How do you properly 'do' church?

A Christian needs to know how a Sunday church meeting should be conducted. Should people interact during a service and how much and when? What role should women have? Should one person do all the talking? How do we encourage everyone to use their spiritual gifts? Why do we usually meet in large buildings instead of in people's homes? Why do we sit in rows? Why do we have communion only once a month? Is tithing a mandatory biblical practice for the New Testament Church? Are sermons the best or only way to teach or are interactive Bible studies more effective? What are the biblical patterns for how we should run a church meeting? How important is fellowship or prayer in a Sunday church meeting? Didn't the early church eat a meal together at every Lord's day church meeting and if so, why is that practice almost unheard of today?

Most local churches just do church the way the leadership or the denomination has always done it even if there is no biblical pattern for what is being done and even if there are biblical patterns for doing things entirely differently. Much of what is done is based on non-biblical traditions, including many carry-overs from Catholicism, the most significant being the practice of meeting in large buildings rather than in homes. Burdening the local

congregation with the expense of maintaining large special purpose buildings with rows and rows of pews that inhibit people from interacting is unbiblical and spiritually unhealthy. For more information on this subject, please check out our articles about “Doing Church“.

4. Calvinism – What exactly are the doctrines of grace?

Does an unsaved person really have a “free” will to choose or “accept” Christ as their Savior and Lord? Did Jesus die for everyone or only for the elect? If Jesus died for everyone then why do most people end up in Hell? Are people predestined to be saved because God knew they would accept Christ or because God chose them from before the foundation of the world according to His good pleasure? If Jesus died only for the elect, then a Christian cannot randomly say to strangers that Jesus died for them. If God hates the workers of iniquity like the Bible says in Psalm 5 and Psalm 11, then a Christian cannot honestly say that Jesus only hates the sin but not the sinner. So these issues surrounding the doctrines of Grace are not trivial matters to be left for the “bible scholars” to worry about.

This essential area of doctrine is an issue that most churches either don’t care enough about or don’t teach correctly. Many professing Christians, including pastors, think that people who believe in Calvinism are people who never want to share the Gospel because they believe God is going to save people no matter what a Christian does or doesn’t do to share the Gospel. However, this thinking represents ***hyper***-Calvinism, not Calvinism. God sovereignly uses preachers (messengers) of the Gospel to sow the Word of God in the hearts of men and then uses that Word to convict and convert some of those sinners, by way of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, the Bible clearly teaches that God elects certain individuals to be saved from before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4-11), precisely because if He did not convert their hearts, they would continue to reject His gift of eternal life. We cannot and do not accept Christ and His lordship until and unless He gives us a new heart and a new spirit (see Ezek. 36:25-27). The Bible clearly says that unsaved man is dead in his sins (Eph. 2:1) and a slave to sin and does not have a “free” will capable of accepting Christ. As Romans 3:11 says “there is none that seeketh after God”. For more on this subject, please check out our articles on Free-Will & Predestination.

5. Christian Education – Whose job is it to educate children?

Is it OK for the government to educate children? Is it the job of the local church? OR is it first and foremost the responsibility of the parents? A student of the Bible surely needs to know what the Bible teaches about this subject. Most churches would rather not touch this subject, unless perhaps they operate a Christian school, in which case they would lean towards having the

local church educating children. But what does the Bible say? We see many biblical statements regarding the responsibility of parents to teach their children but very rarely is any mention made of outsiders teaching someone's children. Samuel is one of the rare exceptions. His mother turned him over to the temple priests at a very young age. However, this practice is certainly not the educational norm in the Bible. In addition, Samuel was not the responsibility of the civil government (as is the case with public education) but rather religious leaders. For more on this subject, please check out the articles on home schooling.

6. Evangelism – What is the believer's role in the great commission?

Is the common pattern of just giving monetary support to overseas evangelists the primary way that the local church should be employing to spread the Gospel? Does the biblical method of evangelism consist of bringing unsaved people to church so that the pastor can preach to them? Is the idea of "Friendship Evangelism" biblical? Please check out our articles on Evangelism Methods & Resources for more information on this important subject matter.

7. Holidays – Should Christians celebrate secular holidays?

Is it OK to celebrate various religious and secular holidays in view of scriptures that command God's people to avoid the customs of the heathens and scriptures that call those practices an abomination to God – even if such a view is unpopular, very unpopular? Can we use the excuse that these "holidays" are good opportunities to witness to the lost? Do we ever need a holiday or any other "excuse" for witnessing to anyone?

8. Sunday or Saturday Sabbath – On which day should the saints gather together?

Why do most churches consider Sunday to be the Lord's day, the "new" Sabbath? Is there adequate biblical evidence to account for this new Sabbath day or is the use of Sunday merely based upon heathen practices and/or unbiblical Catholic tradition? Does it matter to God which day of the week we gather together with other Christians? Our website does not currently have an article on this subject, so feel free to direct us to material that may help others study this subject. Whatever view you hold on this subject you should be able to back it up soundly with scripture, without making a case for a salvation plan that depends on keeping a certain "sabbath".

9. Should churches be incorporated?

Is it biblical for the church to put itself under the authority of the state in

order to gain some “favors” such as tax-exempt status? Why should the state know who gives, how much they give and how much the local church takes in and doles out? Since when is that any business of the civil government? Such an alliance is an **unequal yoke** and scripture commands us: “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” [2Corinthians 6:14]. If a church leader wants to encourage his congregation to support a particular political candidate his hands are tied by the state, and his right to freedom of speech is superseded (forfeited) by the non-profit corporation agreement he signed. These web pages can shed more light on this subject:
Why Churches Should Not Incorporate
U.S. Christian Camp Loses Tax-Exempt Status over Same-Sex Civil-Union Ceremony

10. Giving and tithing?

Should giving be done in secret or openly? Most churches just have “their way” of doing things without explaining why and that way usually involves passing a plate or basket in the open. Didn’t our Lord say “But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.” [Matthew 6:3-4]? Should the pattern of a paid clergy be the norm or the exception? Is it better for church leaders to work a regular job as an example to the flock and to not be a burden to the local congregation and to allow money to be spent more on evangelism and outreach and on legitimate hardship cases such as widows, the sick, the elderly, the handicapped, etc.? If church leaders were not paid, wouldn’t it be more likely that they would have to delegate work, perhaps by training up other unpaid leaders so that more men could learn vitally needed leadership skills and could use the gifts that God gave to EVERY member of the local body? Additional information on this subject can be found here: What The Bible Says About Tithing For The New Testament Church

11. Does God care what name we use for Him?

We certainly can’t argue that we are not to take the Lord’s name in vain, but is that any reason not to use His name? (Many Jews think so). However, many churches don’t even study the bible with respect to the name (or names) of God. And yet there are many specific commands in the Bible regarding the use of God’s name. The Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that God’s primary name is Jehovah. But are they right about that? Could God’s primary name be Yahweh and the JW’s have got it wrong? Could most Christians have it wrong too, referring to God only by the names “Lord” or “God”? Is “Jesus” the Messiah’s name or that just a “nickname”, with Yeshua being His actual given name? Are these questions important? It sure sounds like it: “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD [literally “yahweh”] thy God in vain; for the LORD [literally “yahweh”] will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.” [Exodus 20:7] For more information on this subject, click HERE.

12. What about church membership and attendance?

Does the bible say we need to take a course or fill out a form and sign on the dotted line in order to be "worthy" of acceptance into a local congregation? Does such a process somehow create commitment? Is "attendance" a proper gauge of a person's involvement in the local church? Is water baptism alone an adequate step to being considered a part of a local church? Is rebaptism necessary if a local church does not know anything about your life in Christ prior to you showing up at their door? Our articles "Church Membership" and "Church Attendance" discuss this subject further.

Some good news for the weary Christian pilgrim:

On this web site you will find enough information to do a fairly adequate job of studying the above issues yourself – and not have to wait 'til the cows come home to find out about these things. I also hope you will not blindly trust seminaries and the people who graduate from them (or any other "teaching authorities" for that matter). The Bereans of Acts chapter 17 did not even trust Paul, and he commended them for that! Shouldn't that tell you something? Also, please remember that the Bible commands YOU to study to show YOURSELF approved (2Tim 2:15). If you are a true child of God, you do not have the option of sitting back in a pew each Sunday and letting someone else spoon feed you some doctrine. Crack open your Bible and dig deep… Discuss biblical issues with Christian friends during the week and may the Good Lord richly bless you as you ***earnestly*** contend for the faith. — *RM Kane*

SEE ALSO:
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The "Prosperity Gospel" is unbiblical
The "Tongues Movement" is unbiblical
The "Love Gospel" is unbiblical
The "Social Gospel" is unbiblical
The "Free Will" Gospel is unbiblical
The "Sinner's Prayer" is unbiblical
"Friendship Evangelism" is unbiblical
"Altar Calls" are unbiblical
The "4 spiritual laws" are unbiblical
"Accepting Christ" is unbiblical
The "Clergy System" is unbiblical
Incorporation of churches is unbiblical
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