

## Frequently Asked Questions

This document reflects some of the more frequent comments and questions we get on the subject of this book.

**Q. Is this document about *your* view of what is happening to the Church or is it what God is revealing to you about His Church?**

**A.** It's both. It's about what God's revealed to me personally about the reality of leaven in the Church and it's the result of intensive study of the issue in Scripture. I didn't go looking for this information until God brought it to my attention. I'm suspicious that God has talked to all sorts of people about this, but most have ignored His voice on the subject. I think it's His nature to talk about this, to talk to those who want to follow Him about this, and because He's a God of love, He behaves and thinks the same way as Jesus behaved and thought. But because few others in the Church seem to be saying this, it implies that people just don't want to hear it or obey it.

**Q. Is it the education or the degrees, or both, that are pharisaical?**

**A.** Knowledge itself is not the problem. Both Jesus and Paul had an excellent grasp of the Scriptures. The problem is that formal educational institutions promote a head- rather than heart-approach to the Bible and then insist that their program (or someone else's) and its credentials are what qualify a person for ministry or for the role of overseer or pastor or teacher. Institutions promote the misapprehension that it is education, then, that qualifies us for service, rather than character, calling and experience with God. Though they acknowledge that those things also matter, they will not allow you to teach in their schools or lead their churches without formal credentials. (Of course there are those few exceptions where they accept someone who has written a blockbuster book or accomplished other noteworthy feats, but then they usually want to grant them "an honorary degree" to validate their ministry.)

**Q. Are you implying that if you had completed your Master's-level training and received the title at the end of your name that you would undoubtedly have been doomed to a life of Pharisaism?**

**A.** Only God knows whether I would have been able to see, admit and accept it at that point, after my whole life had been invested in pursuing it and validating it. He told me *before* I

got the credentials because it is so extremely difficult to eradicate leaven out of the heart once it has taken root. I may not have been successful in repudiating it or even seeing it without His help. He was trying to protect me.

**Q. Did 12 units short spare you from that fate?**

A. Not entirely, because I'd already gone too far in many ways. But it was a huge step finally in the right direction; perhaps the most important step that I ever made and maybe the only reason why I am able to write this book. I should have made it much earlier though, because He was talking to me for years. But I was proud and ambitious like so many others. I think He tries to talk to everyone about this, or everyone He thinks will listen, but most don't. They are not willing to forsake their career ambitions for the alternative. I myself still spent many years pursuing an academic approach to Christianity, even after I quit school, because I had bought into the false message of spirituality that Pharisaism promotes. But fortunately, I did finally quit pursuing pharisaic religion and that alone has allowed my salt to retain its savor.

**Q. Is it primarily the title that is fatal or the education? If it's only the title, then the problem could be resolved by simply educating but not issuing titles. If it's the education, then you should have been irreparably damaged since you were only 12 units short.**

A. They are both problematic. Formal education always has an agenda, to transform you into an agent of whatever perspective predominates at that institution. These dogmatic, hardened views create division and elitist attitudes in the Body of Christ. If you don't adopt and subscribe to their viewpoint, you can't graduate, you won't be considered competent or trustworthy, and you won't get hired in their institutions. In contrast, Holy Spirit education is primarily spiritual and experiential. It is incarnational teaching, as you stand, as you sit, as you walk in the way with God. Titles are also problematic because they go too far. Jesus said to call no man "father," or "leader" or "teacher." And yet we do so, and even more than that. There *are* elders in the Body, and deacons, and prophets and teachers, but these are not intended to be titles, but either roles or responsibilities or gifts. We have perverted these words and use them to exalt one above another in value or usefulness. Our almost universal practice of viewing formal education and the degrees and titles they spawn as essential to ministry in the churches is anti-biblical and we should stop it.

**Q. Haven't you spent years studying?**

**A.** Yes. Information is not bad in and of itself. Neither is study. It's all in the heart objective. Do we really want to know the true God and become like Him, or are we preparing to teach others and elevate ourselves to positions of influence, power and authority? One thing I *will* say. All the while I was pursuing academic education, I was challenging my professors and classmates about the biases of their particular institutions and perspective. On more than one occasion I left an institution because they would not admit their prejudices.

**Q.** Are you suggesting that there should be no formal Bible schools or seminaries?

**A.** Yes, with a caveat. Paul had the School of Tyrannus in Acts, but we are not told how it functioned. However, we seriously doubt it looked anything like the Bible schools and seminaries of today, with professors on paid salaries, students paying tuition, formal testing, graduation ceremonies and degrees. This would have been contrary to everything Paul indicated he had left behind and everything Jesus eschewed, and would have duplicated everything that the Pharisees valued.

The difference between formal education and being taught by the Spirit is like the difference between dissecting and chewing. When you dissect something, you are the objective and academic observer looking for information, flaws, incongruities, taking things apart bit by bit and analyzing them for the purpose of documenting them, evaluating them or teaching them to someone else. When you chew on something, you are an active participant with it. You can feel and taste the substance you are chewing. You are impacted physically and emotionally by the taste, texture, and temperature. You are not a disinterested observer but are personally invested. It's a form of communion with the object of your inquiry, and that is what we are to do with the Bible. We are informed by the Spirit of God as we meditate on His Word and as we interact with Him personally. It's not an academic exercise. It's a relational, heart-engaged activity. In the Church we've encouraged both, but we put a lot more weight on the former, granting it status and validating it with credentials. The former more often than not causes us to be puffed up and leavened. The latter causes us to be conformed to the image of Christ by the renewing of our minds.

**Q.** At what point in the religious educational process does one's faith begin to become irreparably damaged and does it happen to everyone? Is it possible that others are not adversely affected in their faith by either education or titles? Can everyone recover from it or does the damage become irreversible immediately after you receive the credentials?

A. The damage begins the minute you acquiesce to the system. And to the degree you acquiesce, you are compromised. You can get out if you fight hard enough, but there will always be evidence and vestiges of it in your heart and life, and the battle must be waged continuously even after you give it up, against resentment over your loss of a dream, your loss of significance in the church, against judgment of those who remain in the system and reap its rewards and lock you out. You may even have to unlearn some of the things you were taught and that you accepted. You may have to regain your heart for God, which many lose in the pursuit of formal academic education and their own spiritual ambition. You will have to be willing to lose friends, status, reputation, fellowship. The fact that Jesus didn't pick any disciples from that formally educated group implies that it affects everyone; that they're all leavened. No one escapes. The damage is only reparable if they go through a transformation like Paul did. They have to *do* what he did. Consider it all garbage and throw it away. Refuse to use the titles and credentials. And the history we have in the book of Acts shows that those individuals who did not do that were the biggest disrupters in the Church.

**Q. Are you suggesting that Christians shouldn't study?**

A. No. The Scriptures exist and that's where the main story is. Christians *should* study. We're told to study. We're not supposed to be stupid. The problem is in people using their academic credentials to lord it over others and promote themselves in the churches, as if academic education makes someone spiritually mature or godly, qualified to lead, or even to teach.

**Q. What about those who study Biblical languages and translate the scriptures? Don't they need degrees?**

A. Those who translate the Scriptures need to be vetted as to their knowledge of the source languages as well as the target language. And for the most part, yes, they won't get hired without credentials. Having a degree in languages (Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic) is perfectly fine. A degree in language study is not a spiritual degree. It's like someone who studies the law in order to apply it. They don't even have to be a believer in actuality. They are like a technician. The formal training gives them the ability to translate the original languages; however, that doesn't mean they have the right to tell us all how to interpret or apply the text on a spiritual level. Because discovering what God intends to convey is a spiritual activity and a journey with the Holy Spirit.

**Q. But don't we need academic professionals, too, who devote their lives to the study of the Scriptures, since those of us who are working and raising families are so busy?**

**A.** The Scriptures were originally written for the common person. (Greek was the common language of the New Testament.) Once it's been translated properly, it's not so technical that we need professors to decipher it for us. Individuals are capable of hearing from the Holy Spirit directly without the intermediary of a priest or pastor/teacher. This is where the Church went astray at the beginning, making the pursuit of God equal to the pursuit of Scripture knowledge. Bear in the mind that the early Church had no New Testament. They had a few letters here and there. They did not have pocket bibles like we have today or bibles on every shelf. The Scriptures were hand-copied and expensive. So the only way they got familiar with them was if someone read it to them. Many of the common people were not even literate. And yet these same people turned the world upside down. Jesus didn't command us to "go into all the world and pass out Bibles." But that's what we've done. That's how we've interpreted His command to "make disciples of all nations." The reality is, all you need to know is the gospel, the good news of salvation embodied in the illustrations of baptism and communion, and you can set someone on a path to knowing the true God.

**Q. Are you suggesting that there should be no books?**

**A.** No. But there should be a huge reduction in emphasis on books. Books are highly over-rated. (See Eccl. 12.) The Bible is a gift from God, but you don't worship it. It's not God. It's not this perfectly flawless book that dropped out of heaven. It's an accurate representation of those portions of history that God wanted recorded, where He was intimately involved in the human story, and it's a communication from His heart. Is it a perfect photocopy of every single event? No, but it's an adequate communication from God about these events and His perspective on them.

**Q. Or is it really paid religious professionalism that is the problem?**

**A.** A salary is its own problem. Once you've been educated and given endorsement by the professional Church, payment only exacerbates the illusion of credibility and validates it. It also further entangles the heart, corrupting it with a false sense of security, and a dependency on the religious system. Out of that grows the tendency to manipulate others in the local church to support your personal agenda and self-interest (i.e., your salary).

**Q. Are you saying that pastors should not be hired as professionals?**

A. Yes. Pastors who are salaried professionals are hirelings. They will do the job only as long as they are paid. A caveat: “Don’t muzzle the ox while he’s threshing.” We take this to mean we are free to support teachers and missionaries like Jesus was supported. But Jesus did not get a salary. Peter did not get a salary. Paul did not get a salary. Individuals freely helped them and Paul taught his followers to work to provide for themselves also, as he did. It is true that “a laborer is worthy of his wages” and the elders are worthy of double honor, and Paul tells us that Jesus proclaimed that those who spread the gospel should get their living from the gospel. But we are inclined to think this did not refer to those employed by formal churchianity, a pattern almost identical to the pharisaic system Jesus rejected, but those engaged in missionary outreach and itinerant preaching. It’s good to help these people. But to expect a wage, like a business, turns spirituality into a career. Our security and validation should come from God, not from a paycheck. If someone wants to give you money as a Spirit-directed act on a Spirit-led basis, there is no problem.

**Q. Are you suggesting that the Church shouldn’t own property?**

A. Yes, because as soon as the Church owns property, now we “go to Church” rather than *are* the Church, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, and wherever we gather, there is the Church. This is a main theme. In the NT: the Church met in homes. Owning property also creates the issue of mortgages, budgets, government entanglement, risk management, etc. Assets have to be protected and policies enacted. And policies based on risk management will always trump the leading of the Holy Spirit when they are in conflict. Now you’ve just recreated the synagogue system.

**Q. Are you suggesting that we shouldn’t tithe?**

A. Yes, not in the sense that the churches promote it. Tithing in its formal sense was the financial system for the Levitical law and the priesthood. It amounted to a religious tax in a theocracy. Of course you can give 10% of your income, or any other amount you want wherever you want. But the reason most people tithe is because they’ve been told it’s their responsibility to help the local church pay its bills, or they’ve been told if they give 10%, God will bless them with more, guaranteed. After all, we have church mortgages and pastors that need to be supported. But this was not God’s plan for His Church. We are not called to worship in an elaborate church building (temple), but in spirit and truth, like Jesus told the Samaritan woman. There was no need for regular cash flow in the early Church to support church-owned properties and towering edifices. There were no employees either. The Levitical priesthood was defunct as far as the Church was concerned. The Temple was, in one sense, irrelevant, just as Jesus said it would be. The evolution of a salaried class in the

churches was altogether negative. Once you have a salary, there is a tendency to believe this gives you special status and elevates your point of view or teaching. We are all equals in the Church, though not identical in gifting or calling, and are to treat each other as brothers. Tithing that is aimed at supporting a clerical class and all the accoutrements of such is not God's plan.

**Q. Are you suggesting that there should be no parachurch organizations?**

**A.** The Church should function primarily relationally. The world should look at us and see that “these people are Christians. They love people. This is what Christians do. They’re involved in everything and they contribute positively wherever they are: hospitals, offices, playing fields, schools, gatherings of all kinds.” They can be *in* organizations, but they shouldn’t *have* organizations. They should be involved in life, being salt and light, not isolated from it. Organizations invariably become corrupt over time, and compromised. Those with the initial vision die off and others take over who don’t share the original inspiration or commitment or passion or integrity. Goals become tainted with self-interest. Salaries and livelihoods become entangled with the mission. This is the unfortunate reality of human imperfection. It permeates everything, even those things started with the best intentions. Parachurch organizations are in the same predicament as churches. They often own property or other assets and therefore must engage in risk management. Thus the Holy Spirit has to take a backseat to security and self-protection. Potential lawsuits must be avoided at all costs if the organization is to survive to accomplish its intended purpose. It is difficult to be critical of these organizations because their aims are often good and godly. But the fact remains, they are limited by their own self-interests.

**Q. Are you suggesting that there should be no tax-exempt status for the churches and other Christian 501C3 organizations?**

**A.** Yes, absolutely. Get rid of them. This problem goes all the way back to Constantine. Once the government gets a claim on our finances, then the “god of this world” can begin to exert control and pervert the aims and practices of any organization. Does God need help from the government to fund His work? No. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. Remember, Jesus said “My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” We often have such grandiose ideas for ministry because we want to feel good about who we are or make a name for ourselves. God’s ways are more often humble and hidden, and the glory goes to Him.

**Q. Are you suggesting that there should not be any doctrinal statements?**

A. Yes. This further supports the idea that someone needs to tell us all what to think and believe. There should be no “orthodoxy” other than the gospel. The scriptures are our basis. We don’t need to codify them. As soon as you create any systematic theology, you are doing the same things schools do. These theologies soon supersede the Bible and God’s voice. We teach *that* now instead. This undermines the Spirit of God and personal conscience, and fosters indoctrination, passivity, institutionalizes error, creates division and cliques in the larger Body of Christ. We *are* to be of one faith, one Lord, one baptism. And yes, we are to strive for unity and like-mindedness, but not by coercion. “If you don’t agree to this statement of faith, you cannot fellowship with us.” We think it protects us from error, but often it hardens us *in* our error and keeps us from exploring certain “sacred cows” of the faith. Untouchable doctrines make for weak faith. Head faith, signing on to a list of beliefs, is not the same thing as conversion. But we pretend it is. No wonder the Church lacks power.

**Q. Are you suggesting that there should be no hierarchies?**

A. Yes, I am, with an understanding that there *are* more mature people and less mature people in the Body of Christ. The more mature need to help the less mature mature. You don’t let the kids run the Church any more than you let them run the home. Jesus said “call no man leader, for you are all brothers.” That’s pretty clear. But that doesn’t mean that there aren’t elders and overseers in the Church. There are, but these aren’t to be titles. They are based on character qualifications entirely and are not gifts but roles. Paul was a unique individual in the Church. He was given the vision for the administration of the mystery, and it was his job to get the Church on a right footing. It was a responsibility for which he paid dearly, as Jesus said he would. He appointed elders and he defined what they should look like. But they are not to be viewed as more important people than the ordinary believer. All believers have a role to play in the Church when the Church functions like a living Body. Elders are primarily responsible for discipline when it becomes necessary and for protecting sound doctrine.

**Q. Are you suggesting that people who go to institutional churches are not true Christians?**

A. No. What we’re saying is that people who go to institutional churches are leavened by that system to one degree or another and they’re not usually aware of it. It affects some more than others. To the degree that they’re leavened, to that degree they’re ineffective. Some are content with this, as in “the old wine is good enough.”

**Q. Are you suggesting that all pastors are hypocrites (playing a role, wearing a mask)?**

**A.** No. That's up to God to determine and communicate. The system breeds hypocrisy however, and so the person who's in it may well be a hypocrite and not even know it. Jesus referred to all those who were involved in the system as hypocrites, so it's risky business to swim in that pool and think you have the objectivity to protect yourself. Ultimately God will judge this situation, but we don't think it's a good idea to get involved in that system.

**Q.** Are you saying there are no traditions for the Church?

**A.** No. There are some. Paul referred to them. Baptism, the Lord's Supper, head coverings, a few others were normative in the early Church. They are symbols. Without the symbolic meaning they are empty rituals. Christianity is a nontraditional faith. It is primarily experiential and relational.