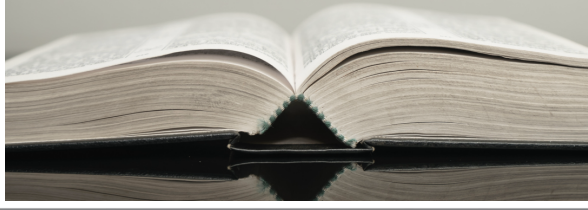


"Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."
(John 14:21 ESV)



Marietta church of Christ

8150 Driggers St.
Jacksonville, FL 32220

Times of Worship

Sunday:

9 am - Bible Study / 10 am - Worship / 5 pm - Worship

Wednesday:

7 pm - Bible Study/Worship

Evangelist: Devin Barber

www.mariettacoc.com



Because You Met A Christian

There's a saying that goes "People are not Christians, either because they haven't met one, or because they have met one." That's a profound statement in both directions, so let us examine it.

We'll start with "because they haven't met one." This seems obvious. Why would people be a Christian if they haven't met one? If nobody has been there to teach them the truth and the blessings in the Bible? The world will not be saved without making contact with Christians after all. Romans 10:13-15 is an excellent passage to demonstrate this. And we know that Paul practiced what he preached because he went on 3 missionary journeys across the Roman empire to spread God's Word, to Jews, to pagans, to kings, to men and women, to anyone who would hear. He helped to establish congregations and guide them into spiritual maturity, and later checked in on them through the epistles we have in the New Testament. Indeed, whether they learned of the truth through Paul, from his assistants such as Timothy or Silas, or whether the established congregations' own outreach brought in more converts, every single soul saved was due to contact with a Christian.

Consider the men in Acts 19:1-7. When asked if they had received the Holy Spirit, they did not even know that the Holy Spirit exists. They had only received John's baptism, and Paul was able to quickly teach them the truth and properly baptize them in the name of Jesus. Once again, if it wasn't for the Christian Paul encountering these men, they likely would not have become Christians. ...

And Paul himself, the champion of faith that he was, was no exception. In Acts 9 we see he was not saved on the road to Damascus, but Jesus told him he had to go into the city and seek out Ananias to learn how to be saved. Even Paul needed a Christian to instruct him how to receive forgiveness and be saved, and added to the church.

Consider also the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26. This man was clearly interested in the things of God and wished to learn more, but he could not fully understand without assistance. God provided for him to meet with Philip so the eunuch could learn what to do to be saved, and he was baptized before he even got home. Truly, "He who seeks shall find" (Matthew 7:7-8).

Now we must look at the other side of the saying. "People are not Christians because they have met one." This is a haunting reality, but it may well be that some people resist the Word because of encounters they have had with Christians. Perhaps they have seen Christians engaging in hypocrisy; for example they may hear a Christian preach soberness and abstaining from alcohol, only to see that same Christian at a bar, or buying cans of beer at Walmart. One can see how this greatly damages that Christian's influence. Or, you might see a Christian engaging in gossip. Yes, a Christian could come to church every Sunday and Wednesday, study their Bible everyday and by all accounts be considered an upstanding example of righteousness, and utterly ruin their influence through the sin of gossip. I could easily see a non-believer saying "All those Christians ever do is talk about how much better they are than everyone else. I'm not interested in what they have to say." And wouldn't it be a shame to know that your negative influence kept someone from desiring to learn more of God's Word? We must be diligent to ensure we are shining our lights and reflecting God's Light, and leaving a positive impression, not a sinful one.

I believe the churches found in Revelation 2 and 3 can be a great example to both sides of this saying. Two of them, Smyrna (Rev 2:8-11) and Philadelphia (Rev 3:7-13) had nothing bad said about them. One, Laodicea (Rev 3:14-22) had nothing good said about it, and the others were somewhere in the middle. ...

Jesus Himself directly commended Smyrna and Philadelphia for the faithfulness, so we can be sure that they were shining examples of what Christians should be. Indeed if non-believers met the members of those churches, I'm certain they would be much more inclined to hear the truth. Yet Jesus had some strict warnings for the others, to prevent their candlestick from being removed. Sardis and Laodicea certainly did not have the shining, positive influence they should have, and that jeopardized their own salvation. Let us all take care that we let our light so shine before men, and may it not be said of us "I would be a Christian, except I saw _____."

Written by; Daniel Young

Local Churches in the New Testament—Examples for Us to Follow Today?

Local churches in the New Testament were all taught the same doctrine—the apostles' doctrine, or the doctrine of Christ. So whatever they did in terms of organization, work, and worship, they were taught to do so, and that teaching came from the Lord (1 Corinthians 4:17; 7:17; 14:34-35; 16:1-2; Colossians 4:16; Acts 2:42; 20:26-27; 1 Corinthians 14:37; Galatians 1:11-12; 1 Thessalonians 4:2; 2 Thessalonians 3:6).

To put it more succinctly, here's what Paul wrote to one such local church: "You became **followers of us and of the Lord**" (1 Thessalonians 1:6).

Application: What these churches did in obedience to the Lord is what we must still do today. "If what you **heard from the beginning** abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father" (1 John 2:24). The church I belong to today, I plan on comparing it to what was taught "from the beginning," and I hope and pray you'll do the same with yours.

Written by; Brian Gibson (Plain Words from God's Word Facebook Group)