

IS GOD A PART OF YOUR LIFE... OR IS GOD YOUR LIFE??!!!

This has been an ongoing question for most people throughout the ages. There is a difference between God being “a part of your life” and Him being your life. Now, I am not talking about being in “full-time ministry.” Unfortunately, that is what many churches have made it. Actually, the

question has nothing to do with being in “full time ministry” or not. It simply involves the attitude of an individual’s heart towards and with the Living God.

The problem that most people have with their relationship with God is that they have departmentalized it. God has become a “part” of their life. That is not a bad thing. However, that is not what Jesus or the prophets, apostles and other people that we see in the Word are referring to when they write about or speak about what it really means to be a child of God.

Unfortunately, that is what it has become in many people’s lives, these days as well as in days past. The church is partly to blame for this dilemma. The church has made being or becoming a child of God all about really being a church member – especially their own church. It has become what the pastor of that particular church has said or declares for it to be.

If we actually take a look at the original concept of what a true relationship with God should entail we see that it doesn’t tell us anything about the involvement of being a part of an institution – such as a church. No, from the beginning the real “house of God” has been, and still is today, when we look at it the way God really sees it, the individual person.

Yes, people did gather together. The main purpose of their gathering was to continually encourage each other in this new aspect of having God within their lives. They realized that the true message of God meant that believing in Him meant that you must love everyone else. I think we have forgotten that main issue these days within the Body of Christ.

The early believers were being persecuted and severely punished for being a member of “the Way.” Yet, they continued to grow. Why? I believe because it was real. There was no room for “false believers.” The world made that very clear. If you were a true, real believer in Jesus in the early days, then you became a “marked person.” You would be tried (maybe) and then even killed. That is what Paul was doing when he miraculously was called by God and Jesus on the Road to Damascus. His life was turned around.

Throughout the scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation, we see that God and His prophets, apostles and leaders never really speak about growing any individual church or any individual denomination. What they do speak about is a continuing growth in an individual’s relationship with the living God. That is what the true concept of what a church really is. It has nothing to do with corporate settings.

It has to do, firstly, with every individual who “calls upon the name of the Lord.” It is about those who truly have accepted Jesus as their Lord and as their Savior and truly believe without a shadow of a doubt that He is the only way and the only one who can truly bring us to the Father. It is only Jesus who can restore our relationship with Father, God.

That is where I believe that somewhere along the line the churches that we have today “have lost their way” a little. It has become all about the church and the ministry and it has lost the true meaning of what “the church” truly is and what it was truly to be. Oh, I am not saying that that is what they necessarily mean but I believe that many leaders and churches today have the mindset of what a church should be based on the move that took place when “Christianity” became the “state religion” of the Roman Empire.

If we take a good look at that time period somewhere around 300-330 AD we see that something changed. It was during that time that Constantine's mother was visiting the Holy Land – Israel. She was “shown” all the sights that her “tour guides” had told her about Jesus. She then had become a believer in Jesus. When she got back to Rome she had persuaded her son, Constantine, the emperor of the Roman Empire to turn the Empire and all who were in the Empire to Christianity.

We know that Constantine stated that he was a believer in Christ. However, he also was the Roman emperor and he needed to keep the empire and its people “happy.” So he incorporated and tied together many of Rome's god's with the idea and concepts of this “new religion” which became known at that time as “Christianity.”

That is where the church made a “turn” concerning what they were truly to be. We know that after Rome turned to “Christianity” that there were many problems that arose. I am not going to go into them now but suffice it to say that for the next 1200 years the “church” became somewhat of a “mishmosh” of different beliefs. There were many different “councils” that were held and many “beliefs” and different ways of worshiping the true God were established within what became known as the Roman Catholic Church.

There were other splits from the Roman Catholic Church that had happened. There was established the Greek Orthodox Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Catholic Church, as well as others. They were all basically the same with the main differences being who and what the leader would be called and who and what they thought the leaders were. We must remember that the term “catholic” really means “universal.” Therefore, what these “religions” were stating was that their “religion” was truly the “catholic” or universal religion to follow concerning Jesus. Hmm....

Many countries were striving to achieve power. There were many wars that came under the guise of evangelizing and turning people to become “Christian.” We know that the Islamic faith had risen up. That is where we see that the “Crusades” were started. The Crusades were a series of religious wars between Christians and Muslims started primarily to secure control of the holy sites in Israel and other parts of the Middle East region which were considered “sacred” by both groups. However, there was really more at stake. Each of them simply wanted to take control of regions for their own governments and for the material resources of that region.

In all, eight major Crusade expeditions — varying in size, strength and degree of success — occurred between 1096 and 1291. However, the result was that the Muslims were successful in the Crusader period and had established a stronghold in the Middle East and took control of most of the Holy Land of Israel.

Then in 1517 AD we had a “shift” in the Roman Catholic Church. Martin Luther began to see things differently from the mainline church. Martin Luther was a German monk who forever changed Christianity when he nailed his '95 Theses' to a church door in 1517, sparking what became known as the Protestant Reformation.

Luther declared that becoming a child of God was more than just becoming a “Catholic.” He rightly declared that “righteousness,” true right standing with God, came only through the accepting of Jesus as your own personal Lord and Savior. We know that Luther went a little bit overboard and actually went a little crazy in his actions later on in life. He thought that the Jewish people must turn to Christianity. If not then the only way was to burn the synagogues and if they were still in them when they were burning then... oh well. Hmm.....

From there, more churches and denominations rose up. The church became divided and the believers were divided into their different thoughts and beliefs about God, the Father, Jesus, the Son and the Holy Spirit. That has led us to where we are today. The church is still very divided and split in both the religious arena, concerning the thoughts and ways of approaching God and entering into heaven, as well as the political arena where they are fighting each other over whose land is whose. The world is in bad shape and it is getting worse. The sad part is that the world's faith in Jesus and in the Father is also being mishandled.

We must get back to the true and basic beliefs of what Jesus was trying to get across to the people. He was telling us that true belief in God had and continues to have nothing to do with politics or the way people desired to live their lives in the natural realm. Jesus was stating that it was all about having a true relationship with God, the Father. Our thoughts need to turn upwards towards God and His ways

Jesus was basically saying that the "church" was the true individual believer in Christ. Yes, it is also the collective believers who are known as "the Church." However, each believer is to be one of the stones of the whole Temple of God. Yet, the Word very clearly states that even though every believer is a stone of the Temple of God it also relates to us that every believer, themselves, is the temple of God.

We see this as Paul declares in 1Corinthians 3:16 and 17, *"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."* Yes, every believer is a temple of God. We know that every believer is also a stone that makes up the temple in the end time when we are with Him. However, it still remains that every believer is themselves a "temple of God." We know that the scripture is speaking figuratively. However, it is still true – every true believer themselves is the dwelling place of God.

Now, I am not saying that we are not to be a part of a ministry. The Bible is very clear on that. In Hebrews 10:25 it tells us that we are not to forsake the gathering of believers – *"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."* However, the main reason for the believers to gather together was to continually exhort each other in continuing on in the faith – the faith that Jesus tells us to have in the Father.

We are to gather together for the main purpose as it states in Hebrews 10:24, *"...to provoke each other unto love and to good works..."* The main purpose of gathering together is to encourage each other as true believers to go forth in the power of Jesus to do good works and to love each other. That is the main purpose of gathering together. However, the real aspect of our relationship with God comes down to a personal "one on one" relationship with the one and only true and living God.

We must always continually be reminded of that and to continually remember that fact. Each and every true believer is first responsible for their own personal relationship with God, the Father, through their belief in the Son of God, Jesus. His Holy Spirit then is allowed to come into our born again spirit and begins the process of growth within the renewed life of the new believer.

This is where we started in this essay. The true acknowledgement of being a true child of God is not merely the acceptance of Jesus as the Lord and Savior of the world and even of in your own life. No, the true fact is that each and every one of us must continually acknowledge and continually change our lives to that of the one in which Jesus directs us to become – a true child of God. This is a continual process throughout our lives.

Unfortunately, we have made the evangelism process a little distorted. We have made it to seem as if all an individual needs to do is accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior and then that is it. We make it seem that if an individual does at least this that it means they are going to heaven no matter what they do for the remainder of the life. That, I think, is a little premature in our thinking. I think that is a mistake.

Yes, if we receive, believe and make Jesus the Lord and Savior of our life then we are born again. However, the true test of seeing if that was truly a real decision or just a momentary thought comes forth and is revealed by, through and in the person's life as they go forward. Are they really changed or did they just make a quick decision without truly knowing the long term effects of that decision?

It doesn't mean that an individual is going to be perfect - of course not. However, it does mean that there will be a continuous change and growth within that individual to that of becoming a new individual, a child of God, with a new heart and a new mindset concerning the things of this life. It means that there will be a true desire to seek out and learn more about the God who they have now turned their life over to.

I remember when I first truly had asked Jesus into my life. That was a long time ago when I was about 16 or 17 years old. My brother had gotten saved and came home after graduating college to tell us that he was going back to Indiana to continue on in a church there. Boy, was that a shocker!! To make a long story very short during the time when he was home, we did talk and I did accept and ask Jesus to come into my heart.

Now, I didn't change right away. I still went out with my friends and did things that I don't want to talk about any longer. However, during that time, even when I did some "bad" things, there was something inside of me that was telling me that I was not going in the right direction and that I needed to change. God was trying to straighten me out. It took some time but little by little I started **not** doing certain things. I started reading the Bible and before long, lo and behold ... many years later, here I am.

I had mentioned the events in my life to show you that salvation is a process – a lifelong process. However, it needs to start somewhere and that is simply accepting Jesus as your Lord and Savior. When you do, the Holy Spirit will come and be with you. He will encourage you and let you know when you are doing wrong. You may not "give in" to Him or His ways right away but if you truly made that decision with the correct heart attitude then be sure that the Holy Spirit will continually be "working on you." The key is to allow God to show you. Choose to be open to the Holy Spirit to show you and help you to make the turns and the changes that will lead you into the right direction – the direction being to the heart of the Father.

Hey, He still is working on me – everyday. I am not "all there," yet. I won't be until I am with Him all the time in the heavenly realm and then in the millennial period and then finally in the "New Jerusalem." However, one thing is for certain. I have made the decision to not allow God to simply be a "part of my life." No, I have made the decision to make God "my life!!!"

Hey, is God still working on you in every moment of your life or did you simply make God "a part of your life." God desires and must be your entire life. That doesn't mean you need to be in full time ministry in a church or organization. It means that God **IS** your full time ministry in every aspect of your life – your work, your times of enjoyment, in your family life, in your entire life. You must be yielded to and submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in every part of your everyday life. You must desire to bless the heart of the Father with every aspect of your heart.

The question we all must continually ask ourselves and the bottom line must be...
Is God a part of your life... or **IS GOD YOUR LIFE????!!!**