

I don't care
for
ORGANIZED
religion.

10:05am
November 1, 2020
Sunday Bible Study



I Need An Answer

“I don’t care for organized religion”



Warming Up

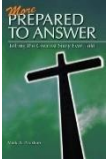
You’re in a safe environment ... be courageous ... list some factors of “organized religion” that you “don’t care for” or struggle with:

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Assuming we listed some yet certainly did not exhaust the list ... what are some other factors people will give for “don’t care for organized religion.”

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Lest we get too carried away ... list some factors of the “organized rank and file church” that are “cared for”:



Devotion from God's Word

Judas chose to go it alone.

He worked out his questions and did battle with his personal demons all by himself. He walked out of the upper room made his escape down the back stairs, and the Twelve became the Eleven.

Now, in all outward appearance, everything with Judas was fine. When he left that evening, the other disciples were willing to see good reason for his absence – he was probably out doing something for the poor he always talked about. But make no mistake. Walking away from that circle of Jesus' followers, such as they were, meant walking away from Jesus himself.

And when grief came to Judas, when it gathered up its full man-crushing weight, he sought people who might help him carry it or who might help him somehow fix the mess he had made or who at least might tell him it was going to be all right. Everyone needs someone to talk to, even Judas.

So he confessed his sin, making a gut-wrenching admission – “I have betrayed innocent blood!” – to the wrong sort of people. The so-called spiritual leaders of Israel didn't know Jesus, therefore, they didn't know grace. “Judas, there is forgiveness for you” and “there is one who loves you still” were not things they knew how to say. With the shrug of their shoulders and their “What is that to us?” these spiritual leaders, in affect, just killed him.

I can't help but think: “If only ...”

If only Judas had stayed in the upper room. There was always a place for him there, regardless of the secrets he hid in his heart. If only he had examined his own heart in the presence of the One who always knew what to say. In the real reasons Judas wanted to leave that little church – his greed, his anger, his pride – he could have seen precisely the reason he needed to stay.

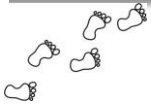
Judas needed forgiveness. It proved to be the one thing he couldn't live without. And there in the upper room was forgiveness personified, for there was Christ holding together John, the one who leaned on his right side.

On Jesus' other side was an empty place.

-Mark Paustian, *More Prepared to Answer*; pp. 177-178

Let's all read John 13:18-30 and Matthew 27:1-10

Step by Step thru the Lesson



STEP 1 – “I just want to contemplate God”

When people say “I don’t care for organized religion” the real question they’re asking is “How can something as personal as religious faith depend in any significant way on institutionalized religion?” They get more out of a contemplative walk alone in the woods, so they say, than from an hour of corporate worship.

??? -- What are the pro’s of the proverbial “contemplative walk in the woods or the reflective seat on the dock as the setting sun creates a dazzling golden path across the rippling water”?

??? – What are the con’s (at least as far as “making a connection with God”)?

??? – What are other commonly preferred ways to “get close with God” as pitted against doing so in the company of the church?

STEP 2 – It’s personal!

Many people, self included, will use the terminology “Christianity is very personal in many respects.”

EVALUATE that statement ... how is it true? ... in what respects does the “personal” nature of it not fit? Explain how “personal” could end up meaning “selfish” or “self-serving.”

Brainstorm: What limitations do we face when we are alone? What limitations does the mission of the church (spreading the gospel) face when people fail to gather and work together?

“The Christian lives wholly by that external Word,
not by his or her own personal feelings.”

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer

What in the world was Bonhoeffer getting at
AND is he in agreement with Scripture?

??? – Some very basic review questions ...

Who is the Church? (*“I believe in the Holy Christian Church”*)

What’s the one thing this Church cannot survive one solitary day without?

Is that one thing needed dependant on “how organized” we are?

Mid-stream “project” ...

Evaluate / discuss each of the following “scenarios”

Scenario 1 --

Many circumstances that I have witnessed involving bible beaters, helped to shape my feelings and thoughts of them long ago. I have one memory of a particularly hot Sunday morning, when my sister was on her way to church and caught a flat tire. A member of the same church was also on her way and saw my sister on the side of the road, struggling with this tire. The “charitable” and God-like thing to do would have been to stop and render aid, or at least offer my sis a ride to church and perhaps she could have found someone to go back and help her. But what did this devout churchgoer, this faithful member of organized religion do? She passed my sister up on the street and headed on to church. Her reasoning? Had she stopped, she would have been late for church.

This is what I think about churches and churchgoers. They are some of the most evil, intolerable, finger-pointing class of populace that I have ever known. I don’t know anyone more evil than a devout churchgoer. Granted, not ALL churchgoers are evil, but they sure do put out an abundance of evil folks by the truckload. I proceed cautiously when dealing with a religious freak. And I do so for good reason.

Scenario 2 –

A sad memory of mine is the day I sat with a couple who hadn’t been in church to receive that grace of our Savior for over five years. They tried to assure me: “Pastor, don’t worry about us. We still believe in God. And we’re doing everything we can to be good people so we can go to heaven.” They are certainly not Judases, betraying Jesus outright. But are they Christians? I honestly don’t know. I only know that there is no spiritual life in their words whatsoever. Not even close.

STEP 3 – “The Us-ness” factor

Read the following passages and uncover the “Us-ness” which God himself is composing and unleashing:

Matthew 18:20

For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

Hebrews 10:25

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-- and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Ephesians 4:11-12

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

Colossians 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Psalms 133

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!
...For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.

STEP 4 -- Summary

In your estimation, what are the “most effective things” you personally can do to stall people from falling into the “I-don’t-care-for-organized-religion” trap?