



## ***Witnessing to the Church Mouse or Someone in another Denomination ...who you suspect is lost.***

By Kurt von Schleicher

How do you witness to a person that you suspect is a nominal Christian even though they faithfully attend what appears to be a sound church or a church in a mainline Denomination?

First off, please know that mainline denominations have true Christians in them, just like independent churches do. If they are preaching a social gospel and not the biblical Gospel there will more than likely be far less true Christians present. Friends from other churches and movements will often win their friends to Jesus. We want this happening inside denominations and outside mainline denominations. Joining Jesus is always more important than joining or being a part of a certain church. We all need to be aware that there are true churches and there are false churches just like there are real pastors and counterfeit pastors. And God wants all His children to find their way to a true church with a soundly saved, spiritual pastor who lives the live and teaches the Word.

*Billy Graham said, "The church is primarily the body of Christ... The Bible says ... that it was Christ's love for the church that caused Him to go to the cross. If Christ loved the church that much ... I must love it too. I must pray for it, defend it, work in it, pay my tithes and offerings to it, help to advance it, promote holiness in it, and make it the functional, witnessing body our Lord meant it to be. You go to church with that attitude this Sunday, and nobody will keep you away the next... The family of God contains people of various ethnological, cultural, class, and denominational differences. I have learned that there can be minor disagreements of theology, methods and motives, but that within the true church there is a mysterious unity that overrides all divisive factors."*

The most effective way to speak about eternal truth with a religious person is not to get smoke screened, sidetracked or drawn into an argument with them. After you start out using the Scriptures, or intelligent diagnostic questions, or your personal testimony to witness to this person, they might start to feel convicted inside of their sins and then want to get you off on some bunny trail of controversy—anywhere that is away from the most basic elements of biblical salvation.

Remember to courteously build a bridge of friendship and ease into the witnessing prayerfully as you tactfully take interest in them as a person, in their family, their relatives, their occupation, their hobbies or their religious experiences. Upon hearing a person's background, you may feel an obligation to speak to issues such as the differences between their church and your church, or issues of infant baptism, transubstantiation, baptism in Jesus name only, women pastors, eternal security, speaking in tongues to get saved, etc. However, it is wiser to put these topics on the shelf for awhile. Aim to build friendship on the points of agreement between the Bible and the person's denomination with your church, such as essential Christian doctrines like the virgin birth, Jesus' deity, the cross, His resurrection, and so on ...or at least on the fact that both your congregations claim to please the one God of heaven. Commonalities are what help to establish rapport. One point of agreement for both of you might be the Ten Commandments. They are a key to bringing any religious person to a saving knowledge of Christ, especially if they have spiritual pride in their heart, and not all exhibit this openly. Many of the best churches in our land have self-righteous and prideful posers—counterfeit saints in them.

After someone is born again and converted to Jesus, the Bible will come alive to them and they will be led into all biblical truth regarding those controversial and shelved items of doctrine by the indwelling Holy Spirit. We don't want to waste time trying to reform unregenerate people from their vices, or from their religious preferences, passions, and preachers ...no matter how polite we might want to do this or feel tempted to go about this. Our goal is *not* to get them to switch churches, denominations so they can become a real Christian. They don't have to. Jesus taught us that His sheep hear His voice, He knows them and they follow Him, not you. You aren't primarily trying to get them to follow you are you? Our aim is to share the Word of God with that person created by God in the power of the Spirit of God so that they will become born of God. After the person becomes a real Christian (if he is not already one) they will want to go to a Bible teaching church with a saved pastor who loves Jesus Christ. Christ will lead them to one if they obey Him (that is if their current church is not teaching through the entire Bible with an emphasis upon understanding God's will and the practical application of it).

God's Word will then give him lots of light as they pray, and that new convert will forsake religious tradition as he is led by the Spirit. While there are strong biblical arguments out there, that may convince unregenerate people that their church's traditions contradict Holy Scripture, there is a difficulty there as the Spirit shows them. Some religious people hold the teachings of their church to be on a par with, or of greater authority than, Holy Scripture. Allow God to work with the pre-saved person and the post-saved person in their mind intellectually and in their human spirit to convince them that their trust should solely be in the person of Jesus Christ for their righteousness. No one's own righteousness or church's traditions will cut it with Him. Aim at the conscience with the Word, rather than primarily at the intellect. Take them carefully through the Law of God (the Commandments) to show that they are personally condemned despite all their good works, and then strongly emphasize that we are saved by grace alone rather than by trusting in our own system of righteousness or religious rituals.

We see in Matthew 8:14 that Peter (who some people claim was the Church's first pope even though he wasn't) was married, as were many of the other apostles were [see 1 Corinthians 9:5]. And discoveries like this can be very hard to grasp for some people. If they are open to the Gospel and the Spirit's moving—if they are interested in what God has to say to them about righteousness, His Church and the truth, then simply lead them to Christ. But their total change of mind in the sanctification process might come more gradually than with other people or slower than you expect after they are saved. Give them time to grow and always remain their true friend who will pray for them and take them to church.

### **What Exactly is the Church?**

The Church is the *"body of Christ,"* that community of the redeemed of which He is the head: *"And He is the head of the body, the church, Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence"* (Col. 1:18). Many people that go to different churches are not real Christians yet. They might think they are or play like they are to avoid witnessing. But the real church is nurtured by Christ's own dynamic life:

*"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word"* (Eph. 5:25-26).

"Christ will come to claim the church as His bride adorned for her husband" (Revelation 21:2), ". . . that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27).

The church's birth was confirmed by the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-11), who also provides the power for its self-perpetuation through witness to the world (Acts 1:8).

### ***The Church Is both Visible and Invisible in the Earth***

- The invisible church is that larger body of believers who, down through the ages, have sincerely trusted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior: *"The Lord knows those who are His"* (2 Timothy 2:19). One becomes a member of the invisible church when he or she receives Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (John 1:12).
- The visible church is the present-day universal church, composed of local groups of Christians. In it are both the *"wheat and tares"* (Matthew 13:25-30)—the truly redeemed, and many who are not.

When a person experiences the new birth, he or she becomes a member of the invisible church. He or she should seek to identify immediately with a local church which honors the Lord and His Word, in order to take an active part in worship, fellowship, evangelism, Bible study, and prayer. This is a responsibility which the Bible teaches: *"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"* (Hebrews

10:25, Nm).

Sadly, there have been many churches down through the centuries that have denied ***"the faith which was once for all delivered"*** (see Jude 3), and which do very little to nurture the believers who are committed to their oversight and watch-care.

***Here's a Strategy that Will Help the Would-be Church Attendee***

1. Commend the one who would inquire for his or her interest in the church. We are being obedient to God when we identify with the local church. In church we are seeking the opportunity to worship, fellowship, evangelize, study the Bible, pray, and participate in the Lord's Supper.
2. Choosing to join a group of people at a local church, does not save anyone. God making you a member of His body is far more important than becoming a member of a group of so called Christians. After that you will want to go join yourself to a decent church. We identify with a church because we are saved and desire to be obedient. Jesus said, ***"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved"*** (Jn. 10:9). Ask the inquirer if he or she has received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
3. After trusting Christ, the one who inquires with you should seek to identify immediately with a healthy local church with a fruit bearing, saved pastor who adheres to Christ Himself, Bible teaching, the Essentials and godly behavior. Suggest that he or she pray for God's guidance in finding the right church, one which exalts Christ, preaches and teaches the Bible, and compassionately evangelizes the lost.
4. Once God makes the sinner a member of his Church (through their own free choice, repentance and faith, not by mere good works) and they commit to a healthy Bible teaching local church, faithful attendance is very important!
5. He or she should seek a place of service in the church as well. Opportunities are always available if we offer ourselves in service to God.
6. Encourage support of the healthy local church with one's time, talents and treasure. Other Christian causes and ministries are worthy of our giving too but in order to function and grow, the local church should receive a substantial part of its members' tithes and offerings. In the book of Acts we see the birth of the Church and its development. The epistles are letters that were directed to the Church to help direct and guide.