

Native New Day

25



Should We Belong to a Church?

Native people in the far North are well acquainted with the Siberian musk ox. For many years the population of the musk ox has declined, but now they are making a dramatic comeback. There is an interesting feature about musk ox survival that gives us a beautiful picture of what Jesus' church on earth is to be like.



When threatened, musk oxen form a protective circle. The security for the young and weak within the circle has preserved the musk oxen population.



Musk oxen travel in herds. Whenever they are threatened by danger, whether from wolves or men, they will immediately form a circle with their heads and massive protective horns outward toward the enemy. Inside the circle they place the young, the sick, and the older members of the herd.

The wolves can't get to the weak ones, because of the protective circle around them. The security of the young and weak within this protective circle is one thing which has preserved the musk ox population.

This is the way God's church is meant to be. The church is a group of people who are not only seeking to follow Jesus, but who also have joined together in order to strengthen and protect one another. Inside the church the young, the weak, the discouraged, and those who meet with severe heartache and trials should find understanding, comfort, and protection.

All of us are weak at one time or another and need the strength of others. God has made the church a part of His plan to help keep us close to Him, so we don't get discouraged and lose our focus on Jesus. It's God's plan that those who have given their hearts to Jesus will be led by the Holy Spirit to want to become involved in a local church congregation.

The Bible tells us that God has a church on earth that He calls His own. The church is made up of caring individuals who believe in Jesus and desire to follow His teachings and plans for their lives.

According to the American Bible Society, there are more than 260 different denominations in North America today, and even more throughout the world from which to choose. In every denomination there are

good teachings, but the question is how many teach and follow all that God has outlined for us to understand and do?

If Jesus were in your village or town, what church do you think He would attend? Which body of believers would He encourage you to become involved with?

What makes belonging to God's true church important? The Bible teaches us that there are ways that seem right, but the end is eternal death (Proverbs 16:25). All sincere Christians will look for a safe haven where they can follow God in the closest way possible. They will look for a place where they can feel safe, knowing that with God's help the body of believers they fellowship with are teaching and following all the basic principles the Bible teaches.

I nside the church the young, discouraged, and those who face trials of life can find understanding and comfort.



Key Thought. The New Testament says, God “added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47, last part). It is God’s plan for our lives that we become part of a church as we prepare for eternity. Some questions to ask are: What are the identifying marks of God’s people? What are the basic principles of Scripture a church should endeavor to teach and follow? In this



All of us can be discouraged at one time or another and need the strength of others.

lesson we will look at some of these very basic teachings that a church should be preaching. Consider these as you study and search.

BIBLE ANSWERS

1. Who is to be the leader of God's family on earth?

Colossians 1:13-22. (*Circle one*) (1) The pastor. (2) The elders. (3) Jesus Christ. (*All quotations from the Bible in these lessons are taken from the New King James Version (NKJV) unless otherwise noted.*)

Note. When examining the teachings of a church, ask these questions:

- (1) Do the members believe in Jesus Christ as the way of salvation?
- (2) Do they believe His sinless life is a substitute for their sinful lives?
- (3) Do they believe in Jesus' death as our substitute for the penalty of our sins?
- (4) Do they accept the wonderful fact that Jesus' life on earth is the example of how we should live, and that when we accept Jesus as our Savior, the Holy Spirit gives us guidance and power to live as Jesus did?



God's people will understand by studying the Bible that Jesus wasn't an ordinary human being like us, but that He is the God and Creator of our world and the universe (John 1:1-14). Every doctrine, every belief, and every sermon should uphold Jesus Christ. Without Jesus and His power in our lives, we will never know true happiness and victory over sin.

Whenever you throw the plug or bait into the water while fishing and reel it in, the bait or plug always returns to the same point at the end of the pole. It's the same way with our religion. Everything we believe should always find its meaning in our relationship with Jesus. Jesus should be first, last, and the center of everything we do and believe.



Jesus and His power in our lives brings true happiness and victory over sin.

2. How are people transformed in preparation to be citizens of heaven? John 17:17; 16:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:13. *Circle one.* (1) God's Word and the Holy Spirit. (2) Preaching and pastoral care.

Thought and Discussion. The beliefs of a church should be founded on the Bible and the Bible only. When we believe and decide to follow exactly what God has taught us in Scripture, the Holy Spirit can better guide our minds and hearts in the way we should live.

He will give us the strength to do right (Romans 12:2; Ephesians 6:10-17). We can never know victory over sin or addiction without the help of the Holy Spirit.

3. What will God's church teach and uphold? Isaiah

8:20. "To the _____ and to the _____ . . ."

When the beliefs of a church are founded on the Bible and the Bible only, it will teach the importance of keeping God's Ten Commandments. Jesus said, "If you love Me, [you will] keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

Often some say, "It is wrong to keep the commandments to be saved." This statement is true; we don't keep the commandments to be saved, but we keep them because we are saved.

Keeping or living God's commandments with God's strength is what Jesus taught over and over again (John 15:10). It is His plan that in heaven sin, the transgression of God's law, shall never arise again (Nahum 1:9;



*God says He will write His law in our hearts (Hebrews 10:16–17).
We keep His commandments because He saved us.*

Revelation 21:4). Jesus isn't coming to take us from one bad world to another where His commandments are not kept.

Satan says it is impossible for man to obey God's law. This false charge is partially true. In our own human power we can't consistently obey, but with God's strength and guidance we can obey the law through the power of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and minds (Romans 8:3-4). God says He will write His law in our hearts (Hebrew 10:16-17).



God's Ten Commandments are like links in a chain.

4. Will God's people endeavor to keep all of His commandments? James 2:10-12; 1 John 5:2-3. (*Circle one*) (1) Yes. (2) No.

Note. All of the commandments are important. They are like links in a chain. Breaking only one link ruins the effectiveness of the chain (James 2:10-12). When individuals give their hearts to the Lord, they will want to do all they can to follow all that He has taught them (John 14:21; Psalm 119:35). A Christian will want to obey all of God's commandments, including the fourth commandment, as well as the first or the third or the tenth.

Everything God has asked us to do is for a reason and has a powerful blessing behind it. Every one of the Ten Commandments that God has given us to follow is simply the framework of how we will live in the earth

made new (Revelation 22:14). Keeping the Ten Commandments is never a problem to a true Christian. When a person loves the Lord he will want to keep His commandments (John 14:15), through His power.

5. Since a born-again Christian will endeavor to keep all of God's commandments, what day of the week will he/she keep holy? Exodus 20:8-11. "Remember the _____ day, to keep it holy. . . . The seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God."

Note. The Sabbath is one of the clear teachings of God's greatest blessings to us. God says that in the end time His church will be keeping all of His commandments (Revelation 12:17). In this age of lawlessness and perilous times, God's people will see that keeping all of God's commandments keeps us close to Jesus and His spiritual protection.

6. What will God's church be doing for other people? Matthew 28:19-20. "Go therefore and _____ of all the nations, baptizing them." (See also Revelation 14:6.)

Note. When Christ comes into our hearts, we will experience a love for other people we haven't known before. We will begin doing all we can to help our loved ones who don't know Jesus and His healing power to become acquainted with Him. When we consult a physician and find healing, it is a natural response to tell everyone about this wonderful doctor who was a help. We tell friends that the same doctor can help them also. We

can't refrain from spreading the good news!

God's church will carry on a work throughout the whole world, as well as in the country in which each person is born. We will reach out to our own people and to others no matter how difficult the challenge may be. If Jesus were walking this earth today, He would go wherever there is a need, even to those in remote places. Each individual is very important to our Savior. Like Jesus, we will be reaching out tenderly and enthusiastically to everyone with God's message of hope.



When Christ comes into our hearts, we will experience a love for other people we haven't known before.

7. What is another major teaching—affecting all of our lives—that God's church will be proclaiming? 1 Thessalonians 4:13, 16-18. “But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, . . . For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, . . . And the dead in Christ will _____ first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them . . . to meet the Lord in the air.”

Note. God's people will be telling everyone the great

Everything God has asked us to do
is for a reason with a powerful
blessing behind it.

news that Jesus is coming again. The second coming of Christ correctly teaches us what happens when a person dies. It is part of God's plan that brings great hope and peace to our lives. When a person dies he/she is unaware of feelings, thoughts, and the passage of time until Jesus comes again. Not only does the New Testament teach this truth, but the Old Testament does also. David, "a man after God's own heart," said he would remain in the grave only to be awakened to see Jesus' face at His second coming. The same is true of all of us in death (Ecclesiastes 9:5–6; Psalm 17:15; 146:4; Job 14:21).

Closing Thought. God's church may not be the biggest church in our town or village. (See Luke 12:32; Matthew 7:14.) There may be many people who profess to follow the Lord or say that their church is God's church. Many churches profess to follow Christ and His Word, but only a few churches actually teach the importance of loving God and accepting His salvation—and also





The resurrection and the second coming of Christ are two beautiful assurances in the Book of Heaven.

the importance of showing our love by our willingness to obey all His teachings and commandments.

It may be inconvenient to step out and do what God has asked us to do, but this difficulty is never a valid reason for disobeying our Lord (2 Timothy 3:12; Romans 8:35-39).

Which church should I attend? In a church following Christ the way He wishes, you will find certain basic teachings that are clearly revealed in the Bible. If you were to make a list, here are some of the basic teachings you would want to find in a church:

- a) Sinners are saved only through Christ, and only through the power of the Holy Spirit can they be changed in preparation for Christ's second coming.
- b) The Bible and the Bible only is the rule of faith.

- c) God's commandments are important, and He wants His people to keep all of them.
- d) It is important to keep the fourth commandment, to remember the seventh-day Sabbath to keep it holy.
- e) Jesus is coming again to deliver us from this sinful world and take us to a place He has prepared called heaven. Then God will recreate this earth, destroying all the results of sin, and make it into a beautiful land, where we will live with Him throughout eternity.



We are saved only through
the grace of Christ.

- f) When a person dies, he/she remains in the grave until the voice of Jesus is heard calling the dead from their rest at His second coming. In death an individual experiences nothing until Christ's face is seen on that glorious day.
- g) God's church will be reaching out to the whole world. God's people will minister not only to great population areas, but also to rural areas where few people live. God's people will be proclaiming the good news everywhere. They will teach that as God's children we are all "ministers" to carry on His work.
- h) Believers will be baptized by immersion and open their hearts to the leading of the Holy Spirit to

strengthen and lead them into a balanced healthful lifestyle. In what they eat, drink, wear, say, or do, they will seek to honor God in all aspects of their lives.

Won't you pray about this matter? God needs you to help reach out to others with these wonderful teachings He has outlined in His Word. Don't hesitate to take your stand to walk with God's people so that all of God's purposes may be fulfilled in you.



Jesus is coming again to deliver us from this sinful world. He gave His life to bring us new life.



Jesus came that we may have a truly abundant life. (See John 10:10.)

Next Lesson. Do you wish to know how to get ahead financially? God has a plan for us to prosper and have our needs taken care of. Our next lesson outlines how we may receive spiritual and financial blessings.



Native New Day

P. O. Box 53055, Los Angeles, CA 90053-0055

EDITORS: NATIVE MINISTRIES NORTHWEST EDITORIAL COMMITTEE;

RUSSELL HOLT

ILLUSTRATIONS: A. J. McCOY

DESIGN & PHOTOGRAPHY: ED GUTHERO DESIGN: MICHELLE C. PETZ

COPYRIGHT © NORTH AMERICAN MULTILINGUAL MINISTRIES