

Jesus, Unleashed

By Joel M. Killion

Chapter Five:

Jesus Goes To Church

She was sitting on the floor in her room, spending time with the Lord, crying. Of course, I didn't understand why – I was four years old. So I asked her if she was sad. She said she was crying because she loved Jesus which raised my curiosity even more. I saw something in her that I wanted. I had to know him. So mom introduced me to her friend, the one who knew her best and loved her most. That was the beginning of a journey that has conditioned my whole life with him to such a degree that I've remained, for the most part, unsatisfied with anything less than the pure love he gave me the day we met.

And yet, throughout my life, there have been times when “religion” has tried to creep into my mind and heart to make me somehow think I needed something else. And there were times when I bought the lie and, without knowing it, headed away from the Lord down a path that was fun, on the surface, laden with “good” things, such as church activities, programs, events, etc. Then, in addition to all that, I read all the right books, attended all the cutting-edge, deeper-life conventions and conferences, listened to all the teaching tapes I could get my hands on, and went to church faithfully, every time the doors were open, like a good Christian. But still, something was wrong. Something was missing.

Over and over again, well-meaning church people warned me not to forsake the assembling of myself with the people of God, as if going to church was the only way to assemble. And yet, as much as I went to church to try and submit to their counsel, thinking they were right, I found myself surrounded by people I didn't know at all. Fellowshiping with the back of someone's head in the pews, sharing short and shallow conversations on the way to “Sunday School” or “The Sanctuary,” passing the offering plate back and forth, going through the same boringly uniform motions every Sunday and finally running out the door after “The Service” to get to the local restaurant before the church crowds converged, felt more like a social club than the vibrant, personal interaction of a family that's deeply in-love. Somehow, inside, I knew we had lowered the bar on “fellowship.”

Then, one day, I was drawn to the Gospels and started reading them over and over again, and I couldn't stop. I felt like a junkie looking for his next fix. I couldn't get enough, and I knew Jesus' life had the answers to all my questions, even the questions I wasn't asking but soon would. For a long time I couldn't read anything except the Gospels which put me in a place, spiritually and mentally, where his life started to confront and transform my thinking in many ways regarding church-life (and life in general). And as I gradually began to see his life and the life he shared with his followers who were really his friends, without all the religious noise and bombast, the purity, clarity, and simplicity of Christ's definition of fellowship, “church” and church-life began to shine through. The more I read, the freer I became, and since I was fed up with religion's sop, I knew Jesus' life alone had the key. For a long time I didn't feel it was time to share what I discovered and am still discovering, but now is the time.

What you are about to read is a peek into some of what I found.

Sunday Mornin' Homecomin'

After being baptized in the Jordan and spending forty days and forty nights in the desert, Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee and started teaching in their "churches." And apparently he was such an excellent teacher that he quickly became front-page news.

Then he went home, to Nazareth, probably thinking his hometown would like the "new me" as much as the people of Galilee. So he went to "church" on "Sunday" to make his grand debut, but it didn't take long before things turned ugly.

Remember, Nazareth was his home town, the place where he cut his teeth, went to school, played with friends, and eventually became a man. Everyone knew who he was. They saw him when he was in diapers, spitting up baby food and making a mess. They had gone to "church" with him every "Sunday" since he was born.

But this "Sunday" was different.

When Jesus entered "The Sanctuary," he approached the "pulpit," opened his "Bible" to Isaiah 61:1-2, and started reading out loud:

"The Spirit of the Lord [is] upon Me, because He has anointed Me [the Anointed one, the Messiah] to preach the good news (the Gospel) to the poor; He has sent Me to announce release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to send forth as delivered those who are oppressed [who are downtrodden, bruised, crushed, and broken down by calamity], to proclaim the accepted and acceptable year of the Lord [the day when salvation and the free favors of God profusely abound.]" (Amplified).

Then, apparently, at some point during "the meeting," Jesus displayed miraculous powers that were so amazing that everyone wondered where he got them. And his words were so full of grace and wisdom that everyone marveled. Obviously, this wasn't the same Jesus they were used to. Yet, when he finished reading Isaiah's prophecy, he closed the book, sat down, and with all eyes watching, said, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." In other words, he said, "This passage is talking about me. You don't have to wait for it to be fulfilled anymore. I am the Messiah."

Of course, everyone was stunned. How could Jesus be the Messiah? To them, he was simply "the carpenter." They knew his mom and dad and brothers and sisters by name. How could he possibly be the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy?

Then, to make matters worse, Jesus spoke of himself as a prophet without honor in his own hometown and topped it off by essentially comparing himself to some of Israel's greatest prophets, Elijah and Elisha, which so infuriated everyone that they kicked him out of town and tried to throw him over a cliff. These "believers," who had been his neighbors his whole life, became so enraged by what he said that they wanted him dead as soon as possible. And yet,

when they attempted to kill him, he gave them the slip and finally went back to Galilee and ministered in their churches where the reception was, well, less hostile (See Luke 4:16-37 as well as Matthew 13:54-58; Mark 6:1-6).

The “church” in Nazareth had their own ideas of how Isaiah 61:1-2 was going to pan out and Jesus didn’t come close to matching it. They put their own spin on what God had in mind and as a result missed entirely the blessings that were included in the prophecy.

Nazareth was so familiar with his humanity, so preoccupied with how “different” he was and so satisfied with “business as usual,” that they failed to notice that he had come “in the name of the Lord,” the One they professed to follow (Matthew 23:39, KJV). He possessed all the answers to all their problems. He offered healing, deliverance, restoration, and blessing. But all they cared about was that he was unsettling their comfortable religious world. They believed he was narcissistic and delusional and were so offended by him that they were hindered from being able to recognize his authority.

As a result, he was accepted in Galilee where he could be himself and was despised in Nazareth where he “could do no mighty work...except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.” (Mark 6:5, NKJV)

Today, there are many churches like the “church” in Nazareth which only saw what it was prepared to see and missed the time of their visitation because God came to them in a form they never expected (Luke 19:44). Then, on the flip side, there are churches like the “church” in Galilee, where Jesus can be himself, no matter how he comes, no matter what he looks like, no matter how contrary he is to what they’re used to or what they’ve been told. The main difference between the two is that one discerns him after the flesh, while the other discerns him after the Spirit; one judges him by what’s been done before, while the other judges him by his fruit.

Mr. Alien

The story you just read was one of many similar occurrences. Every time Jesus and “religion” or “church” connected, they mixed like oil and water. Why? Because church-folk didn’t like him, and there was nothing in him or about him that affirmed their culture or paradigm. Though he preached in many “churches” throughout the course of his ministry-life, he never “fit in.” He was a square peg surrounded by round holes, always going against the grain. And what’s funny is that he irritated religious people by just being himself. Even at the age of twelve, he had a special way of dropping pious jaws (Luke 2:46-47). If only he had been anyone but himself, he wouldn’t have caused so much trouble.

Unlike most ministers today, Jesus wasn’t “seeker sensitive.” He didn’t meet people where they were by giving them what they “wanted” or “preferred” so they would like him or so that he wouldn’t offend them. And he was never concerned about growing and maintaining a “following.” Rather, he was sensitive to the guidance of his Father who always sought to meet people at their deepest point of “need” – way below the surface.

While everyone around him revered the religious establishment and all its trappings, Jesus did not, which so freed him from all that blinds, that he was able to see through things much more quickly and clearly than most people. He could walk into any “church” and immediately discern the primary root or roots to any and every problem; and most of the time he would expose everything hidden in darkness, even to his own hurt and eventual death.

When Jesus “went to church,” he brought the living reality of his World with him by living on earth as he lived in Heaven, behaving according to his identity in his Father. In other words, he was like an alien in a foreign world or like a rose in a garden of weeds, even though the weeds thought they were the roses and he was the weed.

His presence made everyone uncomfortable, except for the humble, because he was unconventional in every way, igniting fierce resistance everywhere he went. He never went with the flow in order to avoid the path of least resistance. He didn’t “go along to get along.” While religious leaders expected everything in “church” to be “decent and in order,” Jesus behaved in ways that seemed grossly inappropriate and messy. By religious standards, he always did what “ought not be done.”

For instance...

- He defied the Law of Moses, which dictated the “churches” “bylaws,” by disregarding the Sabbath (Matthew 12:1-14; Mark 2:23-28; 3:1-6; Luke 4:31-37; 6:1-11; John 5:1-18; 7:21-24; 9:14).

He seemed to have no special regard for one day or time over another. In fact, he seemed to be even more inconsiderate of protocol on especially “holy” days (John 2:13-22; 7; 10). And on such occasions, he would often stand before large crowds and say things that dubbed him a blasphemous, demonized lunatic (John 7:20, 28-30, 37-39; 10:24-39).

In Luke 13:10-17 Jesus delivered a woman, in “church,” who had a spirit of infirmity. And there was only one person who did not like it: “The ruler of the synagogue” or, as we would call him today, the “pastor.” In fact, he was so upset that he told the people, “Look, you can be healed any other day of the week, just not today, not on the Sabbath.” Clearly, this “preacher” cared more about obeying the law than seeking God’s best for his people. So Jesus proceeded to publically shame him and his associates by saying, “You hypocrites! You untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead them to water on the Sabbath, but you won’t even lift your little finger to help this dear woman who’s been afflicted by Satan for eighteen years. What are you thinking?” Evidently, Jesus didn’t have any intention on compromising or negotiating with this “pastor.” He didn’t say, “Okay, well, pastor, this is your church, and since you are the leader, we will respect your wishes” and he certainly didn’t tell the people who needed healing, “If you need healing of any kind, come and see me any other day but today. We need to respect the pastor’s wishes, and recognize his authority as a ‘man of God.’ He is God’s anointed, and we need to honor him.” No! Jesus put the principle of love before policy and protocol, which humiliated the “big dogs” and delighted the little people (Luke 13:17).

- He and his disciples ate without washing their hands, which was also against the tradition of the elders (Matthew 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-5; Luke 11:37-41).

By and large, Jesus questioned and ignored “church” practices, laws and “bylaws” when they either got in the way of His Father’s will for any given situation or became more important than the reality they may have been meant to represent. His general grievance against “religion” was that it always tried to limit and bind him and those who needed what he had.

- Jesus condemned ecclesiastical hierarchies and hypocrisies, “forms” of godliness, the use of “titles” and corresponding “entitlements,” abuses of power and the exaltation of professional ministers which elevate certain “special” people above others, thereby producing a leadership/laity split among the people (See Matthew 6:1-7; 23:1-12; Mark 10:35-43; 12:38-40; Luke 11:39-44; 20:46-47; 22:24-27). Jesus’ “on-earth-as-it-is-in-Heaven” mindset, which clashes with every earthly structure and organizational model, praised and modeled least-ness over greatness, humility over pride and service over being served.

And as a direct solution to the problem, he introduced the priesthood of all believers to the world by equipping and releasing his “nameless” and “faceless” disciples into the world with the power and authority to heal the sick, cast out demons, raise the dead and preach the Good News to the poor.

- Jesus had “church” everywhere: in the fields, in homes, on mountainsides, at the temple, in synagogues, on the road, on seashores, in boats, etc. He didn’t just have “church” at “church” and his “church family” reached far beyond all “church” walls (Luke 8:19-21). His whole life was one big “church service” because he didn’t have a spiritual life and a secular life; his whole life was lived in relationship with his Father which influenced every moment of his life; he said and did everything out of who he really was, which never changed, depending on where he was or who he was with.

By the way, while it is true that Jesus did periodically “go to church,” there is no evidence that Jesus “went to church” every time the doors were open or even went every “Sunday” (See Luke 4:44). And yet, whenever he went to “church,” he crossed the religious leadership and overturned their “sacred cows,” which often made him a prime target for stone-throwers (Luke 11:37-12:1; John 8:31-59).

- He delivered offensive, blasphemous, divisive, seemingly demonic messages (e.g. Matthew 23; John 5; 7:14-24; 8:12-58; 10:22-44).

For example, most of Jesus’ “Eat my flesh” and “Drink my blood” sermon, in John 6, was preached in the synagogue in Capernaum and produced a “church split,” on the spot, driving away thousands of people and leaving him alone, again, with his original twelve disciples. Why? Because his invitation to eat his flesh and drink his blood defied the Law of Moses which forbid cannibalism and the drinking of blood (Genesis 9:4-6; Leviticus 3:17; 7:26-27). According to Israel’s history, eating human flesh was a result of

disobedience against God, and here was Jesus, telling everyone to eat his flesh (Leviticus 26:14, 15, 29; Deuteronomy 28:53-57; 2 Kings 6:28-29; Jeremiah 19:9; Lamentations 2:20; 4:10; Ezekiel 5:10).

As usual, Jesus' words divided cities, people groups and "churches" by separating those who believed in him from those who did not (John 7:37-53; 9:39 in the Amplified).

- He forgave especially wicked sinners, something everyone believed only God could do (Matthew 9:2-3; Luke 5:18-21). And now he has given us the power, in him, to remit sin (John 20:23).
- The record doesn't give us stories of Jesus tithing. It does show how he gave his life every day in service to the poor, the hurting, and the broken. He was a whole burnt offering, a living sacrifice, 24/7.

But this doesn't mean he was against monetary tithing. As you may recall, Jesus never rebuked the religious leaders for tithing. Rather, he called them "pretenders (hypocrites)!" because they gave a tenth of their resources but "neglected and omitted the weightier (more important) matters of the Law--right and justice and mercy and fidelity." (Matthew 23:23, Amplified) He condemned these religious people for putting duty for God before "the love of God" which, by his very words, proves that it is possible to fulfill every pious obligation without actually loving him (Luke 11:42, Amplified). Jesus never made tithing a litmus test for Christian devotion.

As for Jesus, again, he upheld a higher standard by giving 100% of himself every moment of every day. Indeed, if he had only given a tithe of himself, of his life, where would you and I be today? He gave it all and praised this quality of sacrifice in others. For example, during one of his visits to the temple, he sat down near the offering box and started watching "how" people were giving. After seeing the rich throw in large sums of money, he noticed a poverty-stricken widow who "came and put in two copper mites [the smallest of coins], which together make half of a cent." This so moved him that he called his disciples to him and praised this woman and, in effect, made an example of her. Why? Because she gave all she had to live on, she gave out of her lack, which was much more than anyone else had given, including the rich people who gave out of their wealth to appease their consciences without any real impact on their lives (Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4, Amplified). Jesus' whole life was a personal gift that he and his Father gave to mankind.

- He overturned tables and drove out merchants in the Temple with a whip in hand (Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:45-46; John 2:13-17). He was a zealot for the Kingdom of God, but he didn't carry daggers or swords like all the other zealots in his time. Instead, he carried Truth, courage, compassion, raw supernatural power, and holy anger.
- He condemned religious systems.

In John 7, during the feast of Tabernacles, one of Israel's greatest annual events, Jesus stood up in the temple in Jerusalem and screamed out, "If anyone is thirsty, come to me and drink." (John 7:37) Can you picture what this looked like? Jesus stood up in the middle of Israel's "mega-church," while it was chock-full of "believers," and basically said, "I know you are unsatisfied with the religious system you're in. So come to me and I will give you what you've always been looking for. If you put your trust in me, I will cause rivers of living water to come out of you to quench your thirst in such a way that you will never thirst again." (John 7:37-38, paraphrase)

Then on one occasion, while some were giving Jesus a tour of the temple, the venerated center of religious activity and worship, he basically said, "It's all gonna come down." (Matthew 24:1-2; Mark 13:1-2; Luke 21:5-6) So, Jesus didn't care for the things that were honored by the pious people of his day. Instead, he knew that the death of its trappings would be its downfall.

Also, unlike many "Christians" today, Jesus didn't evangelize people to bring them to church, but to his Father and his friends and family who shared life with him. He wasn't about "the church" but about the kingdom of God lived in the earth, in word and deed, in every area of everyday life, through vulnerable, revolutionary relationships. And unlike so many "leaders" today, Jesus never gave a single thought to "church growth" or "membership" or "attendance." To him, it was never about "the numbers," as if his success was measured by such petty things.

- He openly rebuked and embarrassed the "pastors," "reverends," and "men of God" to such a degree that they wanted to take him out by any means possible (Matthew 5:20; 12:9-14, 22-45; 15:1-14; 16:1-4; 19:2-9; 21:23-46; 22:15-23:39. Luke 12:1-12; 16:14-31; 20:1-47. Mark 7:6-16; 8:11-12; 10:2-9; 11:27-33; 12:35-40. John 8:14-30). He was a walking contradiction to everything the religious leaders lived for, and he never once complimented them – not once! Though the "church" looked "successful" on the surface, impressive for all to see, Jesus was still moved with pity when he saw things as they really were, when he saw the multitudes who were fainting and scattered like sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:35-38). The machinery of "churchianity" was impressive and magnificent, but not to Jesus. And a time even came when Jesus became so unmanageable that the Pharisees and Sadducees had to join forces to gang up on Jesus, which still didn't work (Matthew 22:34).
- He had what the "big-dogs" lacked and everyone knew it (Matthew 21:14-17; Mark 11:18). His life – everything he said and did – set him apart from the pretenders.

For example, have you ever considered how many times Jesus exorcised demons in "church"? (See Mark 1:21-28, 39; Luke 4:31-37; 13:10-17) And isn't it interesting that those demons possessed "church-goers," without fear in "the church," and without regard for the religious rulers? Obviously, those evil spirits didn't recognize their authority at all. And yet, when Jesus walked in, they trembled. Why? Because they feared him; they

knew who he was while the clerics (who were themselves, possessed by religious spirits) remained clueless from day one.

Even the everyday person sensed something special about him that they had never noticed in their “pastors,” “bishops,” and super-duper, glow-in-the-dark “apostles.” While the religious leaders cared more about sound doctrine, adherence to the law, reputation, political correctness, and well-formed sermons but lacked the authority to heal and deliver the hurting, Jesus loved so deeply that he had the power to get the job done every time. He didn’t just talk the talk, he lived it and demonstrated the power of it, which set him apart from everyone else as one who had authority, whose words were “gracious...with power.” (Luke 4:16-22, 31-44)

- He never once ranted about “going to church” or getting involved in “church” activities or routines. Why? Because he knew it wasn’t necessary in the Kingdom. His own relationship with our Father wasn’t dependent, in any way, on “church attendance,” and when he did “go to church,” he didn’t do so to “get fed” or encouraged or to praise and worship in a collective body of believers or to become a better Christian. He simply lived out of his unbroken intimacy with his Father and his identity in him everywhere he went. And when it came to fellowship, he didn’t “forsake the assembling” of himself together with “believers.” (Hebrews 10:25, KJV) His relationship with “the people of God” was a part of His whole life. He walked arm-in-arm with his Father and everyone around him because, to him, they were all one family, 24/7. So, for someone to reprimand him for “not bein’ in church” would have been pathetic, to say the least.

Needless to say, Jesus was not your average “church-going Christian.” Most of the leaders labeled him a blasphemer (Matthew 26:57-66) while the crowds tried to make him king (John 6:15). And yet, it seems that no one really liked him – not really – because, in the end, Jesus was abandoned (John 10:24-39). After doing so many good things that even the world itself could not contain the books that could be written about them, Jesus was forsaken by all but a handful of people (Matthew 27:55-57; Mark 15:40-41; John 19:25-26; 21:25).

Of course, there were some religious “leaders” who believed in Jesus for a while, but they didn’t go public because they didn’t want to make any waves and certainly didn’t want to be “kicked out” of the “church.” Why? Because they loved the approval of men more than the approval of God (John 12:42-43). And then again, there were some “leaders” – very few in number – like Jairus, who knew Jesus had the goods and weren’t too proud to ask him for help; they were too desperate for “more” of God to be concerned about anything other than their need of what he had (Mark 5:21-42; Luke 8:41-56).

The Nicolaitans

Jesus hated and spoke out against “the deeds of the Nicolaitans,” the teachings, practices, and influence of those who “conquer” and “destroy” (nicos) “the people” (laity) (Revelation 2:6, 15-16). And what’s sad is that these people, who thought they were “of God” and constantly declared their devotion to him, had no idea they were actually working against him. While Jesus came to bring freedom and restoration, these self-appointed clerics made themselves “lords over

God's heritage" and bound them to religious rules and regulations. While Jesus came to serve and give his life, these wolves in sheep's clothing produced a subtle system of control and manipulation wherein they were fulfilled. While Jesus was busy about his Father's business, these "ministers" cared about building their "ministries," furthering their agenda, and inflating their wallets. While Jesus brought people into the liberty of love, grace, and truth, his opponents forced people into the darkness of fear, guilt, shame, and lies.

The Nicolaitans didn't really love people the way they should have, even though they thought they did. Though they may have thought they cared for God's children as good parents do, their actions spoke louder than their words. Deep inside, at the core of their hearts, they loved themselves and the bells and whistles that came with being the heads of a system that had nothing to do with God. And instead of spending themselves on broken humanity, they used and abused the masses to fund their plans, to erect bigger and better monuments, and to elevate themselves. The reason they hated Jesus was because he threatened everything they loved and worshipped. He saw the true intentions of their hearts, which even they could not see, and exposed them to the sunlight.

This is why Jesus didn't have one good thing to say about them and, in no uncertain terms, warned his disciples and everyone else against them (Matthew 16:6-12; 23:1-12; Luke 12:1-12; 22:24-28). He saw the evil that was destroying the people he loved, and it was this love that motivated him to war against it so violently (John 2:17; 8:12-59).

Final Thoughts

Today, most Christians measure their relationship to the Lord by the level of their relationship and commitment to a local church and by the type of church they attend; and this is how they judge others as well. But, clearly, if we measured Jesus by this same standard, he would fail our test.

But, I wonder, what would Jesus be like if he visited your church or the average church today? What would he do? Would your pastor like him and invite him to preach at his or her church?

Jesus' daily life with his friends and family has nothing to do with Christianity as it is known and practiced today; in fact, the gap between the two is enormous and compelling. And he certainly didn't intend for his life to spawn a religion that's based on building programs, denominationalism, hierarchal leadership models, non-profit organizations, church attendance, dogma, easy-believism, etc. Those who think otherwise would have to lift certain verses and passages out of the New Testament narrative, paste them together outside of their context, and add their spin in order to make their case.

Why does it matter so much to us where we meet, when we meet, and how we meet? Jesus didn't care a whit about church services and never said anything about how we ought to do church, and there is a very good reason for this: He wanted his friends to be free to focus on his ultimate purpose for them.

His way of doing everything was free and spontaneous because he knew that the wineskin, the structure and container of his life, had to be able to ebb and flow and flex with him and his assignment. Plus, his purpose took different forms and applications all the time, depending on where he was and who he was with. This is why he said, “Judge every tree by its fruit,” not “Judge every tree by its bark” or “Judge every tree by its limb formation” or “Judge every tree by its width and height.” To him, the end justified the means even when, to the natural mind, the means seemed counterproductive to the end. His life in his Father was never organized or restricted by man-made rules, rituals, and regulations. He simply lived holistically and organically out of the overflow of his relationship with his Father.

And it never mattered whether Jesus was in a house, temple or grain field, on a seashore, walkway or roadside. His Kingdom was relevant everywhere, everyday, with everyone. Indeed, there are many times in the Gospels where the authors never mention where Jesus was when he was teaching, healing, preaching, or whatever. Why? Because it simply did not matter.

Jesus loved people, valued personal relationships, and looked for every opportunity to fellowship with the broken, hungry, hurting, tormented, and rejected. This is why he spent so much time with people around the dinner table; he loved the atmosphere of transparency and vulnerability it produced, and it seemed to be one of the primary places where everyone could be themselves without fear. This life was his “church life.”

What if Jesus became our pattern? Wouldn't our whole life become spiritually sacred and alive through and through? What if we lived like the Church of Jesus Christ that we are, instead of merely going to church? Would our 9 to 5 jobs not become more meaningful? Would our homes not become more heavenly? What if we all became personally responsible for our own spiritual lives and depended more on the Lord to be our shepherd, rather than a mere human being?

Recent statistics from *The Barna Group* and *Pew Research* show that most churched Christians are immature and fruitless when compared to those who do not go to church but have a personal relationship with Jesus and his people and maintain a healthy, disciplined, balanced diet in the Word of God and prayer. Of course, Jesus' disciples had their own relationship with the Lord and each other and kept themselves “spiritually” fit by spending time with him and studying the Scriptures and look how mature they were, compared to their religious counterparts. They lived as a community of faith and love out of the overflow of their individual love-affairs with the Lord and it spread into every area of life until the whole world was turned upside down.

Wherever two or more are gathered together, in his name, he is there with them. This was and still is Jesus' definition of “church” and does not need to be improved upon. As for whether or not you should go to church or not is between you and him – no one can tell you that. The venue does not matter and never has. What matters is that we each have our own relationship with him and that we have deep, meaningful fellowship with one another as he brings us together in his life, by his spirit.

Further Recommended Reading:

- *So You Don't Want To Go To Church Anymore* by Wayne Jacobsen
- *Pagan Christianity* by Frank Viola & George Barna