



“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...” Matthew 28:20

**Church of Christ** • 13800 S. 4080 Road • P.O. Box 527 • Oologah, Oklahoma 74053

## Keep the Church Pure

Johnny Ramsey

I once heard an aged brother pray these words: “Lord, help us to keep the spiritual body of Christ as pure as he kept his physical body.” This statement, coming from a grand old soldier of the cross, has lingered in my memory for many years now. It is challenging and thought-provoking to every member of the body of Christ. We should all pray: “Lord, help us to keep the church pure.” The very fact that the New Testament depicts the church as the bride of Christ, his body, God’s family (Ephesians 5; 1 Corinthians 12; 2 Timothy 3:15) and other close relationships should cause each Christian to realize the need for purity in the Lord’s church. Let me briefly list ways that we can, by God’s instructions, keep the church pure.

**Preach the Truth.** The church can never be what the Lord desires until it stands as a bulwark of truth. The pure gospel must be preached if we are to keep the body of Christ uncontaminated. Substitutions, perversions, additions, subtractions, philosophical entreaties — all of these corrupt the purity of the message that God has left for the church to promulgate. Regardless of how intellectual the preacher might be, or how refined the congregation, there will never be a substitute for plain, fearless, heart-searching gospel preaching. This type of preaching has always been and shall continue to be one of the identifying marks of a pure church. We must not be ashamed of the gospel (Romans 1:16) but preach it “in season and out” (2 Timothy 4:2) as we strive to keep Christ’s kingdom undefiled. I verily believe that all the liberalism and modernism we have read about (and witnessed in some places) in the New York City, Chicago, and Pepperdine areas (within the

church itself) can best be traced to a failure to keep the church pure by pure teaching from the pulpit and elsewhere. I once quoted Colossians 2:8 to a Catholic priest in Wisconsin to rebuke him for failing to teach New Testament Christianity. Those stirring words might well be remembered by all of us as well — lest we turn away from pure deliverance of the oracles of God. Paul was inspired to write: “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” Over and over again in his epistles to Timothy and Titus, Paul exhorted those evangelists to be sure their message was “sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1). Brethren, if the spiritual body of Christ is as precious to us as it should be, we must preach the truth — all of the truth — to a lost and bewildered world. This is one step in our task of keeping the church pure. We must also:

**Live right.** Last year, while preaching in a gospel meeting in South Texas, I was impressed with the closing sentence of a brother’s prayer. He said: “Lord, help us to live right.” That simple statement becomes profound when we really try practicing it. All of the eloquent sermons a man can preach will never hide an impure life. Paul was very plain when he told Timothy: “Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine” (1 Timothy 4:16). An evangelist of the Lord must never condemn his own sermons by failing to practice what he preaches. Every child of God must remember that the most memorable, indelible sermons are the lives we live before our neighbors and friends. The population of heaven and hell will largely depend on how members of Christ’s body conduct themselves in this pilgrim journey. Should we fail to live right, the day of judgment will be a sad, sad day for us. As Christians we must “abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul” and “cleanse ourselves of all defilement of flesh and spirit.” (1 Peter 2:11; 2 Corinthians 7:1). This is another step we must accomplish if we keep the church pure. Not only must we preach right and live right we are also admonished to:

**Withdraw from the ungodly.** Regardless of how diligently the truth is preached and lived, a congregation can still be impure if ungodly, worldly-minded brethren are not disciplined. The Lord has left specific instructions in his will concerning this matter. It seems that few of us are willing to abide by God’s wishes for we fellowship anybody and everybody, and precious little discipline is used in the church of the Lord today. As long as there is “sin in the camp,” we can expect discord, worldliness and chaos from within the ranks of the Lord’s army. The church at Corinth was commanded to “put away from among yourselves that wicked person” (1 Corinthians 5:13) for “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (verse 6 of same chapter). When we tolerate evil-doing, we are breeding corruption in the blood-bought church of Jesus Christ. It is impossible for elders in the church of God to condone and use adulterers, gamblers, drunkards, etc. and still fulfill their obligations as shepherds of the flock. It is also impossible for preachers of the gospel to preach the whole

counsel of God and fail to condemn such immoral characters who cast the cause of Christ into ill repute by their hypocritical living. If the church does not arise and fulfill its God-given duty in this realm, we will fail in our efforts to keep the church pure. The purpose of “church discipline” is at least threefold: (a) To bring the erring brother to his senses. (b) To keep the church clean and cause the other members of the body to take notice of how the Lord looks on sin. (c) To forever remind the world that the church stands for something and that there is a vast distinction between the children of God and the offspring of the devil! But, there is still one more necessary element in a pure church and that is:

**A burning zeal and enthusiasm.** We have all seen congregations who preached the truth, lived as they should, and even disciplined their wayward members. Yet, something was still lacking. That something was enthusiasm. We must be on fire for the Lord. Too many of us seem contented and passive in the Lord’s work. We have a nice, convenient religion, and we need not be concerned over the teeming millions who do not share the rewarding pleasures of a Lord’s day spent in true worship and service to God. Brethren, the greatest hindrance to the vitality of the church is our indifference and complacency. It is not enough to preach the truth and live accordingly — we must be energetic, zealous, and fervent in our service to Christ. Laodicea’s great sin was her indifference (Revelation 3:14-16). There are congregations just like Laodicea today. They are much like a room where no fresh air ever enters, that is, stale, stagnant, lifeless. That room is not impure because of dangerous, deadly gas entering it — but because no air at all is there. Thus, many times the lack of growth in the church of the Lord can best be traced to no life at all instead of rank immorality.

The Lord of Glory shed his blood for the church (Acts 20:28). He is coming one day to receive it unto himself. May we do all we can to keep the priceless possession pure — “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:27). ■

### The Person Down the Road

In thirty, forty, or fifty years, you’ll meet a person down the road. Whether that someone is kind and gentle or selfish and demanding depends on what you do today. If you live only in terms of what you can get out of life, this person will be crabby, self-centered, and spiteful. But if you open your life to others and live as a giver, this person will be kind, open, and generous.

This somebody whom you’ll meet down the road someday is you. The person you will be tomorrow depends on the life you live today. Everyday, in every way, you are becoming more and more like yourself. Make sure the person you are becoming is someone whom you’ll enjoy being around.

## Observations and Concerns

January 10, 2024

**Welcome Visitors!** Thank you for being with us in worship today.

**Praise in Psalm:** “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all *them that are* about him” (Psalm 89:7).

**Declaration of Appreciation:** Let us be thankful to the God of heaven for the Lord’s Day, the Lord’s Day assembly, and all who are present.

Beginning this evening, the adult Bible class will be watching a video on **Personal Evangelism** by Rob Whitacre. The course will last for five weeks.

There will be a **men’s budget planning meeting** on Friday, January 12<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm.

**Roy Goddard** will be our guest speaker this coming Sunday. He is from the Bible Institute of Missouri.

Our **monthly potluck luncheon** is this Sunday after morning services. All are encouraged to stay!

There is a sign-up sheet in the foyer for our in-house lectureship. This year’s lectureship is scheduled for March 29-31, and the theme is **Conversions in Acts**.

We extend our sympathy to **Darla Smith** in the recent loss of her sister-in-law in Oklahoma City.

**Remember in Prayer:**

- ▶ We are thankful to God that the results of **Sammy Gray’s** biopsy revealed he does not have cancer. He is scheduled to meet with his doctor regarding other health issues soon.
- ▶ **Andy and Nelda Hudson** are suffering with health issues.
- ▶ **Darla Smith** had surgery to remove cancer. She is recovering at home.
- ▶ **Bill Roach**, an elder at the Owasso congregation, had surgery to remove cancer.

### Experience is the name people give to their mistakes.

Schedule of Services	Assignments		
	Wednesday, Jan. 10	Sunday, Jan. 14 AM	Sunday, Jan. 14 PM
Sundays			
Announcements	Chris Nelson	Ross Swearingen	Bill Dilks
Prayer	Chris Nelson	Ross Swearingen	Bill Dilks
Song Leader	Ross Swearingen	Bill Dilks	Doyle Jackson
Lord’s Supper (speaker)		Chuck Northrop	Chris Nelson
Lord’s Supper		Chris Nelson	
Lesson	Chuck Northrop	Roy Goddard	Chuck Northrop
Prayer	Bill Dilks	Doyle Jackson	Ross Swearingen
Door Attendant	Doyle Jackson	Chris Nelson	Ross Swearingen
Bible Classes . . . . . 9:30 AM			
Worship . . . . . 10:30 AM			
Worship . . . . . 5:00 PM			
Wednesdays			
Bible Classes . . . . . 7:00 PM			
Website: oologahcofc.org			