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Dear Associates and Friends,

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“[Synagogues and Ekklesias](#)” is this month’s article by Dr. Ernest L. Martin. He describes the historical nature of God’s people gathering during the period after the destruction of the first Temple and the development of synagogue gatherings during and after the 70-years exile of God’s people to Babylon.

After the return to Jerusalem the number of synagogues increased in Judea after the second Temple was built in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. The number of synagogues grew during the period of the Maccabees and continued to grow up to the destruction of the Herodian Temple and Jerusalem in 70 AD. Synagogues persisted during the Middle Ages and today more synagogues than ever conduct services around the world.

The Christian *ekklesias* developed out of the synagogue, beginning with *ekklesias* that operated in the home (called a “home church” in modern Christian understanding). In fact, I am confident saying that every mega-church that exists today likely was founded by a home or bible study group that led to a formal incorporation as a “church.”

### *Ekklesia Operations*

Dr. Martin also discusses how *ekklesias* should operate from a biblical standpoint. The closer a group tries to operate in a biblical model, the better will be the experience. The members will be “fed” the meat of God’s word and not milk (1 Corinthians 3:1–3; Hebrews 5:11–14).

I recommend my article “[Further Decline of the Churches](#)” (2006 and 2019 update). In that article I tell about the “Willow Creek Survey.” Willow Creek Community Church is a suburban Chicago, Illinois mega-church that was losing its oldest and most mature members for unknown reasons. The “drifting away” of these important, founding members of Willow Creek was far beyond normal attrition due to age, ill health, or death.

The survey found that Willow Creek Church was losing their important, active, concerned, and best-educated members because they were not being “fed” the mature teachings of the Bible. They did not “leave” the church fellowship, they volunteered less often, they participated less, they had less interest to teach Bible studies, and they held back from organizing events. Willow Creek Church ministers were not teaching the deep things of God to their members. Decline began. Everyone was appalled by the survey results.

The Willow Creek survey was made available to other large churches for their own use, and they found the same thing happening in their congregations, years after the original Willow Creek Survey. And it appears these problems are still happening in large churches.

As you will understand from this month’s article, these churches no longer follow or operate on a biblical model. And it is not just the “model” of how they operate. It is important to have the correct biblical content. Keeping people occupied with “events” is not the same as teaching Scripture without denominational bias.

### *God Is Not Boring ...*

The large megachurches have been successful getting people into the pews using bells and whistles to attract individuals as well as families, but the same people are leaving when they are not learning interesting and important information from Scripture. They are not learning ...

- about the “one God” (1 Corinthians 8:6),
- about His Son (and His role in creation, birth, life, death, and resurrection),

- about their plan of creation (including salvation) for you and every other human being,
- about the fact that you and every other human being are already saved “**in Christ Jesus,**”
- about biblical history as examples for us today, and
- about future fulfillment of prophecy before and after Christ returns.

### ... *But Many Congregations Truly Are Boring*

Many people have told me they go to “church” to enjoy fellowship, yet I quickly find that they are not able to talk about the subjects profoundly important to themselves, subjects found in the Scriptures. (And, if asked, they have difficulty telling what the sermon was about, even if they heard it minutes before.) They are going to a social club not a biblical *ekklesia*. If people want a social club, that is fine and good, but do not call it worshipping God because a few songs are sung, and a feel-good sermon is preached with small “nuggets” of biblical information and truth.

### *The Solution*

At ASK we do not have congregations, and we make no attempt to appeal to “itching ears” as Paul told Timothy:

**“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts**

[1] **shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they**

[2] **shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”**

• **2 Timothy 4:3–4**

When Paul talks about “lusts,” he does not mean moral or sexual lusts. No, that is a King James Version overstatement. Paul is talking about such things as desires, curiosity, likes, personal interests — the things most churches actively seek to provide (and those things vary from church to church). Such organizations are only minimally *ekklesias* in a biblical sense. Paul meant that people want to hear and learn about what interests them, not the things of God. Such is the way to attract young people and families. And, I have, and we all have done such things in the past.

What is the solution? Paul told his young teaching colleague Timothy in verse 2 below, immediately before he prophesied (in verses 3 and 4 above) what would happen in future times. Paul wrote:

**“Preach [herald!] the word; be instant [ready, prepared] in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering [patience] and doctrine.”**

• **2 Timothy 4:2**

All highlighted and underlined words in this verse are imperative verbs that Timothy must do because it is crucial for the proper teaching and education of the *ekklesia*.

### *Thank You*

We are grateful for the few who faithfully support the research of Dr. Ernest Martin and the no-nonsense teaching of ASK as best as you are able. We understand that some of you nevertheless give under difficult circumstances.

We also know that many “lurk” on the ASK website, benefit from the meat, and never throw a bone to us. We are not dogs. We as workers are worthy of our hire (1 Timothy 5:18). Thank you to those who supply our needs. May God bless you for doing so.

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