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the doctrine of Christ (Romans 16:17), not for morally upright, doctrinally pure Christians that other Christians simply prefer not to get out and see.

When a church does congregate in a member's residence, the emphasis must be on being a church, not on being a so-called "house church." The location is merely incidental. It ought to be a way of finding the brethren, not a description of their character.

The Lord's church was never intended to be introverted. Seekers must be welcomed, and, therefore, expected. When Paul wrote to the church in Corinth about proper conduct in the assemblies, he mentioned, *"if the whole church comes together in one place... and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers"* (1st Corinthians 14:23), and when James cautioned about partiality and judgmentalism, he began, *"if there should come into your assembly a man..."* (James 2:2). It was normal in the first century for churches to receive visitors and nothing about that should change. It is easier to expect newcomers when the church gathers in a publicly accessible location, so if it does otherwise, then particular effort needs to be expended inviting guests and ensuring they can find the congregation. Since it is God's *"eternal purpose"* *"that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church"* universally (Ephesians 3:10-11), bringing visitors in is imperative.

As a church matures, it should have *"bishops and deacons"* (Philippians 1:1). The goal is *"elders in every church"* (Acts 14:23); without them, a church is *"lacking"* (Titus 1:5). If a church is incomplete regarding its governance, then it should be striving eagerly toward that honorable objective. Where an eldership exists, it must consist of a plurality of men meeting the qualifications, and the qualifications of both bishops/elders and deacons (1st Timothy 3:1-13) indicates that each one is the head of a household. Thus, at least a few households are necessary for a church to be as whole as God intends. While it is acceptable and understandable for a congregation to begin with less, its members must never be content to remain a single family with no intention of expanding.

Every church is under command to take up weekly collections (1st Corinthians 16:1-2), as it is their duty to relieve needy saints (Acts 11:28-30; Romans 15:25-27) and compensate the work of preaching (Philippians 4:15; 2nd Corinthians 11:8). After one contributes toward such a collection, what is offered has been surrendered from

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"CHILDREN IN THE MARKETPLACE"

Jacob Hudgins

John the Baptist sends messengers to Jesus (Luke 7:18-35), since John is languishing in prison (3:20), asking again whether He is the Messiah. After answering their question indirectly, Jesus addresses the crowd's response to John. In doing so, He gives tremendous endorsements of John (Luke 7:26, 28). Yet, there is also tremendous criticism of the people. *"What then did you go out to see?"* Jesus asks three times. What did you want from John? *"A reed shaken by the wind?"* (24). Someone weak? That doesn't fit John. *"A man dressed in soft clothing?"* (26). A pampered aristocrat? Not hardly. *"A prophet?"* (26). This is nearer to the mark. They went out to see a wild man and prophet of God – yet they found him not quite to their taste.

Jesus compares the crowd to children in the marketplace who cannot agree on a game that suits them. They won't play "Wedding" and they won't play "funeral." How does this relate? *"For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'"* (Luke 7:33-34). John the Baptist was too weird. Now Jesus is too normal! Jesus and John use very different approaches, but the people find something to criticize in both of them. Just what **would** make them happy?

At times we are critical of God's methods: "I wish God had done it this way" and "I don't like this about the Bible" and "How could God allow?" Jesus is saying that the problem is not with God – or John or Jesus or the Bible), but with **us**. There is a broader point here about complaining. When we develop the spirit of discontentment, we can learn to be unhappy in any circumstance – the reverse of Philippians 4:1. There is always something to complain about and if we develop a taste for it, we may wind up rejecting God. God has worked the way he has to **help** us, not to **please** us.

**"WHAT MUST I DO
TO BE SAVED?"**

ACTS 16:30

LEARN THE GOSPEL

John 6:45; Romans 10:17

BELIEVE IN CHRIST

Hebrews 11:6; John 3:16

CONFESS CHRIST

Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 3:19; 17:30

BE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST

Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-6

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

**"THE ASSEMBLING OF
OURSELVES TOGETHER"**

HEBREWS 10:24-25

SUNDAY

Worship @ 10:00 a.m.

Studies @ 11:45 a.m.

WEDNESDAY

Studies & Worship @ 7:00 p.m.

THURSDAY

Men's/Women's Studies

@ 6:30 p.m.

75 Sherrod Boulevard

Belen, New Mexico

**"IF A MAN IS OVERTAKEN IN
ANY TRESPASS...
RESTORE SUCH A ONE"**

GALATIANS 6:1

CONFESS TRESPASSES

James 5:16; 1st John 1:9

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 8:22

PRAY FOR FORGIVENESS

Acts 8:22

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

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individual control (Acts 5:4). If a church is no more than one household without intention of growing further, then that offering may not actually leave the hands of the giver, effectively nullifying the contribution. A church should make use of its treasury in a manner consistent with Scripture.

Meeting under the roof of a family home should be nothing other than a circumstance, whether temporary or permanent, but it should never be an identity, much less a goal.

"WHOLE COUNSEL"

ACTS 20:27

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"THE CHURCH THAT IS IN THEIR HOUSE"

Bryan Matthew Dockens

Several greetings exchanged at the end of various New Testament epistles mention *"the church that is in their house"* (Romans 16:5; 1st Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; cf. Philemon 2). It is possible this simply means there were "called out" people in the households mentioned, for that is the meaning of the Greek word translated "church." However, it is just as possible, and more commonly inferred, that these were congregations assembling in the residences of members.

Churches of the first century assembled wherever it was expedient for them to do so – the Temple of the Jews (Acts 2:46), a school (19:9), some unspecified upper room (20:8), and private homes. No special location is required (John 4:20-24), provided the church does *"come together in one place"* (1st Corinthians 11:20). If a residence is suitable for a local church, it is appropriate to meet there, but it is not a requirement (6:12).

While churches are authorized to gather in houses, Christians must be careful not to choose staying home over assembling with faithful brethren nearby when there isn't a good reason to refrain from their company. Withholding association from fellow Christians is an act of punitive discipline (1st Corinthians 5:11; 2nd Thessalonians 3:6, 14). Shunning should be reserved for those causing offenses contrary to

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