

Understanding the

DECLINE OF LOCAL CHURCHES



Do you feel that many local churches (not all) are weaker than they were 10, 20, 30 years ago?

If so, why do you feel local churches are weaker? In your view what has happen?

What is the solution to this troubling problem? What can we do about it?

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The concerns that you and I have for the local churches of today are not unique to our day and time.

Paul said, *"besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches."*

- II Corinthians 11:28.

Even though this is not a new problem, I would like for us to look at what each generation faces and what each must guard against.

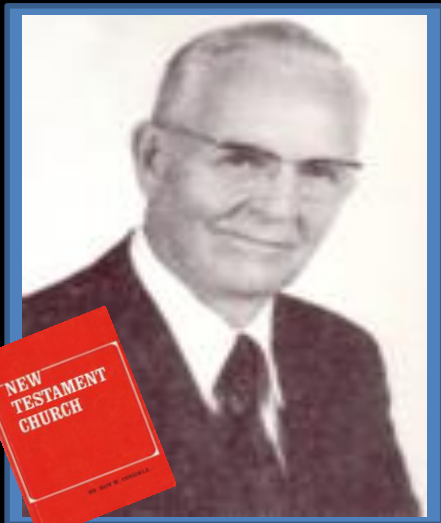
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❖ SPOKEN UNDERSTANDING

Preachers / Teachers taught, and congregations understood the distinctive truth of the gospel of Christ!



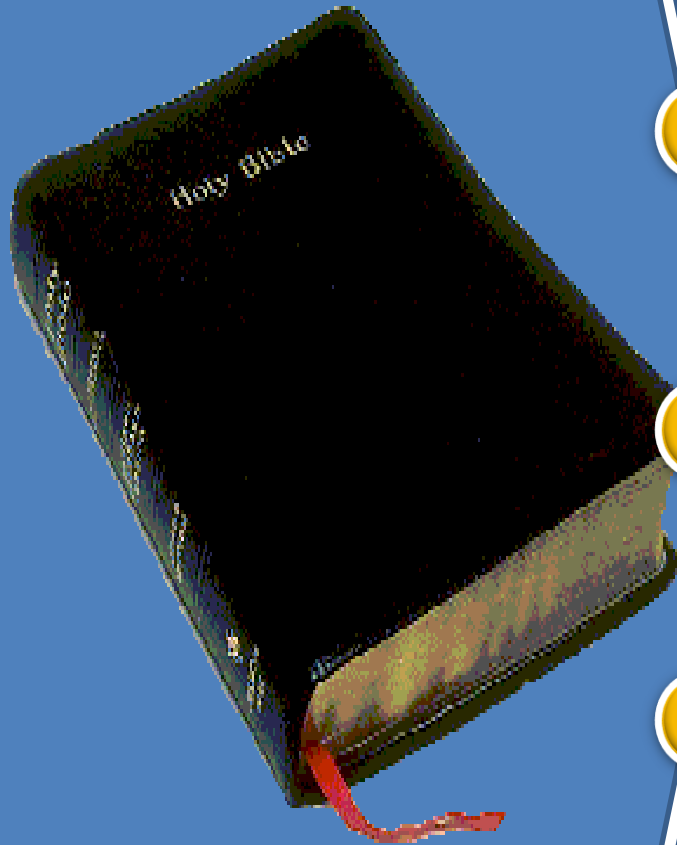


The Churches of Christ have steadily progressed in spite of ridicule and opposition until they have reached a plane of dignity and respectability in the world. They are now confronted with the danger of accepting their place among the religious bodies of the world and becoming merely ANOTHER DENOMINATION. It is quite

commonly a subject of discussion that there is but little difference between the Church of Christ and other religious bodies. The purpose, prayer and aim in the preparation and development of these lessons has been to make the distinctive position occupied by the Church of Christ outstanding and easily discernible. Members, both young and old, need to know the difference between the Church and denominationalism. Indoctrination along this line is imperative if the members of the Churches of Christ are to remain "a people for God's own possession." (1 Pet. 2:9).

- Roy E. Cogdill, (New Testament Church - Preface)

The Bible gives us distinct instruction regarding God's plan for the salvation of man through, and only through, His Son Jesus Christ.



The Bible teaches that Jesus is the **ONE** means by which men are saved.

Matthew 1:18-21; John 14:6; Acts 17:31

The Bible teaches that there is **ONE** church that belongs to Christ.

Matthew 16:18; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 4:4-6

The Bible teaches that there is **ONE** plan of obedience, worship, work.

Mark 16:15-16, John 4:23-24, Colossians 3:17

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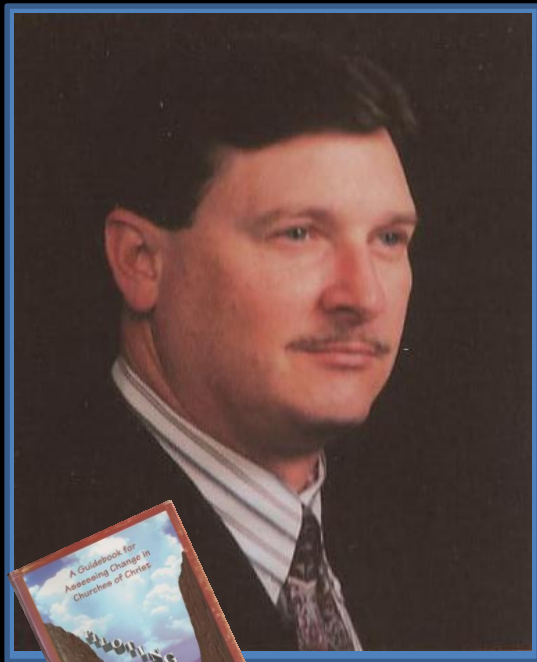
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Preachers / Teachers no longer taught because congregations understood the gospel of Christ!

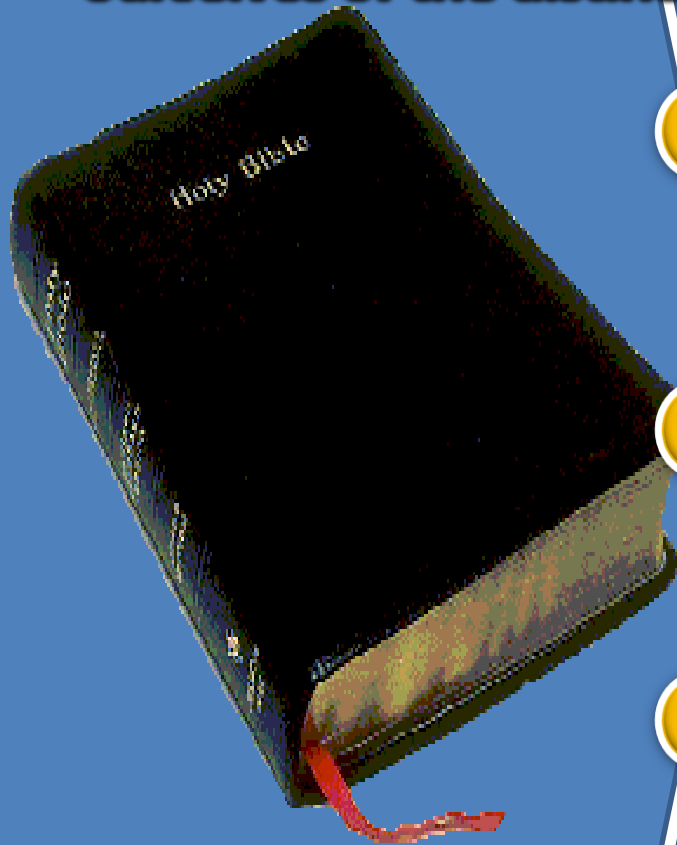




“There was a time among churches of Christ when there was a spoken understanding that members of denominations were lost since they were not members of the church described in the New Testament. With time, we moved into a period of unspoken understanding. Everyone knew what shape denominations were in; it was understood. But we shied away from verbalizing it, “lest we offend.”

- Dave Miller, (Piloting The Strait, Pg. 286).

The Bible warns us about the great need of keeping the truth of the gospel of Christ in front of us. We are to continually remind ourselves of the distinctive truth of God.



The Bible demands that there is only **ONE** truth.

John 17:20-21; I Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:4-6

The Bible commands the truth is to be continually preached/ taught.

II Peter 1:12-13; II Timothy 4:1-2; Jude 3

The Bible warns that when the truth is not preached / taught, error will follow.

Acts 20:28-32; Ephesians 4:11-14; II Peter 3:15-18

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❖ UNSPOKEN MISUNDERSTANDING

Preachers / Teachers do not teach, and congregations have a fuzzy understanding that the gospel of Christ is distinct!





"I believe we have grown up a generation of people who have no idea about the problems churches of Christ experience today relating to the issues that have divided us in years gone by. I know I have made some uneasy when I say, "If it's between me and you, I have my doubts about you". Why do I say this? The only person I know is me. We use to schedule men for gospel meetings 5 and 6 years ahead. We don't do that now because we don't know what type of position they will take on certain issues confronting the church today."

- Tommy Thomas
April 2011

The Bible warns us about the dangers of idleness. We must never take for granted that our brethren are firm on the truth, nor that our children understand the truth.



The Bible gives us clear warning of the need to teach truth to our family.

Deuteronomy 6:1-7; Judges 2:10; Ephesians 6:1-4

The Bible gives us clear warning of the need to teach truth to our brethren.

Acts 20:28-32; II Timothy 4:1-2; Titus 2:1-15

The Bible warns us of the ever present danger of error.

Romans 16:17-18; II Peter 2:1-3; Galatians 1:6-9

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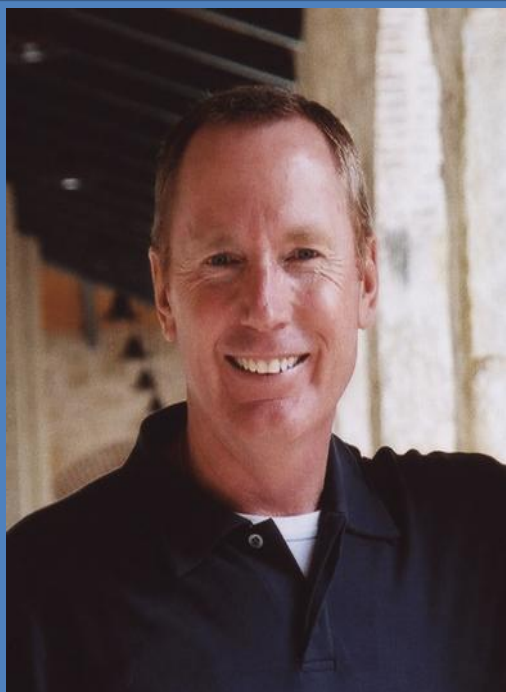
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Preachers / Teachers do not teach, and congregations have a fuzzy understanding that the gospel of Christ is distinct!

❖ SPOKEN MISUNDERSTANDING

Preachers / teachers / congregations are proclaiming that their message, their worship, their work is not distinct from any other! They understand themselves to be one of many!





Max Lucado

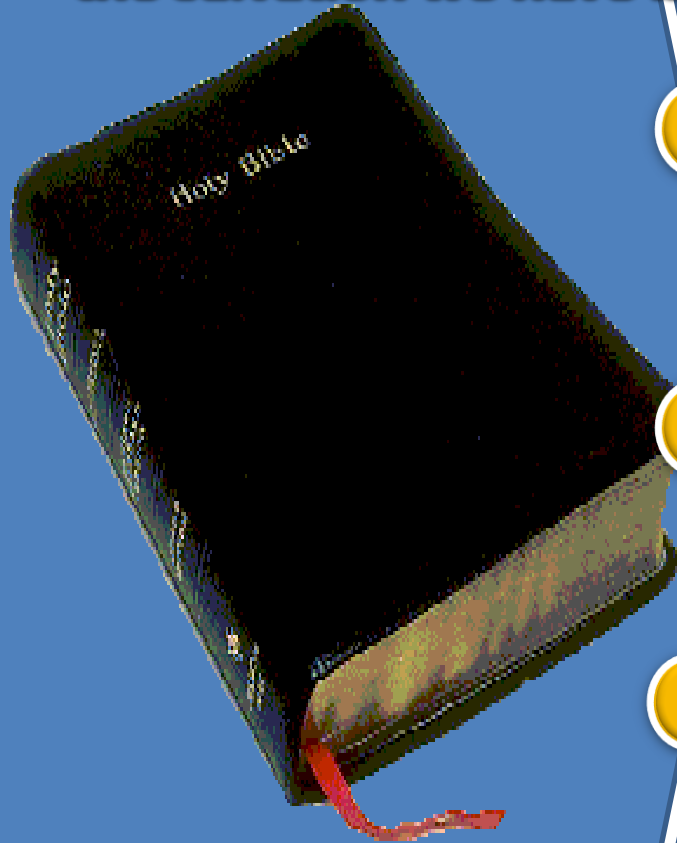
Lucado's church is Church of Christ -- but not a typical Church of Christ. For starters, musical instruments are used (although there is still one acappella service). Also, the church has a baptistic view of baptism -- that is, that baptism isn't required for salvation.

Recently, his church, which has some 5,000 members, even changed its name from "Oak Hills Church of Christ" to simply "Oak Hills Church."

"We've received criticism, of course," he said. "But our thinking is that we're not here to please other churches or other church leaders in other cities. As a church in San Antonio, our goal is to reach San Antonio."

- Michael Foust (Baptist Press)

The Bible warns us about where error will lead. It will not lead us to God but will lead us away from Him. It will lead us away from the salvation we have in Christ to be cast away in the devil's hell.



The Bible warns of the destructive nature of following error.

Matthew 15:14; II Peter 2:1-3; II Peter 3:15-17

The Bible warns there is a time the Lord will move the "lampstand".

Revelation 1:9-20; 2:1-7

The Bible warns us of the doom of not being "in Christ" (the Lord's Church).

I Peter 4:17-18; II Thessalonians 1:7-10; Jude 1:14-16

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Preachers / teachers / ... their message, their work ... any other! They understand ... of many!

Obey The Gospel:

Believe, John 8:24

Repent, Luke 13:3

Confess, Matthew 10:32

Baptized, Mark 16:16