

Pln13 - **The Early Church - Acts 2:42-47**

Have you **heard** these **“Seemingly” Spiritual Comments;**
I Love Jesus - But I Hate Religion
I Love Jesus - But I Hate the Church

Regarding Religion - These **comments** are prob referring
more to the **Pharisee Type** Religion

Regarding the Church - These **comments** are prob referring more
to that **man-made institution** where **Jesus** is NOT in Charge

But **here’s** the **problem** - it **puts** across a **angry, embattled** attitude

YES there are **real problems** with **institutions & organizations**
that we **generalize** by calling **“The Church”**

BUT, Jesus LOVES the **REAL Church**
Jesus DIED for **the Church**

& His **ONLY PLAN** to **Make Disciples** of all Nations - **IS the Church**

There’s a **young, hip, Rapper** who put a very **cool video**
on **Youtube** called ***“Why I Hate Religion But Love Jesus”***

the **Video** went **viral** & **now** has over **25 MILLION views**

This **Rap artist** has now **become** a **Spiritual Teacher, Speaker, &**
Mega Book Writer - All **launched** By **Viral Video YouTube FAME**

1 reason this guy is now a **super-star** - is because of how many
people RESONATE with his Now-Famous line
“I Hate Religion But I Love Jesus”

The problem is - **SO MANY** of his followers apply his words to something he didn't really mean with his catch line

His INSINUATION (tho He clearly says it was NOT his intention)
His INSINUATION is - It's OK to HATE the Church

& People LOVE to HATE the CHURCH

Some people think it makes them sound Super Spiritual to say
I Love JESUS - But I won't have anything to do w/ the Church

Again - I'm 1st to acknowledge - there are some very real problems with the institution people mistakenly CALL THE CHURCH

BUT - What did JESUS CALL THE CHURCH ??

He called it HIS BRIDE - & so these people are saying *"Hey Jesus, I love you, But I HATE your BRIDE"*

The Bible calls the Church God's CHILDREN - & So these people are saying *"Hey God I love you, But I HATE your children"*

Try telling a husband & father (Not Me) - *"Hey I like you, But I HATE your Wife, & I HATE your kids"* - See how that goes

God says in His Word - The Church is His ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, His HOLY NATION, His OWN POSSESSION

& If you would really LOOK at what the Bible says about the Church
You might re-think - Hating it

But then these people would say - *Well - I don't mean that - I just HATE the people in the church*

BUT - The **GREEK Word** for Church is **ECCLESIA** -
it **means** lit - ***“The Called Out Ones”*** (ones who’ve been Saved)

& so - **Those people that you HATE . . .**
those people ARE the **Bride of Christ**
They **ARE** the **Body of Christ**
They **ARE God’s Own Possession**

I KNOW - there’s a **LOT** of **problems** when **Sinners Gather** together
I KNOW - there is a **GAPPING CREVASSE** **Between** what the **Bible**
calls the Church - & what **some institutions** have **become**

But we **CANNOT LUMP** them **all together**
& say ***“I love Jesus - But NOT His Church”***

Because that is **100% ANTI-Biblical** - **AND Anti-Christ**

The Truth is - **God** is **using His Church** around **the World**
to **Save Sinners** & **Transform Lives**

& God has called you to be PART of His Church
Part of His **Body** - His **Bride** - His **Holy People**
His **Royal Priesthood** - His **FAMILY**

Let’s Pray

We’ve said for the last **2 msgs** - God’s **ONLY PLAN** to **reach** the
World with the **GREAT COMMISSION** - - - **Is The Church**

& **God** has **given** us **His Life** - & **The Power** of the **Holy Spirit**
to **accomplish HIS Plan** - **IN us** & **THRU us**

But - - - it is IN us & THRU us - TOGETHER

There's **NO CHURCH OF ONE** in the Bible - We've been **MADE by God** as a **BODY** - to **live** & **function together** in **UNITY**

& **the Goal** of The **Church** - is to **Bring God GLORY** -
& **Accomplish His Plan** & **His Purpose** - **TOGETHER**

After the Resurrection - **Jesus** gave the **Great Commission**
to **ALL Disciples** (you & me included)

Then - He **told** us to **WAIT** - **WAIT** until the **Power** of the Holy Spirit
has **come UPON you** - **so that** you can **be my WITNESSES**
to **CARRY OUT** the **Great Commission**

& **then** - in **Acts Ch 2** - The **Holy Spirit** was
POURED OUT on the **120 Disciples** in the **Upper Room**
& **what** we call "**The Church Age**" Formally **BEGAN**

The **POWER** of the **Holy Spirit falling** on the **Disciples**
DREW the **people**

Peter delivered the **FIRST MSG** of the **NT Church** - & **about 3,000**
souls were **added** to **the Church** - **ON THE FIRST DAY**

THIS is the **Beginning** of **the CHURCH** - The **Bride** & **Body** of **Christ**

& **HOW** was this **NEW CHURCH Designed** By God ??
WHAT did it **look like** ??

Well - the **Very 1st vs's** after those **intial 3,000** were **added** -
perfectly Explains How God **Designed the Church** to **Function**

Acts 2:42–47 (ESV)

42 And they (the brand new Church) devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common.

45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,

47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

What an **Incredible PICTURE**

of **the WAY** God **Designed** the **Church to Function**

In Vs 42 - There are **FOUR THINGS** the **Church** was **Designed** to **Be DEVOTED to** - **Not to mention** the **great truths in Following Vs's**

FIRST - we are to be Devoted to **THE APOSTLES TEACHING**

For us - that's **THE BIBLE** - We're to **be DEVOTED** to the **Teaching** of **the Bible** - **NOT** Our **Own Opinion**, **NOT** our **Own Desire** the **Actual teaching** of the **Bible**

Often - when a **person** is **lovingly encouraged** to **ACTUALLY be Devoted** to the **Teaching** of the **Bible**

THAT'S exactly when they **get angry** & start **saying** they **Love Jesus but Hate the Church**

Because that sounds so much more Spiritual than saying -
I refuse to accept the teaching of God's Word

So FIRST - We are Designed to be DEVOTED
to The Teaching of the Bible

SECOND - we are to be Devoted to FELLOWSHIP

This word is KOINONIA - It means most literally
"To Have in Common"

It means - *"Sharing LIFE in Common"*

It means - *"An Intimate Association with others"*

The Word is used Mostly of MARRIAGE - AND - The CHURCH!

It means we've been made to SHARE LIFE Together

We're here to Live the Life of Christ - IN COMMON - In Koinonia

The word FELLOWSHIP Means so much more than
the SOCIAL ACTIVITIES of the Church

It means Our Lives are Knit Together IN COMMON
For a Common Good - For HIS Good - NOT Our OWN

& we are called to Share that Life together all the more
as we see the Day of Lord drawing NEAR

Hebrews 10:24–25 (ESV)

24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,

25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

THAT - is what the Church is DESIGNED to DO

stirring up one another to love and good works - not neglecting to meet together - & encouraging one another

THIRD - We are to be Devoted to the BREAKING OF BREAD

This phrase can refer to EITHER

**The Lord's Supper (Communion) - or *actually*
Sharing Full Meals Together**

Most Scholars believe it refers to BOTH

Because in the Early Church - What we Call Communion was often PART of a larger "Love Feast" which we would call - a POTLUCK

BUT - it was never intended to be a SOCIAL PARTY

**BOTH - Taking Communion Together - AND Eating Together
Are designed to show our UNITY together in CHRIST**

**In taking Communion Together - We SHARE in Remembering
& Proclaiming the Life of Jesus TOGETHER**

& then - in Eating Together - We SHARE LIFE *together*

In the Middle East - the ACT of EATING TOGETHER (espec from the same dish) - is a sign that we share the SAME LIFE together !!

But Now WAIT a Minute - It seems like FELLOWSHIP
And BREAKING OF BREAD are pretty SIMILAR

TWO out of the FOUR Primary Practices of the Early Church
Are about UNITY & SHARING LIFE IN COMMON

50% of what the Early Church was Directed to DO - is about
Living in UNITY & ONENESS - Sharing ONE LIFE in Common

WHY do you think ONE-HALF of the what the Early Church did
instructs us to Live in UNITY & ONENESS in Christ??

Is there a Chance that God KNEW that THIS is where the Enemy
would work MOST Effectively - to try to Dismantle the Church ??

& So - We have on the Front end - Being Devoted to the Bible

& Then a DOUBLE Commitment to Living TOGETHER
in UNITY with Each other & with Jesus Christ

& then to close it out . . .

FOURTH - We are to be Devoted to PRAYER

FRANCIS CHAN Says: *To say that Prayer was IMPORTANT to
the Early Church would be a GROSS UNDERSTATEMENT*

Prayer was CRITICALLY CENTRAL to ALL the Early Church DID

They were COMPLETELY DEPENDENT
on being in Constant Communion with God

Because it was in thru their Dependence in Prayer
that ALL their STRENGTH & PEACE & DIRECTION Came

**They KNEW that their ONLY HOPE - was to be
in Constant Communion with God in Prayer**

& maybe that's the problem For Us today

**it's NOT that often - I find a Christian who's truly, completely
DEPENDENT on being in Constant Communion with God**

Because we've been trained to be the OPPOSITE of Dependent;

WE know what WE want

WE know how things SHOULD be

WE know what others SHOULD be doing for us

**& so it's HARD for us - to become Truly Dependent
on being in Constant Communion with God**

**From What I SEE - the #1 WAY a Christian learns to be Truly
Dependent on Constant Communion w/ God - - IS HARD TRIALS**

**It DOESN'T HAVE to be that way - But our IN-DEPENDENCE MUST
be BROKEN - So that we can (Together) - Become DE-PENDENT on
God in PRAYER**

**& Praise the Lord this type of Prayer is happening more & more
Right HERE in our Prayer Ministry**

**WHY ?? - Because God brought a Leader
who's been CRUSHED by Trials in this life**

**& the ONLY way he's serving God today is because of his Complete
Dependence on Being in Constant Communion w/ God in Prayer**

& we can learn a LOT from Him

& So - Being a PART of the Church Jesus Began - LOOKS like THIS:

We'll be **Devoted** to **GOD'S TEACHING** in the **Bible**

We'll be **Devoted** to **SHARING LIFE** in **Common** with **one another**

We'll be **Devoted** to **COMMUNION** with **Jesus & one another** - &

We'll be **Devoted** to **DEPENDENCE** on God in **Prayer** - *Together*

So **That's ONE Vs** here - **Acts 2:42** - & the **other Vs's** are **just as Powerful** - So Let's **at least Re-Read** them

(again) Acts 2:43–47 (ESV)

43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

44 And all who believed were together (unity) and had all things in common. (again a ref to Koinonia)

45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. (Radical Giving)

46 And day by day, attending the temple together (they actually WENT to church) and breaking bread in their homes (also gathered in their homes), they received their food with glad and generous hearts (they had thankful & Generous Hearts),

47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

WOW - what an **incredible START** for **the Church**

& **what** a **Perfect EXAMPLE** for **us to Follow**

BUT - **WHAT Happened** as the **remainder** of the **N.T.** was **written** ?
Problems developed in the church - Didn't they?

MOST of the **Letters** if **the N.T.** were **written** to **specifically address**
some PROBLEM in **one** of **the Churches**

& Do we HAVE these exact same problems in the Church Today?
& Did God KNOW The Church was going to have these Problems?
& Did God STILL Call EACH of us to be an Active, Functioning, Part of the Church? - - YES!

WHY ???

Because - Because EVEN WITH all our Problems
The Church IS STILL the BODY of Christ on Earth

Eph 2:21 says *We are being JOINED TOGETHER*
into a HOLY TEMPLE in the Lord

& V.22 says - *We are being BUILT TOGETHER*
into a Dwelling Place for God

So if you are choosing to NOT be a PART of the Body of Christ
to NOT be a PART of the Temple of the Holy Spirit
to NOT be a PART of God's Royal Priesthood - His Holy Nation

Aren't you really Choosing to NOT be a PART of Christ Himself ??

IF you are doing that - I'd strongly Encourage you - to Reconsider

OK - Where else can we get Good BIBLICAL Direction
on HOW we are to be PART of the Body of Christ??

Here are THREE Scriptures - WRITE THEM DOWN
STUDY THEM - *DEAL with GOD on them* → →

& Either - ACCEPT God's Word

Or Accept the Fact that you are REJECTING God's Word

1Cor 12:12-31

Rom 12:3-13

Eph 4:11-16

Read - Study - Meditate - Journal - Wrestle with God . . .

But in the End - Please - CHOOSE God's WAY -

& truly become a Functioning Part - of His Body on Earth

Because it is the ONLY DESIGN God OFFERS -

For you to be PART of HIS Plan & HIS Purpose

Finally - What about all those Terrible Church LEADERS
we all get so MAD at??

FIRST - Let me say:

Church Leaders Make Mistakes - JUST LIKE YOU DO

They are Real People - Following Jesus - JUST LIKE YOU ARE

They are NOT PERFECT - JUST LIKE YOU ARE NOT

I've had Church Leaders Make Mistakes in Leading ME

& I've Made Mistakes AS a Church Leader - in Leading others

I understand - Leaders Make Mistakes

But God has NO OTHER PLAN

But to use Imperfect Sinners to Lead his Church

Tho God holds Leaders to Very HIGH Spiritual & Moral Standards

Here at CCN - We follow a Very Biblical MODEL of GROUP ELDER OVERSIGHT of the Flock of God

This **Biblical Model** we believe **Best Addresses** the **Imperfect-Sinner** Leadership issues

We have **FIVE ELDERS** who have **TOGETHER Accepted Responsibility** to **Care** for **this Flock** of God

We **KNOW WHOSE Flock** this is - & we **Genuinely Tremble** at **caring** for **this Flock** on **Behalf** of **Jesus Christ**

Today - **I serve** with **FOUR ELDERS** who are **the most GENUINE, HUMBLE, BROKEN Men** I have **ever Served** with

There is not a **Personal Agenda** or a **Desire for Position** or **Power** in **ANY ONE** of **these MEN**

We **genuinely WANT** to **lead you** - **On Behalf of Christ** to **grow** in **your Faith**

As Ephesians 4:15 says (speaking of Leadership) (ESV)
15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

& - **WE AGONIZE** over **HOW** to **Speak the Truth** to you **in Love**
So that we may all grow up IN EVERY WAY into Him who is the Head, into Christ

But **very often** - **Even tho** we **do all we can** (*Being Controlled by The Spirit*) - to **Speak the Truth IN LOVE** to a **person**

Often that person **STILL** gets **VERY ANGRY**

& immediately starts Telling others how TERRIBLE we are
In order for them to feel some type of SUPPORT of their Position

& I can't tell you - How MANY people I know - who've Left Church -
AND Developed that "I Love Jesus but HATE the Church" attitude

Because God wanted to TRANSFORM THEM

He wanted them to GROW UP in a Certain Area

& God used a Church Leader to give them that opportunity

But instead they chose to Reject
what God was trying to do in their life

& instead - they RUN OFF to try to find another place
where they can AVOID Growing in That Area

& the Spiritual Growth of the Majority of these People
Gets put on PAUSE - While they are Nursing their PRIDE

I KNOW - Because I HAVE BEEN One of Those People

& I'm trying very hard right now - to speak that Truth - in LOVE

Listen please - If you are Saved Today

It is in ORDER for you to BE PART of the Body of Christ

You have been Redeemed

to be used by God in His Great Plan of Redemption

But God's ONLY PLAN involves you being PART of His BODY

Part of His Royal Priesthood - His Holy Nation,

The Temple of the Holy Spirit, The Bride of Christ

ALL those Titles Speak - of the Church

That **IMPERFECT Church** - Full of **Sinners being Transformed**
& **Loved & Empowered by God** . . . **WE ARE THE CHURCH**

Don't Get DUPED By the **Devils Scheme**
to **separate you** from the **Body of Christ**

LEARN from the **LION in Africa**

The Lion first **SEPARATES ONE** from **the Herd**
& then **rips it's guts out & devours it**

1 Peter 5:8 (NLT)

8 Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.

DON'T So Easily - Become His PREY
Be a PART of God's Church

& DON'T Worry - We're JUST LIKE YOU . . .

Imperfect - Mistake-Making Sinners
Being Transformed by **God's Grace**

Come on in - You'll FIT PERFECTLY

Let's Pray