**BURY THE CHURCH OR BETTER THE CHURCH**

**INTRO:**

**Illustration: Years ago in a small quiet community, it was the tradition that when someone died that the pastor would go to the church and ring the church bell three times. This was how the little town would know when someone passed away.**

 **So one Sunday afternoon, the pastor of the little church went and rang the church bell three times. People from throughout the little town came out and started gathering at the church. Everybody knew everybody, and they had no idea that someone had passed away.**

 **Everyone who came began to ask, “Who has died?”**

 **The pastor said he would announce it once everyone got inside and assembled. After everyone was seated, he made this announcement. “You have gathered here wanting to know who has died. Friends, I’m sad to report to you that your church has died! Only a handful of you were here this morning for church, and out of that handful some of you had no real interest in seeing the Lord move in the service. So it’s official; the church has died! Now it is up to you whether you want to bury it, or began to pray and ask God to resurrect it and revive it and make it alive again. However, it all depends on what you will allow God to do in your hearts as to whether this church will get buried or will get better.”**

**1. Look at the Spiritual Church**

 **Acts 2:38-41 [38](https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Acts-2-38/%22%20%5Co%20%22Acts%202%3A38%20KJV%20verse%20detail)Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.**

[**39**](https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Acts-2-39/)**For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call.** [**40**](https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Acts-2-40/)**And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.** [**41**](https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Acts-2-41/)**Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.**

**2. Look at the Sardis Church**

**The Revelation 3:1-2** [**1**](https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Revelation-3-1/)**And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.** [**2**](https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Revelation-3-2/)**Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.**

**\*\*Today, we as members of the church and we as individuals must decide whether we want to be like the first church in Acts chapter 2 (The Spiritual Church) or if we want to be like the church in The Revelation chapter 3 (The Sardis Church).**

**\*\*Today you have a choice before you whether to Bury the Church or to Better the Church.**

**\*\*Be honest when you answer these questions. 1) Does anyone want to bury the church? 2) Does anyone want to better the church?**

**\*\* If you mean it from your heart then listen to the message that the Lord has laid on my heart on how we all can BETTER the Church instead of BURYING the Church!**

**I. LET US HELP THE CHURCH TO BE GODLY**

**Acts 2:40-41** [**40**](https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Acts-2-40/)**And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.** [**41**](https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Acts-2-41/)**Then they that gladly received his word were baptized:**

**\*\*Untoward means crooked, wicked and perverse, and Peter said if you want to save or keep yourself from the danger of wickedness, then you have to accept the Word which is Jesus and repent and be baptized!**

**\*\*The church will die and be buried if ungodliness reigns in the members of the church. Your ungodly living will kill the church!**

 **A. To Be Godly, There Has To Be A Transformation**

**\*\*Be ye therefore transformed from death unto life will make the church alive!**

 **1. Transformation means you have a Past**

**\*\*Notice it is in the past and not in the present!**

**a. Sin is in the Past b. Self-Righteousness is in the Past**

**c. Sorriness is in the Past**

 **2. Transformation means you have a Profession**

**a. You professed the Father b. You professed the Faith**

 **3. Transformation means you have a Proof**

**a. The Salvation is your Proof. b. The Savior is your Proof.**

 **B. To Be Godly, There Has To Be A Testimony**

 **1. I’ve forsaken Sinful Places**

 **2. I’ve forsaken Sinful People**

 **3. I’ve forsaken Sinful Practices**

 **C. To Be Godly, There Has To Be A Triumph**

 **1. Triumph includes a Remembrance**

 **a. Can you remember the conviction?**

 **b. Can you remember the conversion?**

 **2. Triumph includes a Repentance**

 **a. You have to repent and ask for God’s Help**

 **b. You have to repent and ask for God’s Holiness**

**\*\*You cannot be godly and the church won’t be godly unless people repent!**

 **3. Triumph includes a Redemption**

 **a. Redemption makes us Pure**

 **b. Redemption makes us Praise**

**\*\*If you want to bury the church then all the members and officers of the church have to do is to live in ungodly sin!**

**\*\*By the way it is ungodly sin for healthy and able Christian people to forsake the assembling themselves together and to forsake contributing their time and their time to the church!**

**\*\*You can live in ungodliness and be a part of burying the church, or, you can leave ungodliness and be a part of bettering the church!**

**II. LET US HELP THE CHURCH TO BE GROWING**

**Acts 2:41b-42 . . . and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.** [**42**](https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Acts-2-42/)**And they continued stedfastly . . .**

**\*\*To grow the church needs Souls and Stedfastness!**

 **A. Our Worship Helps the Church to Grow**

**Acts 2:47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.**

 **1. Worship God for His Blessings**

 **a. He’s blessed this church with His Peace**

 **b. He’s blessed this church with His Power**

 **c. He’s blessed this church with His Presence**

 **2. Worship God for His Building**

**\*\*The church does not exist because of the bricks; this church exists because of the body. The Lord built a body of people here.**

 **a. He built it with Humble People**

 **b. He built it with Holy People**

 **c. He built it with Hungry People**

 **d. He built it with Helpful People**

 **e. He built it with Heavenly People**

**\*\*If you want to make the church better, be one of those type of people!**

 **B. Our Witness Helps the Church to Grow**

**Acts 2:40 And with many other words did he testify**

 **1. Have you Testified about our Christ Lately?**

 **a. The community will be affected with your testimony.**

 **b. The community will be amazed with your testimony.**

 **2. Have you Talked about our Church Lately?**

 **a. The community will be Attentive when you do.**

 **b. The community will be Astounded when you do.**

**\*\*The church can be better if you just testify about our Christ and talk our church on Facebook, by texting, at the beauty shop.**

**\*\*You can reach people I cannot reach, and we all need to reach out in order to better the church and not bury the church.**

 **C. Our Willingness Helps the Church to Grow**

 **1. We Must Be Practicing People**

**Acts 2:40 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.**

 **a. Make the Truth a Practice (Doctrine)**

 **b. Make the Ties a Practice (Fellowship)**

 **c. Make the Table a Practice (Bread Breaking)**

 **d. Make the Throne a Practice (Prayers)**

 **2. We Must Be Purposeful People**

 **a. Let’s be one Single People**

**Acts 2:44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;**

**Acts 2:46 did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,**

 **b. Let’s be one Sacrificial People**

**Acts 2:45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need.**

 **c. Let’s be one Spirit-filled People**

**\*\*In verse 47, they were praising God!**

**\*\*Through the Worship, the Witnessing, and the Willingness helps to grow the church and make the church better!**

**\*\*Will you choose to make the church better by doing something for God, or will you choose to bury the church by doing nothing for God?**

**III. LET US HELP THE CHURCH TO BE GREAT**

 **A. Make this Church Great by being Connected**

 **1. Get connected to the Praying**

 **2. Get connected to the Praising**

 **3. Get connected to the Preaching**

 **4. Get connected to the Power**

 **B. Make this Church Great by being Concerned**

 **1. Get concerned enough to ask God to Hear Us**

 **2. Get concerned enough to ask God to Help Us**

**\*\*We’re not concerned about the church or about Christ when our People keeps missing, our Participation keeps missing, and our Payments keep missing!**

**\*\*If you want to bury the church, just keep missing!**

 **C. Make this Church Great by being Challenged**

 **1. Accept the challenge to be Dependable**

 **a. In Sunday School**

 **b. In Service**

 **c. In Sowing**

**Quote: If the church meets to spit off the porch, then I want to be there to spit off the porch with them!**

**Quote: The great task of the church today is not only to get sinners into Heaven, but also to get saints out of bed.**

 **2. Accept the challenge to be Dependant**

**\*\*I’m dependant on the church and must be there because that’s where we as a church get Encouraged, Exhorted, and Edified.**

 **3. Accept the challenge to be Different**

 **1. God may want our Programs to be Different.**

 **2. God may want our Promotions to be Different.**

 **3. God may want our Plans to be Different.**

 **4. God may want our Practices to be Different.**

 **\*\*Maybe our traditional Functions and Formalities.**

**\*\*Don’t mistake Change for Compromise! There is a difference!**

**\*\*As the pastor, I will not change or compromise the Sermons, the Singing, nor the Standards!**

**\*\*However, we as a church must be open to following the Lord in doing some things differently to reach our community so the church can get better and not get buried!**

**CLOSE**

**Let me ask you again now that you know what is required.**

**1) Do you want to be a part of Burying the Church?**

**2) Do you want to be a part of Bettering the Church?**

**\*\*If you want the church to do better and be a part of that and you mean it from your heart, then respond to the question by coming to this altar and praying for our church!**

**\*\*We must do something. I’m willing. Are you willing to do something to better the church?**

**A. Will you help this church to be Godly?**

**B. Will you help this church to be Growing?**

**C. Will you help this church to be Great?**

**\*\*Then respond and come pray and dedicate yourself unto the Lord and for His service.**

**A FUNERAL FOR THE DEAD MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH**

**There was a preacher who figured out that his church was dying because there were some dead church members that were still occupying the pews from time to time within the church. So he decided one Sunday that it was time to bury those dead church members.**

**It was then he got up and announced that he was going to name all the dead church members, put their names in a box, and then bury them in the church cemetary so the church could grow and live on.**

**Now as you read this list of names, you need to spend more time asking whether any of the names fit you rather than labeling some fellow Christian.**

**Here are the names of those read to the congregation at the funeral for dead members:**

**Mr. Bill Backslider, Mrs. Lucy Lukewarm, Mrs. Inez Indecision, Mrs. Gloria Gossip, Mrs. Nelly Neverwill, Mr. Don I. Dolittle, Mr. Peter Payless, Mr. Ned Negative, Mrs. Suzy Sunday Sickness, Mr. Judas Iscariot, Mr. Newt Noseall, Mrs. Janice Joy Killer, Mr. Stevie Sleepsin, Mr. Sean Someday, Mr. Willy Wiser, Mr. Sonny Selfishness, Mrs. Sally Sensitive, Mrs. Mandy Madd, Mr. Homer Hateful, Mr. Timothy Temper, Mrs. Imogene Impatience, Mr. Bob Busy, and all the members of the Critical Family who are as follows:**

**Mr. Chris Critical, who thinks the preacher preaches too long; Mrs. Christy Critical, who thinks the pastor should call more often; Mr. Craig Critical, who thinks the church supports too many missionaries; Mrs. Cindy Critical, who doesn't like the choir songs; and finally, Mr. Carl Critical, who personally knows all the hypocrites who are members of the church.**

**After the funeral service for these dead members of the church, the church was able to bury them and live on and be a Spirit-filled church! Praise God!**

**Each of us need to die daily and take up the cross and follow Jesus so that the church doesn't die because of our selfish ways and naughty hearts.**