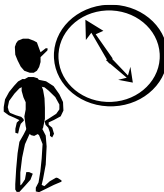


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### Time of Assembly



#### Sunday:

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.  
Worship 10:00 a.m.  
(Or every other week)

Bible Study 4:00 p.m.  
Worship 5:00 p.m.

#### Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

## On Drifting Away From the Faith

By Terry Wane Benton

If we surveyed churches who declined in attendance because of COVID, we may find an alarming number of brethren who fell or are in process of drifting further away. I remember thinking a long time ago that should persecution arise in our country, and it was viewed as a crime to be a Christian and assemble with Christians, that this would test us to the core of our faith, and many would not look for a way to assemble but would find their excuse not to assemble.

Two kinds of brethren would emerge in such a picture:

1. Those with faith to find a way because the Lord and the brethren come first (Matthew 6:33; Hebrews 10:24-25), and
2. those who would let fear rule over their faith (II Tim.1:7; I John 4:18).

Persecution was not the only test that could do this. It turned out that fear of a virus could do the same thing. Fear ruled over faith and love in many cases and showed us what we really were deep down. The love of many waxed cold. Some could go to every public event, restaurant, ballgame, and grocery store but not to the church. They could find a way for every event but the church assemblies. Fear can justify very unreasonable decisions and becomes very inconsistent. It tested our faith and fear won in many cases. The church is more dangerous than other places? Other places are worth the risks? Did fear isolate us from our own families? Or just our spiritual family? Did we cut off family members who did not share our fear or just spiritual family members who did not seem willing to comply with the rules of our fear?

We need to evaluate how the test of fear either exposed a weakness of faith and love in us or provided the opportunity to prove how genuine our faith and love are. If we

did not do too well in this test, how would we do under persecution? Fear comes in various forms and tests us. How well we do in smaller tests may very well expose a lack of faith for bigger tests of faith to come. The trying of our faith exposes “genuineness” (I Peter 1:6-7) or exposes the lack of it. Did the test prove your faith genuine, making it shine brighter? Or did the light of Christ in you grow dimmer? Did you get stronger, or did you start drifting away from the faith in Jesus?

What would you have done if it was a crime to be a Christian? Would there be enough evidence to convict you? Let us each “*examine yourselves whether you be in the faith*” (II Corinthians 13:5) or whether we let fear rule and cause us to drift away!

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## Lies People Protect

By Terry Wane Benton

In the first century, Paul exposed the lies people were telling each other. It was that an animal is a god to be worshiped (Romans 1:18-26) and that such gods allow us to make up our moral standards as we desire. Thus, one lie protected all kinds of sin.

Since the moral system was actually immoral, the first lie protected the entire immoral system and made truth-tellers like the apostles of Jesus the bad guys. The only immorality in such a system was to judge anybody who challenged such a system as hateful and immoral. Thus, the apostles got railroaded out of town quite often or stoned to death.

Today, you might lose your job if you refuse to go along with the lie that a man is a woman or if you refuse to pretend that he is a woman if he chooses to present himself as one. The lie is not evil in this case, but you are evil if you refuse to pretend the lie is true. Paul said that they “*exchanged the truth of God for the lie*” (Romans 1:25). The creature has become greater than the Creator. The creature can change the truth that he is a male into the lie that he is female, and the only one that gets punished or ostracized is the truth-teller that God is the source of all truth that humanity is made in only two categories: male and female, nothing more or less or other than male and female.

The truth of God is clearly under attack today. The lie that a male can choose to be a female, and all have to accept that choice is pushed with political clout into companies so that Christians will often have to pretend the lie is true or lose their job and career opportunities. You have to allow men into women's restrooms and sports, or you are tagged as evil. That is the system that is growing more and more powerful because we pushed God aside.

When God is pushed aside, the only moral compass will be the lies we invent and perpetrate as true. We give those lies the strength to rule us by refusing to “*expose the unfruitful works of darkness*” (Ephesians 5:11).

“*Let God be true and every man a liar*” (Romans 3:4). God is true and righteous

altogether. In Him is no darkness at all. People love darkness because their deeds are evil (John 3:17ff). There is a standard that is true (John 17:17; II Timothy 3:16-17).

Be kind to all sinners, love their souls, but do so without legitimizing sin based on lies. All liars will have their part in the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8). Put away lies and speak the truth with your neighbor (Ephesians 4:25). Don't go along with pretending a lie is true. That only protects lies and harms truth and becomes a trap for whole segments of God-fearing people.

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## Whose Voice are You Hearing?

By Doy Moyer

*“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me”* (John 10:27).

Whose voice are we hearing? We are all listening to someone's voice, whether it be the voice of culture, the voice of another perceived authority, or the voice of Jesus. There is no escaping this.

Hearing the voice of someone else or a cultural group-think is acknowledgment in our lives of where we think authority ultimately resides. When we hear the voice and follow, we are saying that this voice holds enough weight for us that we are willing to give our lives and thoughts to what this voice is saying. The “voice” is everything to us. It is the “voice” to which we appeal for why we do what we do. The “voice” becomes an integral part of our identity.

In the cacophony of voices, we will hear echoes of confusion, distrust, every wind of doctrine that tosses us about and creates in us a chaotic sense of doubt and lack of clarity. There is no peace, no grounding, and no hope in the disorder. We are tired, restless, and hungry for what truly satisfies us. The voice of culture cannot give this, for it is ever in flux, never providing a solid footing on which to stand. The voice of others beset by their own sins and weaknesses cannot provide ultimate hope, no matter much confidence they exude or the pride they demonstrate. They are empty, *“waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever”* (Jude 12-13).

We are made to hear the voice of clarity that reaches the depths of our hearts and renews our spirits. We are made to hear the voice of Jesus.

*“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”*  
(Matthew 11:28).

*“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied”* (Matthew 5:6).

Whose voice will you listen to today?