

Stay or Move?

Church loyalty

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with Karen Maheson

Harvestime

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Contents

Introduction	7
1 What am I doing here?	9
2 'What are you doing there?'	17
3 Where is God in all this?	23
4 Whose church is it anyway?	29
5 Brought to perfection	37
6 You in your small corner?	45
7 God is still looking	51
8 Church-splitting	59
9 Sheep-stealing	67
10 Red herrings	75
11 Old chestnuts	81
12 No compromise	91
13 Utter obedience	97
14 Reward and prize - gain or loss?	107
15 A tale of two cities	115
Appendix: Some useful practical points	123

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Note: The names in these stories have been changed.

Introduction

The most frustrating thing about buying furniture from a do-it-yourself store is that there always seems to be something vital missing from the pack.

Visualising with eager anticipation the fine display of fittings soon to grace your bedroom, you are keen to get started right away. You arrive home with your boxes only to discover that several screws are missing and the instructions are incomplete. Not only that, it's Saturday evening, the shop shuts in five minutes and you had your heart set on moving everything into the new wardrobes tomorrow, if not before!

What do you do? Wait until you can go back to the store and obtain the missing items? Or go ahead anyway, hoping you can still assemble the furniture correctly and that a few missing screws won't make much difference?

Experience shows that to try and assemble furniture without full instructions and a complete kit is likely to result in severe frustration and a good deal of wasted time. Not to mention shelves that wobble and wardrobe doors that refuse to close properly. Yet many of us are trying to build our Christian lives that way.

Some of us start out with enthusiasm, eager to see our town turn to God – by the end of next week if possible! We join a local church only to find that tradition takes priority over God's Word and few share our longing for a closer walk with God.

Disillusioned by the lack of vision in the church, and the restrictions upon our moving forward with God the way he wants, we struggle to keep our own vision alive. Soon, our enthusiasm is replaced by frustration and a sense of failure.

Others of us settle in churches where we hope our desire to learn God's ways and find his will for our lives will be met, only to be confused by critical attitudes and disunity. Our

hunger remains unsatisfied. Disappointed by our lack of personal growth, empty and longing to be filled, we cry out, 'There must be more to it than this!'

Still others of us have grown comfortable in our churches, content to maintain the *status quo*. Faintly aware that the Spirit of God is moving today in ways beyond our current experience, we catch an occasional glimpse but quickly settle back, never quite seeing that God wants to bring us into the mainstream of his purpose, use us mightily and bless us abundantly.

Like the do-it-yourself man, we are trying to build our spiritual life without full instructions and a complete kit.

We are struggling to build in an environment where people are willing neither to put the whole Word of God into practice nor to acknowledge the gifts and ministries he has given to enable us to build to his plan. Vision and enthusiasm, though vital, can never be enough on their own – and we find that, spiritually speaking, our wardrobe has an ominous slant.

Perhaps you have experienced something like this yourself. You may even find yourself in a similar situation right now. You have searched for answers but they always seem to elude you.

If that's you, then it's time to go back to the Maker's instructions. It's time to look into the Word of God and take counsel from him.

Each one of us born into the family of God has a unique inheritance to claim and a unique role to play in our Father's house, a role reserved for us alone. So let's not delay any longer. The devil has been robbing us for far too long and it's time to tell him where to get off.

As you read on, may God speak clearly into your situation, leading you into the richness of all that he has already set aside especially for you.