Seek The Old Paths

"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths...and walk therein" (Jeremiah 6:16)

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WHY SOME QUIT THE CHURCH

James W. Boyd

We begin by noting that there is a difference between a reason and an excuse. An excuse is designed to release one from his duty without revealing the real truth behind the desire for release. A reason seeks release but tells the truth as to why. A Christian should never have either an excuse or a reason for wanting to forsake his duty to Christ and the church. It is a sad thing that some do quit.

Many offer excuses why they never become Christians, such as: they are too bad, or they are already good enough, too young, too old, can't hold out, intend to someday, too many hypocrites in the church, etc. The real reason is that they do not love the Son of God and do not have sufficient faith to lead them to obey.

Some are very much against the church and offer as their excuse such things as the church being too narrowminded, intolerant, hypocritical, old fashioned, etc. The real reason is that they are untaught, or prejudiced, determined to go their own way, unsubmissive to God's truth, misinformed and closed of mind. Why should anyone ever decide to go to hell because of somebody else?

Still others who have become members of the church will quit. Peter shows the tragedy of those who turn back in Second Peter 2:20-22. They offer such excuses as too sick, too tired, too busy, have to work, transportation, first one thing then another, excuses that never keep them from doing anything else they want to do. But the excuses do not reveal the real reasons. In this lesson we want to discuss four reasons behind their quitting. There are others than these four that we could also examine.

SHALL WE STAND?

Some who quit do not like the stand for the truth that the church must take. What they refuse to accept is the fact that the church does not determine what ought to be upheld. Christ has determined that and revealed that in His word. Brethren only have to decide whether to obey Christ or not.

Many brethren really resist the church taking the Lord's side regarding worldliness. The cares of this world have choked out their love for the Lord. They want the things of this life so much that they will sacrifice Christ in order to have them. They are too steeped in ungodly living and do not wish to give that up. They resent the church teaching against drinking, dancing, smoking, immodesty, gambling, dishonesty, gossiping, etc. because those things are part of their lives and they refuse to abandon them. They do not like the condemnation of the evil, sex-crazed movies, television shows, literature and magazines because they watch them, read them, subscribe to them and enjoy them.

They do not like the church to take God's stand on marriage, divorce and remarriage because they, or someone they know, have become involved in sinful situations from which they have no intentions of leaving.

They do not like to hear the church present lessons on attendance at worship, or cheerful and liberal giving, putting God first, because that interferes with their sports, their fun, their vacations, their popularity and pleasure and having more possessions. When the truth gets in the way of what they want they feel uncomfortable and had rather not have to hear about it, so they quit.

The question that Paul once asked, "Am I your enemy because I tell you the truth?" must be answered, "Yes," by many who quit the church. Nobody becomes more agitated and resentful toward truth than church members who wish the other brethren would tone down the condemnation of sin and the proclamation of Christian duties.

NOT QUITE QUITTERS

Some do not quit entirely, but they drag their feet, complaining always against faithful brethren who stand for God's word, finding fault with every exposure of their sins, attacking the messengers of truth because they cannot handle the message of truth. They have the foolish idea that they can ride two horses at the same time even though they are going in opposite directions.

Some others, who do not quit altogether and do not complain out loud, choose the route of inconsistency and hypocrisy, pretending to follow Christ but resenting every step of the way. They are all diseased with the dislike of the church standing for the truth, which is the what the church must do.

Some have been known to quit because they do not like somebody else who is a member. It may be an elder, the preacher, somebody, anybody. We ought to make sure that whoever and whatever we dislike is based on the Scripture rather than on personalities, peculiarities, opinions and personal enmity. Scriptural problems can be resolved by scriptural processes. Why should anyone take out their dislike of another against God and turn on Him?

WHO SUFFERS?

Who is hurt the most when some-

one quits? Is it the person who is not liked, or the person who quits? The one who quits is on his way to hell regardless of how ugly somebody else may be. What could be worse than eternal condemnation? Salvation is faithfulness in Christ whether you like somebody else or not. Disloyalty on my part to Christ does not change the essentiality of faithfulness. Letting somebody else, especially somebody we do not like, keep us out of heaven is foolishness gone to seed.

If ever you consider quitting the Lord's church because of some of the members, you better consider who gets hurt. Do you realize who you are

offending? True, everyone is hurt when anyone quits a faithful church. But never does the failure, fault, or weakness of somebody else give you sufficient justification to neglect

your sacred duty to God.

Keep before us the words of Jesus, "No man, having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of heaven" (Luke 9:62).

AN AVENUE OF APOSTASY

Some quit because they marry outside the church and under that influence they lose their zeal to be faithful to it. I am aware that there are many people who have married non-Christians who have not only remained faithful themselves but have converted their mates. If this be your case, be thankful it turned out that way - you are the exception, not the rule. Those who have studied the matter tell us that seven out of ten who marry outside the church eventually leave the church. We have known many, many people who have gone that deadly path. Only a small percentage ever converts their mates.

Many children are lost to the cause of Christ because only one of their parents cared for the Lord's church. The other did not. The children were torn in frustration and confusion and did nothing for the Lord. There is not an adequate way to express the heartache and trouble that has come into the hearts of many

A Christian should never have either an excuse or a reason for wanting to forsake his duty to Christ and the church brethren because they married outside the church.

Many who marry non-Christians do not leave the church but they become rather bland and

shy regarding the truth. They do not stand as they once did. They are prone to compromise and minimize truth in favor of their mates. They are often so critical of the church because the church must take the Lord's position which the non-Christian resents. Homes that are divided religiously may have a degree of happiness now and then, but they can never be what God wants the home to be because Christ does not reign supreme in that home, even at the top.

One of the leading causes for the apostasy of Israel was that they married those outside of God's family and people. This polluted their thinking

and their faith suffered. Even though repeatedly warned against it, they persisted in it and it brought their ruin. These things were written for our learning, but many just will not learn.

Marrying one who shares your faith is a safeguard against apostasy. How can people do this thing to themselves and their children they may Do they care only for themhave? selves that they leave out God from their marriage? Here is the closest human relationship on earth, and God is omitted. We need all the encouragement we can get to live life faithfully. How contrary to good sense to deliberately place the added burden against yourself by entering a marriage with one who does not put Christ first in life!

We do not apologize for denouncing mixed marriages. If you had seen as much trouble in the lives of others because of such things that most preachers see, you would not see it any other way than the way we have presented it.

DID THEY REALLY START?

Some quit because they may never have really started. They were not converted. They went through a form or some motive, but their heart was not changed. They became a member like somebody joining a club. They held reservations in their mind even as they verbalized their professional convictions. They became a member to please somebody else rather than the Lord. They did not really obey God, but had other motives for doing what they did. Maybe they were misled by over-zealous "soul winners" who did not teach them sufficiently, and when they did come to understand the true cost of being a Christian they melted away. We would not pretend to judge their hearts, but these things are matters of reality with some.

Marrying one who shares your faith is a safeguard against apostasy

Nothing short of genuine commitment to the cause of Christ will please God. Somebody has said that nobody can be sure just who really belongs to God. We do not subscribe to this view because, by the word of truth, we can tell who is and who is not a Christian. Being unable, however, to judge another's heart, we may be deceived regarding some. But God knows the hearts of all people. We can tell, as far as outward appearance is concerned, who is indicating faithfulness, but what the inward man is we leave to God. When a person comes to be baptized we ask them if they believe that Christ is the Son of God. Only God knows if they are telling the truth when they say they do. We have to accept what we are told because we are not judges of another's heart. Whether one has really been converted to Christ is between them and God. We can know if We may not be one we are saved. hundred per cent sure of all others. But we must insist that they do what they do in compliance with God's commands, not only outwardly, but inwardly. We can determine the outward, and leave the inward to God and the person involved. Evidently some have gone through the motions outwardly but it becomes evident later that their motives were not as they should have been. They turned away.

This is not to say that all those who fall away were never really converted as the Baptists erroneously teach. People can fall away and leave that which they once truly and obediently accepted. But some have seemingly fallen away from what they appeared to accept because they either were not aware of what was expected, or really never accepted it from the heart. There is a difference in being "wetted" in baptism and being "wedded" to the Lord.

SAME END

Regardless of why some quit the church, his soul is lost. Does it really matter why one quits when the result is hell in every case? Whatever be the provocation and temptation to quit God, it is folly to do so. Let nothing cause you to quit His church as it strives to continue faithful. You be faithful to Him in His body. Salvation will never be enjoyed in heaven any other way.

Rt. 5 Box 36, McMinnville, TN 37110

POINTING PREACHERS TO CHRIST

Victor M. Eskew

The work of preaching is an extremely high calling. This is so because God ordained the work of preaching. "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1: 21). God does not look upon this work with scorn and contempt. He looks upon it with honor and resect. "And how shall they preach. except they be sent? as it is written. How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things" (Rom. 10:15)!

The work of preaching is also a hard work. One is constantly under the scrutiny of those in and out of the church. His actions, his words, his attitudes and motives are also under constant criticism. The souls of men. congregational problems, brotherhood issues, administrative functions, regular duties, and family situations constantly plague the mind. The preacher is often misunderstood, tempted, cursed, falsely accused, rejected, and persecuted. It is not uncommon for preachers to give up. It is frequently heard that another man has left the field. Due to these unhappy incidents, we

want to point preachers to Christ.

First, we point preachers to Christ to show them that He was often misunderstood. Nicodemus misunderstood the new birth (John 3:3-5). The woman at the well misunderstood the teaching concerning the living water (John 4:13-15). The apostles did not comprehend the Lord's words about His crucifixion (Mark 9:30-They were also confused about 32). the nature of the kingdom (Acts 1:6). It should not surprise preachers that they are misunderstood. However. Jesus did not give up because of this. He continued His work which the Father had given Him to do.

Second, we point preachers to Christ to show them that He was tempted. In Matthew 16:1 we read: "The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven." Three chapters later, the Pharisees are "The found tempting Jesus again. Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every clause" (Matt. 19:3)? In Matthew 22, the Pharisees are up to their wicked practice of tempting the Christ again. "Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him. and saying" (Matt. 22:35). As Jesus was tempted, so will preachers be tempted. Members of the church will often ask questions to tempt or test the preacher. They will not ask in order to learn. They will ask only to entrap. These actions did not discourage the Son of man. He continued both to do and teach.

Third, we point preachers to Christ to show them that He was

constantly watched. In Mark 3:1-2, an account is given wherein we find Jesus being "eyed" by the people. "And he entered into the synagogue: and there was a man there which had a withered hand. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him." Jesus' words were sifted by the religious leaders of His day. His actions were always under the microscopic eve of all. The same will happen to preachers of the gospel. They will always feel the effect of the "fishbowl" through which all eyes look to examine their life. This did not cause the Lord to refrain from His marvelous mission. He continued to carry out God's directions.

Fourth, we point preachers to the Christ to show them that He was cursed. In Mark 4:22 the scribes from Jerusalem accused Jesus of hav-"And the scribes which ing a devil. came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of devils casteth he out devils." During the crucifixion, we read that the people "that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads ... " (Mark 15:29). "Likewise also the chief priests" and scribes mocked Him as He hung on the accursed tree (Mark 15:31). In like manner, preachers will be cursed. Wicked and evil words will often be spoken by others against the servant of God. Christ did not turn back when cursed. He steadily walked the path which was well-pleasing to the Lord.

Fifth, we point preachers to Christ to sow them that He was falsely accused. During the trial of Jesus, many false witnesses took the stand against the Lord's anointed.

"For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together. And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him saying. We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands" (Mark 14:56-58). False words will often be made against proclaimers of the gospel message. Their words, their actions, and their motives will be twisted by others to make him out to be a villain. Jesus did not allow these false reports to hinder His efforts. He continued His course to His heavenly abode.

Sixth, we point preachers to Christ to show them that He was rejected. John 1:10-11 contains some of the saddest words of Holy Writ. "He was in the world, and the wold was made by Him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own. and his own received him not." Jesus was rejected by the Jewish nation, his family, Judas, Peter, the twelve, yea, by the whole world. Preachers, therefore, can expect rejection. "It's time to pack your bags," or, "You're fired," should never surprise the man who speaks forth the message of salvation. Jesus did not let His rejection by others discourage Him. He knew where He was going, and proceeded to His destination.

Finally, we point preachers to Christ to show them that He was persecuted. He was spit upon, buffeted, and smitten (Matt. 26:27). He was scourged (Matt. 27:26). He was stripped (Matt. 27:28). He had a crown of thorns place on His head (Matt. 27:29). He had His head beaten with a rod (Matt. 27:30). He had His hands and His feet pierced with rusty nails (Matt. 27:35-38). He had His side split open with a Roman spear (John 19:34). Such afflictions could come upon all ministers of the gospel of Christ. These wounds did not move the Son of God. He was fully bent upon performing the Father's will.

Dear preachers, the work of a preacher can be overwhelming at times. Church growth is at a standstill. Indifference in the brethren is at an all time high. The problems in the church are getting bigger by the day. More and more areas of truth are being perverted. The message is perverted, but goes unheeded. The preachers are misunderstood, tempted, watched, cursed, falsely accused, rejected, and persecuted. At such times, one should look unto Jesus. Jesus suffered it all. He, however, boldly marched onward to His goal. He understood that with God on His side, the victory would ultimately be His.

Rt. 6 Box 204-A, Yazoo City, MS 39194

5TH ANNUAL MISSISSIPPI LECTURESHIP JULY 29-AUGUST 2, 1990 EAST MAIN CHURCH OF CHRIST, TUPELO "New Testament Questions"

The Church Of Christ And Controversy

Wayne Cox

There is an unfortunate attitude among many in the brotherhood today. Briefly, this attitude could be summed up as: "We should preach all love and peace, and not preach anything that might offend people. Do you not know that people have a right to their own opinion and interpretation? The church should cause no trouble. conflict or controversy. We must strive for spiritual peace with the world, regardless of its beliefs." In view of the preceding statements, and to see if they are true, we need to ask: Will the church of Christ ever be without controversy? Should the church be at peace with the world?

Think for a moment how nice it would be if the answer was yes. Would it not be wonderful to fellowship and get along with all the various religions and denominations of the world? Would it not be wonderful to have unity with all of our own brethren (Psalm 133:1) regardless of their teachings? WHO WANTS CONTROVERSY?!

And, we must ask, did not Christ come to this earth to send peace? As recorded in Isaiah 9:6, one of Christ's descriptive terms is "The Prince of Peace." Did not the angels herald at the birth of Christ, "peace on earth?" Did not Paul write that "the servant of the Lord must not strive" (II Timothy 2:24)?

Yes, Christ is the Prince of Peace, but he is also described as the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev. 5:5). He came not to this earth to send peace, but a *sword* (Matt. 10:34-36). Paul wrote to Timothy to "*fight* the good fight of faith" (I Timothy 6:12), to "endure hardness as a good *soldier* of Christ" (II Tim. 2:3). He admonished all to put on the "whole *armor* of God" (Eph. 6:11), because there is a *warfare* to be fought — controversy ahead for those who will be Christ's disciples.

Do these passages of Scripture contradict one another? NO! We must realize, that just as there are different kinds of love, there are different kinds of peace. There is that peace we have within ourselves, peace with others, and then there is peace with others, and then there is peace with God. Paul wrote, "Be ye reconciled to God" (II Cor. 5:20), not just have peace within ourselves or peace with others!! We must have peace with God and all others who seek peace with God by meeting His conditions.

Throughout the New Testament, examples are given of the lives of those who followed Christ and their type of preaching. Did they preach all love and peace? Did they try to "love people into the church" by preaching smooth and sweet things? Did John lose his head by patting Herod on the back and telling him what a good fellow he was - by emphasizing only the good qualities and traits of Herod and not the bad - trying to "leave the door open?" Was Stephen stoned for preaching "food, fellowship, fun and frolic?" Were stripes laid upon the back of Peter because he practiced "go

along to get along ism?" Did Herod kill James with the sword for preaching "unity in diversity?" Why did it take a host of soldiers to transport Paul from Jerusalem to Caesarea? Was it because he was such a popular and charismatic "soul talk leader" or the "head evangelist?" And finally, was Jesus crucified for teaching **all posi**tive truth and love, love, love to the enemies of his day?

Will the church of Christ ever be without controversy? No, not in this life, but in the life to come. There will come a time, we know not the hour, when we will lay down our sword and shield — then we will receive an eternal peace which shall never be taken away. In the meantime, let us realize that we are soldiers in Christ's army, to fight for what is right, using the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17). All truth must be taught, both **positive** and **negative!!!!**

VIA New Providence Church of Christ

CHRISTIANITY COSTS

The devil has been successful to a large degree of convincing people to do their own thing and avoid situations that will have strings attached. We live in a society today that rolls with the flow and does not have very much, if any, conviction. We want to know what is it in for us and we often want a lot, but we do not want to pay anything for it. This thinking has spilled, or rather, rushed over into the church. Many "Christians" come and warm a pew once, maybe twice a week and think they have Christianity.

I am reminded of the psalmist David who once said, "...but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing" (2 Sam. 24:24). How many of us today like to claim to have christianity but are not willing to pay the price to have it? Christianity costs something.

First, it costs us our own will. Jesus said a man had to deny himself and follow him (Matt. 16:24). How many of us want to say we are following Jesus, but are really trying to lead him where we want to go? To deny ourselves means to do what Christ has said in spite of our feelings about it. I may want to stay home from the services of the church. I may want to harbor hard feelings against someone else. If I am going to be pleasing to Christ I am going to have to deny myself of these wrong things and follow Christ.

Second, Christianity costs us our talents. Whatever talent I have I must use it to the glory of God. Involved in this is the use of my time. Many people have the talent to serve God but will not develop that talent because they know that will involve some of their time. We need to see that God will not be pleased with our use of our talents if we are not willing to also sacrifice our time. We have often heard it said, if you are too busy for God, you are too busy. This is absolutely true. We live at such a fast pace today that we often do not put God first in our use of talents and time.

Third, Christianity costs us our prejudice. To look upon another human being as being inferior or a lower class just because of the color of his skin is a sin. This sin, unless repented of, will keep one out of heaven. There is no place in the kingdom of God for prejudice. James said if we have respect of persons we commit sin (James 2:9).

Fourth. Christianity costs us our money. Many people are going to be lost in hell because they thought too much of their pocketbooks and not enough of helping those in need. We need to realize that we are only stewards of our money. The money really belongs to God and we are just to use it for him. We read of the rich man as recorded in Luke 16:19-31. The reason he was lost in torments was because he failed to make the proper use of his money in this life. Instead of looking at those around him who needed help he looked upon his own needs and cared nothing for those There are those also around him. whose faith is lacking and they are afraid God will not be there when they They are the ones who need him. have to have all the money before they will attempt to do anything for the Lord. I wonder if they think God is going to go broke? Do they think God cannot pay his bills? We need to realize that God owns everything and if we have the proper faith (obedient faith) and put him first, He will surely be there when we need him. It is often said and very correctly, that when we baptize someone we need to be sure

and baptize his wallet also. This one thing will keep more people out of heaven than most anything else. We must learn to turn loose of our money and trust God!!!

Fifth, Christianity may cost us our very lives. I wonder how many people would be faithful if they knew it would cost them their life today? The illustration is often used of men who walked into an assembly of the saints. These men were carrying machine guns. They said, "You have one chance to leave. If you stay you will all be killed for your faith." About 60% left the assembly. The men laid their guns aside and said, "Now that we have removed the hypocrites, let's worship!" This may be an exaggeration, but it teaches a good point. Would you be able to look into the very eyes of death and be faithful to Jesus? To be pleasing to God we must do just that.

We can see that to say you are a Christian is not just a casual statement. If one professes to be a Christian he should be willing to pay the price. Jesus on one occasion said that we must count the cost of following him (Luke 14:26-33). Have you counted the cost? Are you paying it today? Those who casually serve the Lord are going to be rudely awakened on that great day when they stand before the King. Nothing in life is free and certainly no service will be rewarded by God that costs us nothing. If you have not been giving your all to Jesus, resolve today to do so because no matter the cost, heaven will be worth it.

> -David Jones-Rt. 1 Box 330, Middleton, TN 38052



WHAT'S THE SPIRITUAL CONDI-TION OF A CHURCH THAT HAS GREAT SUMS OF MONEY IN THE BANK FOR A "RAINY DAY?"

This is a good question and one I'm afraid will fit far too many congregations.

First of all, there may be some reason for a congregation to have a few thousand or perhaps even several thousand dollars in the bank. It could be for a new building or an addition to their present building — maybe a new furnace or some other expected expense they may be preparing for, but that is not what this question asks. This question deals with money hoarded up for no reason other than a "rainy day." Is it right for a congregation to "sit" on thousands of dollars in a bank account for nothing more than a so-called "rainy day?"

The Bible teaches the righteous use of money in being a good steward. Elders and congregations will have to answer to God for hoarding up great sums of money while the world dies in sin and wickedness. The great commission commands us to "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). That includes the man across the street, across the state, across the country, and especially around the world! It's deplorable that faithful men, willing to go into all the world with the gospel, have to beg congregations for the necessary funds to do what the Lord commanded while many sit idly by on large bank accounts just in case there comes a "rainy day."

Matthew 6:19-21 says, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: (20) But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: (21) For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Large bank accounts show distinctly where a person's and congregation's heart is.

Many think there's security in a bank account. The rich farmer did when he said in Luke 12:19-20, "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

Men's souls cannot be fed with material possessions laid up for a "rainy day." When elders and congregations have such "little faith" we are not left to wonder where their priorities are. God's way is using what we have, man's way is selfishness.

In Matt. 25:26, the one talent man was condemned for not using that which he had. Verse 18 says he "went and digged in the earth and hid his lord's money." Is this not what congregations are doing when they have large bank accounts? I believe so!

1801 Cruise St., Corinth, MS 38834

1. The church was planned by God (Eph. 3:10-11).

CHURCH

- 2. The church was purchased by Christ (Acts 20:28).
- 3. The church is made up of the saved (Acts 2:4).
- 4. The church is the body of which we each can be "members one of another" (I Cor. 12; Eph. 4:25).
- 5. The church was built by Christ (Matt. 16:18).
- 6. The church is that body of which Christ is the saviour (Eph. 5:23).
- 7. The church is the only means through which we live in bringing glory to God while on this earth; no other institution will work (Eph. 3:21).
- 8. The church is God's missionary society on earth to evangelize the world to Jesus Christ (Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 10:13-15; Acts 13:1ff).
- 9. The church is the "pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15).
- 10. The church is that kingdom which at the end shall be delivered back to God the Father (I Cor. 15:24).

Song: "I love thy kingdom Lord, The house of Thine abode, The church our blest Redeemer saved with His own precious blood, I love thy church, O God! Her walls before thee stand, Dear as the apple of Thine eye, And graven on Thy hand." Do YOU love, and support the church of our God??? -Wally KirbyOur mailing list continues to grow. We appreciate so much those who have written or passed word along that you are enjoying **Seek The Old Paths.** We are glad to be able to preach the gospel through this medium. We are saddened to note the passing of S. C. Kinningham's wife, Bea, on January 24, 1990. Brother Kinningham is well known across the state and has devoted many faithful years to the Lord's service in Mississippi. Note the date of the 5th Annual Mississippi Lectures on page 7.

Seek The Old Paths is a publication of the East Corinth church of Christ and is under the oversight of its elders. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3; II Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:13; 2:1; II Peter 1:12. Manuscripts are welcome.

Editor: Garland M. Robinson Associate editors: Ken Burleson, Sidney White

