

Introduction:

1. Imagine that you have just bought a new home—and not just any new home. This one is spacious, beautiful, completely appointed with the finest furniture and appliances. Every room has exactly what you would hope for in a dream home.
 - a. But on the day you move in, you shove the 60” plasma TV out of the den and replace it with your 17 year old 19” TV with the rabbit ears. You push the new hi-tech dishwasher out the back door as you bring your old leaky one that you’ve had for years in the front door. You replace your sleep number bed with the worn out mattress handed down from aunt Tillie. You replace the hi-tech cleaning system with an old vacuum that blows dust all over the house.
 - b. What’s wrong with this picture? Yes, you are in your new house but have filled it with old junk!
2. You say, “Who would ever be so foolish as to do something like that?” Probably no one with respect to a new home and its furnishings. But, believe it or not, this is what some of our brethren did in the first century with respect to the Lord’s church.
 - a. Both Jews and Gentiles who came into the church brought with them old stuff—junk—that did not belong. They brought attitudes and practices into the church that hurt the house of God. Remember, the church is the house of the living God, 1 Timothy 3:15.
 - b. Since the church belongs to God, it is up to Him to decide what belongs in it.

The Lesson:

- I. The Jews wanted to bring their old Jewish background into the New Testament church.**
 - A. The Jews who were converted to Christ needed to learn that the church of Christ is not Judaism. They wanted to bring their old religion into the church and make it like Judaism.
 1. That was the issue regarding the Law of Moses, and particularly the circumcision, Acts 15:1, 5, 24. It was a problem that had to be stopped!
 2. The books of Galatians and Hebrews were written to deal with this problem.
 - a. See Galatians 2:16, 21. If Judaism could save, there would have been no need for Christ and the church.
 - b. See Hebrews 13:12-14. There had to be a separation from Judaism. The Law of Moses was no longer in effect. It could not be brought into the church.
 - B. The Jews had to make a break with the Law of Moses and its ordinances. They had to learn that the church was established by Christ, and that it belongs to Him, Matthew 16:18. No one has the right to make the church different than what Christ intended it to be. They were bringing old junk into the new house.
- II. The Gentiles wanted to bring their old pagan background into the New Testament church.**
 - A. The Gentiles who were converted to Christ needed to learn that the church of Christ is not paganism. They wanted to bring their old religion into Christianity and make it like paganism.
 1. This was the problem in the church of Christ at Pergamos, Revelation 2:12, 14-15. These doctrines and practices that were brought into the church would turn the body of believers into a pagan cult, tolerating fornication and idolatry.
 2. Gentile Christians had to let go of their old beliefs and practices and realize they have come into something far superior to their old pagan background. Yet, some of these Gentile converts would have formed an alliance between the church and idols’ temples, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.
 - B. Since Christ purchased the church (Acts 20:28), whatever is in it can be there only because it is what Christ wants in His church. Pagans had to leave their old junk outside the new house.
- III. The question for us: Have we brought old junk into the new house?**
 - A. Unscriptural attitudes and practices can come into the church today the same as in the first century. Many of us (this preacher included) came out of error to follow the truth.
 1. Whether it is the error that we followed at one time, or whether the general religious errors of our culture, we cannot bring those things in the Lord’s church.
 2. There are many unscriptural things Christians may potentially do, but I want us to think only about those things that relate to our background—as with the Jews and Gentiles.

- B. The problem of our old background can be reflected in our speech. Some examples:
1. *"I joined the church of Christ."* It is true that one may join himself to the local New Testament church; but that is not what most people mean by that statement. They mean that with their baptism, they joined the church. This comes from the popular concept in our culture that says, "Join the church of your choice." Biblically, one can only be added to the church, Acts 2:47. Let us use the language of the scriptures. "I was added to the church."
 2. *"The Church of Christ Church."* The church of Christ is not the "Church of Christ Church." It is the church of Christ. It is that which belongs to Christ, Matthew 16:18. It is not just one church among many. Our earnest plea to the world is that men ought to just be part of what Christ built. "But if I just say 'church of Christ,' it sounds like I am saying that this really is *the church of Christ*." Yes, and there is nothing wrong with that.
 3. *"This is my pastor."* This is used with reference to the preacher. Most religious groups have a one-man pastor system. That is, the preacher is *the* man and is in charge of everything. Biblically, God's organization for the local church is to have a plurality of men serving as pastors (overseers, elders), Acts 14:23. In many cases, pastors in various groups don't even meet the biblical requirements for the office of pastor, 1 Timothy 3:1-6. Even in churches of Christ, most preachers are not pastors (unless appointed to that office).
- B. Some examples of unscriptural practice:
1. *Worship on Sunday morning only.* "I don't understand. At my old church, they didn't expect us to be at other services." Can you see the error here—making the old church the standard? The local New Testament church is overseen by elders who have the responsibility for feeding the flock, 1 Peter 5:1-3. The elders establish feeding times—the worship assemblies and Bible classes—so that the members of the flock can be nourished and built up. To willfully absent yourself from the assemblies is wrong, Hebrews 10:25. But some folks don't get it because they are still carrying the old junk.
 2. *Inactive membership.* This is one of the great curses of the Protestant churches. They build buildings to seat 500 when their membership may exceed 2,500. Sometimes those among us become inactive (translate that "quit") and they think it strange that the church would exercise discipline. "Why does the church have to do anything?" they say. Because so-called "inactive membership" is sin, Ephesians 4:16; 2 Thessalonians 3:6.
 3. *Disloyalty to the local church.* Most people in our culture are fiercely loyal to the notion that it doesn't make much difference what you believe or do. Hence, there is a general attitude of "come and go as you please," without a high degree of commitment to the local church and its work. (It is that attitude that often leads to inactive membership.)
 - a. This attitude further leads to: Failure to support the local church financially. Choosing recreation over worship. Being ill-informed on the activities of the local church, and thus feeling left out.
 - b. In the local New Testament church there is loyalty to the people, plans and purposes of the church, 1 Corinthians 12:25-27; 16:1-2; 1:10.
- C. There are several other problems that could be identified--problems relating to bringing our old junk into the new house.
1. But not all problems come from those who came out of error. Sometimes it is those who were raised with the knowledge of the truth—they take it for granted and are cold and disinterested, failing to recognize what a glorious blessing they have!
 2. Whatever our individual backgrounds may be, let us all strive to be what God wants us to be, and to maintain the church of Christ as Christ gave it!

Conclusion:

1. Let's leave the old junk where it belongs—in the old house. It is a high and exalted honor to be a member of the church of Christ. Let us never lightly regard the privileges that are ours. Let us honor our Lord, Philippians 2:10.
2. Are you a member of the church Christ built? You can be by obeying Him. He will save you and add you to His church, Acts 2:47.