

Preface

1. Frank makes the observation that contemporary Christianity has embraced traditions that have kept the church from functioning the way that God originally intended. Do you think this observation may be accurate? Explain.
2. Have you ever wondered or asked: “Why do we do what we do for church?” If so, give an example.
3. Do you believe that Christians have a responsibility to examine their church practices and traditions against the Word of God, even challenging them when they don’t correspond? Why or why not?
4. What are the benefits of tracing the origins of our commonly accepted church practices? What are the dangers?

Introduction: What Happened to the Church?

1. Do you think George’s assessment that many Christians are “worn out on the endless programs that fail to facilitate transformation” (page xxvi) is accurate? In your opinion, how do contemporary churches succeed in helping members deepen their faith and connect with God? Where do they fall short?
2. In what ways do you think secular marketing strategies have served the church well? How have they hindered it?
3. The authors assert that much of what we do for Sunday morning church has no precedent in Scripture. Does this assertion shock you? If not, how does it make you feel?
4. What is the value of examining Scripture and church history to determine how closely our corporate life and worship reflects God’s intention for His church?

Chapter 1: Have We Really Been Doing It by the Book?

1. Did you relate to Winchester’s frustration in any way? Can you describe a time when you, like Winchester, questioned whether a church practice was biblical or spiritually effective?
2. In general, how do you think your leaders or fellow members would respond if you challenged a tradition within your own church?
3. Do you think it’s possible that “contemporary church thought and practice have been influenced far more by postbiblical historical events than by New Testament imperatives and examples” (page 5)? If so, does that concern you? Why or why not?
4. Have you ever entertained the idea that there could be more to church than what you’ve seen or experienced so far? Explain.

Chapter 2: The Church Building

1. Do you agree that most Christians equate services in a church building with “church”? If so, what problems does this present?
2. How might a building serve a body of believers? How might a building detract from church life and community development?

3. What are some of the theological lessons that the church building teaches us by its architecture? (see pages 37–40). Do you think those lessons are in harmony with biblical principles? Explain.
4. When you consider the history of church architecture, which developments do you think have served Christians well? Which do you think have detracted from God’s original intention for His church?
5. Does the fact that churches spend an enormous amount of money and overhead on their buildings (about \$10 billion annually in the United States alone) concern you? What, if anything, do you think it suggests about our priorities?

Chapter 3: The Order of Worship

1. Citing 1 Corinthians 14:26 and Hebrews 10:25, the authors point out that the meetings of the early church were “marked by every-member functioning, spontaneity, freedom, vibrancy, and open participation” (page 50). Do you agree with their assessment? Would you like to experience such a meeting if you knew it would be orderly and edifying?
2. Do you agree that the contemporary order of worship prevents Christ from serving as the functional head of the Christian gathering, directing what happens and when? Why or why not?
3. The authors also suggest that the Protestant order of service renders the congregation to be mostly passive, and some people find it to be boring. Do you agree with these observations? Why or why not?
4. Do you think it’s possible that an open-participatory church meeting provides some spiritual benefits that the Protestant order of worship cannot? If so, how? If not, why?
5. According to the book, the Protestant order of worship is 500 years old and has undergone little change since its inception. Do you think there is any value in experimenting with new forms of Christian worship in our day? Why or why not?

Chapter 4: The Sermon

1. Have you ever found yourself evaluating your church experience based on the “quality” of the sermon? (In other words, if someone asked you, “How was church today?” your answer would include a description of the sermon.) Have you ever heard someone else do this? Explain.
2. Do you agree that the contemporary sermon has its roots in Greco-Roman paganism? If not, how do you interpret the historical data that the authors present?
3. Do you agree with the authors’ assessment that it is more spiritually beneficial to receive ministry from a local body of believers where interaction and open sharing take place than it is to hear a sermon from the same person week after week, year after year? Explain.

Chapter 5: The Pastor

1. What in this chapter was new to you? What came as a shock or a surprise?
2. Do you agree that the contemporary pastorate grew out of the Catholic practice of one-bishop rule? If not, how do you interpret the historical data that the authors present?

3. Based on the arguments that the authors make on pages 136–140, do you think they have a valid point in asserting that the modern pastoral role/office hinders the body of Christ from functioning fully and that it hurts many of the people who fill this role? Why or why not?
4. Do you agree with the authors' argument that the secular/spiritual dichotomy as well as the clergy/laity divide grew out of pagan thinking? Explain.
5. The acclaimed theologian Karl Barth said, "The term 'laity' is one of the worst in the vocabulary of religion and ought to be banished from the Christian conversation." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Explain.
6. Have the authors convinced you that Scripture does not support the role of pastor in its contemporary form? If so, why? If not, which of their biblical and historical arguments do you find flawed?

Chapter 6: Sunday Morning Costumes

1. Do you think that dressing up for church can create an atmosphere of church that God never intended?
2. Do you believe that there are benefits for clergy wearing special clothes and dress? Explain.
3. Do you believe that there are any negative effects to clergy vestments? Explain.
4. Does it bother you at all that clergy vestments cannot be supported in the New Testament? Why or why not?

Chapter 7: Ministers of Music

1. During the past several decades, music has often been a divisive issue in churches. How have disagreements over musical style affected your church?
2. The authors point to two texts in the New Testament (Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19) that describe corporate singing in the early church. Do you think that these texts have any significance for us today? Explain.
3. Do you think the church choir, worship team, and/or soloists contribute to or detract from God's idea of corporate worship as envisioned in the New Testament? Explain.

Chapter 8: Tithing and Clergy Salaries

1. If the New Testament doesn't teach tithing, as the authors argue, then why do you suppose we do it today?
2. After reading the history of the tithe and that Christians didn't tithe until the eighth century, do you think that Christians are obligated to tithe today? Why or why not?
3. Discuss the authors' biblical and historical arguments against clergy salaries. What do you think about them?
4. What do you think about the authors' point that in the first-century church, giving was done according to one's ability and the money went to the poor, the orphans, the widows, and traveling church planters?

Chapter 9: Baptism and the Lord's Supper

1. What did you find to be most interesting about this chapter and why?
2. The authors explain that in the New Testament church, believers were baptized immediately upon their conversion. Do you think we should follow New Testament example on this or not? Explain.
3. Do you think it's possible that some of our methods for saving souls have strayed from those used in the New Testament? If so, are our modern methods a development or a departure from what we read in the New Testament? Explain.
4. Discuss the differences between how the Lord's Supper was taken in the first century and how it's observed today in many Protestant churches. Which approach do you feel better reflects the original meaning of the Supper? Explain.

Chapter 10: Christian Education

1. Compare and contrast the way that Christian workers were trained in the first century to the way they are formally trained today. What are the benefits and/or problems with each?
2. What can we learn from the way that Christian training was conducted in the New Testament era? Should we apply any of it today?
3. What are the benefits and/or problems with Sunday school? Do you think another model is needed for the training of young people today? If so, what might that look like?

Chapter 11: Reapproaching the New Testament

1. Consider the tale of Marvin Snurdly and the development of his *Collected Works*. How did this story get you to think about how you read the Bible?
2. When reading your Bible, do you sometimes use any of the approaches mentioned on page 230? Which ones?
3. Did this chapter have any effect on how you'll approach Scripture in the future? Explain.
4. Have you ever personally witnessed the effects of "the clipboard approach" in a church or Bible study? If so, what were the results?
5. Do you agree with the authors that one reason the present practices of the Protestant church are so far removed from New Testament principles is because of the "cut-and-paste" method of Bible study? Explain.
6. Do you think there's any benefit in learning the narrative of the first-century church—the story of the New Testament church in chronological order? Explain.

Chapter 12: A Second Glance at the Savior

1. What impressed you the most about this chapter?
2. Discuss Jesus as the Revolutionary. If Jesus were living on the earth today, do you think He would challenge any of our church practices or mind-sets? Explain.
3. Are there any practices or principles that are taught or exemplified in the New Testament that you'd like to see followed in your church? Explain.

Afterword: The Next Step

1. Now that you have finished the book, which chapters had the most impact on your thinking? Explain.
2. Throughout the book, the authors continue to ask an important question: Are our present-day Protestant practices a development or a departure from God's idea of the church as taught in the New Testament? What is your answer to this question?
3. Do you believe that a Second Reformation or "Revolution" in the church is needed today, or do you feel that contemporary church practice requires minimal change? Explain.
4. What next step(s) will you take as a result of reading this book?

For further discussion on the book along with a bonus chapter, go to www.paganchristianity.org