



Cape Coral Church of Christ

1010 S.W. 20th Avenue

Cape Coral, Florida 33991

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<http://www.thelordsway.com/capecoralfl>

Schedule of Services

Sunday: Bible Study: 9:30 A.M.

Worship: 10:30 A.M. and 5:00 P.M.

Wednesday: Bible Study: 6:00 P.M.

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It's Christmas - Big Deal!

Now that I have your attention, will you give me five minutes and a fair hearing? Soon the world will pause to honor the birth of Jesus. Yet, no one knows the birthday of the Savior, and what we do know would cause us to believe that he was not born in December. Shepherds tended their flocks in the field at night when the birth of the Christ child was announced to them (Luke 2:8). This was typically not done in December.

The early church did not celebrate the birthday of Christ. There is not one single mention of Christmas in the entire New Testament. The celebration developed centuries after the birth and without any Biblical authority. There is, however, a clear warning in Scripture regarding the danger of making Christianity a holiday religion (Col. 2:16). Festivals were not a part of the religious scene in the days of the apostles. Christ did not die to give us an excuse for another holiday.

I enjoy many of the activities connected with this season of the year. I am particularly fond of the family time the holiday provides. I like the exchange of gifts, especially the opportunity to give to the people I care about. I enjoy the traditional dishes which are served. I'm thankful that many among us seem to be a little more generous, thoughtful, and caring at this season. I even find the traditional holiday decorations appealing

as long as I don't have to hang them. But, as a religious celebration, this holiday entirely misses the message of the Savior.

Christmas is a holiday with a focus on commerce, not Christ. I'm not opposed to businesses turning a profit. I have no problem with people giving gifts. As I said, I actually like most of the traditions connected with the celebration, but I'd like to get Christ out of Christmas, and keep Him out.

Where Christ needs to be is in our hearts on a daily basis. One who understands the true meaning of Jesus understands that the impact of His birth needs to be felt the whole year through. A couple of holidays a year (Christmas and Easter) will never accomplish that, and may actually hurt the effort. It's far easier to put the principles of the Savior (generosity, kindness, consideration) into practice once or twice a year than to make them a way of life the whole year through, thus, the appeal of the unscriptural and anti-biblical practice!

You may not agree, but if you are honest, you will have to admit that this is what the Bible says. That may not be important to you, but it is to me, and if the Scriptures are to be believed, it's important to God, too (1 Peter 4:11).

The Holiday Blues

It is that time of the year again. Crowds of Yule shoppers invade the mall, family and friends gather, logs crackling in the fireplace, and pumpkin pie, warm sugar cookies, and brightly wrapped packages tied up with curly ribbons. For many folks, this kind of holiday is fantasy.

The holidays can be a very depressing time of the year. Here are some of the causes of "the holiday blues."

1) Family tensions are aggravated. Simmering conflict may reach the boiling point when family members are brought together for holiday festivities.

2) Impossible expectations of holiday joy. The ideal holiday when "all is calm, all is bright" is a rare occurrence. Shopping, entertaining, and traveling are fun but they can be exhausting. The inevitable frustrations of daily living continue to occur during the holiday. This season of good cheer has the potential to put us in a bad mood.

3) Memory of departed loved ones. Many people have loved ones who have died between Thanksgiving Day and New Year's Day. They are fondly remembered but, often, sorrow overpowers the human spirit. Also, memories of family and friends who shared this time of the year with us will be mourned.

Here are some things you can do to combat "the holiday blues."

1) Dwell on your victories, not your defeats. Disappointments and anger can occur anytime of the year. Don't allow malignant thoughts to take you captive. Pray often about the things that upset you. Then turn your mind to the "good stuff." "Whatever is true, noble, right, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy, think about such things. And the God of peace will be with you" (Philippians 4:8-9b).

2) Slow Down. Choose carefully the holiday activities you will attend. Participate in those festive occasions, which mean the most to you. Physical exhaustion is often the direct cause of depression. A famous football coach once said, "Exhaustion makes cowards of us all."

3) Go ahead and cry. Because of the nature of the Yule season, emotions run high. When a memory comes and brings a sweet sorrow and you feel like crying, then cry. Crying means you are getting better.

4) Trust God to bring you comfort. Draw near to God. Talk to Him. Praise Him. Thank Him. Meditate on His word. You will find comfort. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).

Are You an Alarmist?

An alarmist is, "A person who needlessly alarms or attempts to alarm others, as by inventing or spreading false or exaggerated rumors of impending danger or catastrophe" (*American Heritage Dictionary*).

Our society sure has its share of alarmists. We are constantly bombarded by the media regarding fears of terrorism, climate change, economic depression, nuclear war, the depletion of the ozone, annihilation by an asteroid, foods that are supposedly killing us from pesticides, a disease that is resistant to antibiotics, Muslims are taking over the world, an alien invasion from space, the threat of a super volcano, etc.

Do we find this type of mentality in the church? Have you heard the comments that all the good preachers are dead, the vast majority of churches no longer teach the truth, the Christian colleges are all swept up by those on the left, the church as we had known it for years is dying, etc.?

This reminds one of the feelings once expressed by Elijah. He thought that the hope for Israel was gone. But the Lord had a message for him. "Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him" (1 Kings 19:18).

Why is alarmism such a concern? For two good reasons: one, because it is either an untruth or an exaggeration of the facts; two, because alarmism spreads quickly. It is a reminder of what the apostle Paul said, “Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?” (1 Cor. 5:6).

Someone once said, “Ninety per cent of the things I worry about never happen.” It sure does help us put things into proper perspective.

Bring Christ Your Broken Life

When I visited Ukraine several years ago, I was impressed by how beautiful everyone looked on the street and in the community. Men were wearing their finest suits and polished shoes, and women were wearing their most beautiful dresses, designer heels, and name-brand accessories. When I asked one of my Ukrainian companions about their wealth and how everyone looked so stylish, he mentioned to me, “It’s all a show. These people have only a few sticks of furniture in their houses and are all very poor. They want to give the impression that they are wealthy but these are probably the only clothes that a lot of them own.” It seemed very strange to me that a people would go to such lengths to show themselves so strong and put-together but in their private lives be living in poverty.

Why is it that many in the church behave that way? It is so easy to act like there is absolutely nothing wrong in our lives, and we display our “Sunday-Best” with our “Sunday-Morning Smile” so everyone can see how put together we are. Yet, if someone were to probe just a little deeper than “How are you this morning?” Or “How’s your week?” they would often find people broken by sin, holding back tears, and forcing a smile. Even deeper, it might be that they’re afraid to be looked down upon if any of these weaknesses were made known – even within the church. What happens when the “abundant life” is not so abundant? Do we just pretend?

We often sing the song, “Bring Christ Your Broken Life.” The church that our Lord purchased with His own blood is a place where we bring to our Master Potter the pieces and He puts us back together to be useful in His service (Jer. 18:1-6). The church is a place where we bring the Great Physician our scars, cuts, bruises, and brokenness and He begins to heal us (Luke 5:31-32). The church is a place where the spiritually sick come to get help. Why would we think that it’s not OK to need help or to ask for help from others (James 5:16)? God can do so much with a broken life - it’s when our lives look like they’re put together that we need to watch out (1 Cor. 10:12; 2 Cor. 12:9-10)!