

# Conservative Christianity

By Pastor Kelly Sensenig



## Considering a Conservative Church Ministry

Have you ever considered visiting a conservative church ministry? Conservative Christianity is still thriving today even when most of the church culture is non-conservative in its approach to worship and living. Smaller conservative or more conventional churches are dotted across America. Families, who want to raise their children with traditional and Biblical values or standards (separation, holiness, reverence), should seek out a conservative church ministry, where the Bible is preached, old-fashioned separation and reverence is practiced, and where God get's all the glory (1 Cor. 10:31).



Why should your family consider visiting and attending a conservative church ministry? In this study, I want to articulate the position of a fundamental, Bible-believing, separated, and conservative church. Many today have lost their way from a Biblical philosophy and have adopted a worldly mindset and philosophy (Col. 2:8).

There are several important reasons why your family should attend a conservative church ministry.

## Doctrine and Discernment



The conservative church ministry is rooted in solid Bible teaching and preaching (2 Tim. 4:2). It gives uncompromising allegiance to God's Word. Families can learn the Bible (1 Pet. 2:2), grow (2 Tim. 3:16-17), and become grounded in sound doctrine (Titus 2:1) without hearing psychological, manmade, compromising, or charismatic teachings. The environment of solid Bible teaching allows our families to develop discernment for daily living (Heb. 5:14).

Discernment means we can evaluate the difference between right and wrong, good and bad, the better and the best, and develop convictions based upon unchanging truth. Our families need this in the midst of the philosophies (Col. 2:8) of pragmatism (if it works - use it, results are everything), relativism (truth is flexible), and existentialism (truth is what I feel).

## Separation and Sacrifice

The traditional or conservative church ministry will teach families the importance of Biblical separation unto God, which is part of the believer's priestly sacrifice and service that is rendered up to God (1 Pet. 2:9; Heb. 13:15-16; Rom. 12:1). Separation applies to one's everyday living (Rom. 12:2) and to church worship (Malachi 1:7-8). For instance, the conservative church refuses to mimic the rock culture in its worship, which is so prevalent in many mainline churches today. It refuses to bow the knee to contemporary music and entertainment which has spread like wild fire in the modern church. God has never sanctioned worldliness and entertainment (a party spirit) to be part of local church ministry (1 Cor. 14:40; John 12:43). Our families need to learn this and experience church services that are free from man-centered entertainment, the rock culture of rebellion, and which seek to glorify God in message and music.



Someone has remarked:

"When ministry becomes performance, then the sanctuary becomes a theater, the congregation becomes an audience, worship becomes

entertainment, and man's applause and approval become the measure of success."

In general, the teaching and atmosphere of the conservative church reflects Bible separation instead of cultural rebellion, chaos, and confusion (2 Cor. 6:14-17). This distinction is important for your family to learn and experience. It will teach the entire family the importance of living a life of separation and integrity before God.



Here is something to consider. Parents that want their children to learn the hymn heritage of the church, and who want to attend a church that has not jettisoned the conservative worship of church ministry (traditional hymns, modest dress, and uncompromising preaching from the Bible), should consider attending a more conservative church. In the conservative church the past is not lost; however, the present is not ignored. The conservative church realizes that new songs are being written, which reflect God's holiness, and also uses these songs in its ministry and worship. It is also up-to-date with what is happening in the world and uses the Bible to counteract the culture when necessary. A thriving conservative church is not archaic, rustic, and dead. It is a lively church that is interested in the souls of people and which seeks to create an atmosphere of love, unity, sound doctrine, and Scriptural separation in the midst of a world that has gone stark raving mad!

### **Holiness and History**

The conservative church seeks to honor God's holiness which is part of the history of church life and ministry (2 Cor. 7:1; 2 Thess. 3:6-7). This is another important reason why you should consider attending a conservative church. Holiness is the heart and soul of Bible separation and the conservative church (1 Pet. 1:15-16). The traditional church wants to represent God's holiness in the best possible light during its worship services.



Psalm 29:2

"Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

In time, your family will learn about God's holiness and appreciate His holiness in a greater way. *Holiness is a command to be obeyed, a course to be followed, and a commitment to be kept.* The sooner we realize this, the stronger our families will become, as we refuse to be soiled by carnal and worldly living (James 1:27). Holiness (being set-apart from the world and unto God) is the Biblical basis for all separation (1 Thess. 4:3; Phil. 2:15; 1 John 1:5, 7 – “walk in the light”).

## Reverence and Respect



The conservative church will also teach your family the importance of reverence for God and church ministry. This is something that many families in our culture need to relearn, in their personal lives, and when attending church. Reverence is not something that is only *taught*, it's something that is *caught* over a period of time.

Psalm 89:7

“God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.”

Conservatism portrays reverence for God in its church services. Reverence refers to attitudes, actions, and dress which demonstrate deep respect for God and His holiness. Our families need to learn respect for God and His house. The conservative church practices respect and demonstrates reverence for God in its music, dress, and overall worship service.

Someone wrote:

“Many today have learned to go to church without reverence for God and have come to look upon it as the natural and expected thing.”

## Understanding Conservative Churches



Most people have heard about the conservative movement in the political realm. This movement is a group of people who desire to follow traditional practices and the philosophy that reflects the freedom upon which this country was built. It's a

freedom that is rooted in the constitution of the United States of America.



In a similar way, there is a conservative movement among Christianity, which follows traditional standards that reflect the true freedom or liberty (Rom. 6:18, 22) that Christians should experience from sin and worldliness (1 John 2:15-17). This is a freedom that is rooted in Christ (John 8:36; Gal. 2:20) and following the commands of the Bible (James 1:25).

The conservative movement among Christianity has an unwavering goal and commitment to honor God's holiness (Ps. 96:9), instead of reflecting the worldly standards of modern Christianity and the cultural icon of contemporary rock music in its churches (Ps. 93:5), and the personal lives (1 Thess. 4:7; Titus 2:3) of those who embrace the Biblical philosophy of conservatism. The conservative and traditional movement among Christianity reflects "newness" instead of the "oldness" (Rom. 7:6) that is related to the unsaved way of life (2 Cor. 5:17), which is seen in many churches as indecent music, ill-mannered behavior, irrational worship, and immodest dress.

### **Marks of a Conservative Church**



The general marks of conservative Christianity are as follows:

- Reverent and holy worship (Ps. 89:7; Heb. 12:28; Ps. 29:2; 93:5; 96:9).
- Regard for God's holiness in everyday living (Lev. 11:44; 1 Pet. 1:15-16).
- Return to Biblical and doctrinal preaching (2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 2:1).
- Reaffirming the Scriptures as final authority (Rom. 4:3; 2 Pet. 1:19).
- Revisiting the pattern of the early Church (Acts 2:42-43).
- Restoring order to God's House (Titus 1:5; 1 Cor. 14:40).

- Returning to historic Bible separation and Fundamentalism (2 Cor. 6:14-17).
- Refusing to remove old landmarks (Prov. 22:28; 23:10).
- Regard for the “old paths” in a new day (Jer. 6:16; 18:15).
- Realizing the distinction among the sexes (Deut. 22:5; 1 Cor. 11:14-15).
- Restating a position on modesty and male leadership (1 Tim. 2:9, 11-12).
- Regaining discernment for difficult times (1 Chron. 12:32; Heb. 5:14).
- Reuniting in truth and unity on a local church level (Eph. 4:3, 13).
- Refocusing on the nature of true love (1 Cor. 13:6; 2 John 6).
- Revival of godly living for the last days (1 Tim. 6:11-12; Titus 2:12).
- Reaching out to the lost (Mark 16:15; Acts 8:4; 1 Thess. 1:8).
- Renewal of traditional family roles (Eph. 5:21-25; 6:1-4; Titus 2:4-5).
- Reestablishing the role of integrity in living and leadership (1 Tim. 3:1-14).



More concerned and discerning families are getting weary of the contemporary rock culture and entertainment in the church today and are deciding to return to more traditional forms of worship and church ministry. Families are visiting traditional churches saying, “This is the way church used to be.” I often add, “This is the way church should be!” Many churches have digressed by reaching down to the level of the unsaved, instead of reaching up to the level of God’s holiness (Isa. 6:1-3), as they seek to reach people for Christ. We must remember that we do not help the unsaved if we mimic their way of life, culture, and worldly practices (Matt. 5:13-14).

## Exploring the Conservative Church Ministry

Let's consider some brief explanations on the subject of conservative and traditional church ministry.



### Definition

A conservative church favors *traditional* views and values. It's a church whose doctrine, practice, worship, music, and dress reflect a conventional or traditional approach to ministry. It's a church that *preserves* the traditionally accepted practices and norms of church doctrine (including the doctrine of Bible separation), along with non-contemporary ministry and music, which were ordained since the days of the early church (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), and maintained in fundamental churches (Rev. 2:25). The conservative church avoids novelty, showiness, and entertainment. It does not imbibe the contemporary rock culture that is in much of the mainline and mega churches of today. The conservative church does not live an antiquated lifestyle that is out-of-date and out-of-touch with society; it simply follows the "old paths" (Jer. 6:16) that relate to godly living and holiness, in the midst of cultural confusion, and when many churches are catering to the carnal appetites of the unsaved and old way of life (1 Pet. 4:3).



Those within the conservative Church movement want to maintain the *new-creation* emphasis (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:10) and follow the *non-mixture* (2 Cor. 6:14-17; Jer. 10:2) command that God requires for holy living. They want to avoid taking on the appearance (1 Thess. 5:22) that they are identifying or associating (1 Cor. 10:20; Eph. 5:7, 11)

with the questionable, extreme, radical, worldly, and unbiblical movements within our society, such as long hair on men, the rebellious rock culture, and the unisex philosophy of our present day culture. These types of movements represent rebellion against God and His natural order (1 Sam. 15:23) and have notoriously promoted things such as lust, sex, drugs, and

a general defiance against God. Conservative Christianity detests those things that represent rebellion and evil (Rom. 12:9; Amos 5:15) and refuses to reflect these rebellious movements in their church worship and daily living (Rom. 12:2).



## History

Conservatism in doctrine began to noticeably decline in the mainline churches during the *modernist controversy* (1870's–1930's) when the liberals gradually overtook the denominations. With conservative Bible doctrine under attack, the fundamental and conservative brethren chose to separate from the liberal denominations and start *independent* churches, which adhered to pure doctrine, since the liberals were winning the battle in the mainline denominations (1900 -1930's). There was a mass exodus from the denominationally structured churches during these years, since the conservative Christians wanted to remain pure in their doctrine and not affiliate with the liberal denominations and their apostasy (2 Cor. 6:14-17). Therefore, it was independent churches that continued to practice conservative Christianity.

But conservative Christianity once again came under attack by another movement called the *New Evangelical Movement* (1940's to the present) which was a movement and spirit of compromise that promoted ecumenical ties with false denominations and liberalism.



The founding father of New Evangelicalism, Harold Ockenga, once said: “The New Evangelical has changed his strategy from one of separation to one of infiltration.”

The key terms that summarize this movement are toleration, accommodation, cooperation, and contamination with apostasy (departure from truth) and worldly living. The name “New Evangelical” implies dissatisfaction with the traditional and historical concept of evangelical Christianity. This movement, which began in the 1940's set the stage for a softer, broader, and worldlier position among the evangelical Christians which is experienced in the



churches to this very day. New Evangelicalism turned into what we term as the *modern* or more *contemporary* form of Christianity today with its compromises with liberalism and Charismatic false teachings through ecumenicalism and its departure from the historic doctrine of Bible separation (2 Cor. 6:14-17; Rom., 12:1-2).



This philosophy and movement of compromise eventually developed many worldly trends that have filtered into the local churches to this present day. For instance, the more conservative churches during the 1970's slowly began to give acceptance to the new hippie and charismatic music, along with a change in dress and more compromising preaching. Since these days the contemporary leaven of CCM (Christian Rock Music), immodest dress, grotesque body piercing, tattoos, dancing, long hair on men, a general lack of distinction among the sexes, entertainment, and many other worldly vices or trends that have spread and been endorsed in most churches (1 Cor. 4:6; Gal. 5:9), except those assemblies that choose to remain conservative in both doctrine and practice.



## Statements

### **1. Churches are conservative because it's Biblical.**

The traditional practices of the conservative church can trace its roots back to the apostolic days of the early church, with the traditional teachings taught by Paul and his associates, regarding doctrine and ethical matters.

2 Thessalonians 2:15

“Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.”

Bible traditions speak of the Scriptural commands and principles, or ethical teachings, which must be maintained in our personal lives and corporate gatherings. When we apply these traditionally taught truths to our lives, both our home and church life will be different. We will be “an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity (1 Tim. 4:12) and each of us will know “how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15).

## **2. Churches are conservative because they are part of the Fundamentalist Movement.**

This means we are strictly an independent church following in the train of the Fundamental Movement (1900’s – present) which broke away from apostate doctrine and worldly practice. As a result, conservatism does not associate with those men, ministries, and movements which promote ecumenicalism, contemporary music and worship, and charismatic worship or experiences.

We are conservative because we do not associate with those who promote doctrinal compromise (2 Tim. 3:5; Rom. 16:17) and disorderly living (2 Thess. 3:6, 14). Our loyalty is ultimately to God (Rom. 12:1) and this leads us to separate from churches where the brethren promote ecumenical ties with liberals and worldly philosophy in their worship.

John Miles, the president of the Bible Institute, where I attended, once said: “Believers can lead us into compromising positions more quickly than anyone else. So, though we long to fellowship with believers, and recognize the unity of the body of Christ, if a believer leads us into a compromising position, where our loyalty to God is going to be questioned and compromised, then we have to part company with that believer.”

## **3. Churches are conservative because the Bible teaches separation.**

Conservative Christianity is rooted in the Bible teaching of holiness and separation, as it applies to the subjects of modesty, ecumenicalism, contemporary rock music, and other worldly trends taking place in the modern-day church (2 Cor. 6:14-17).



Conservatism reflects the Bible way of separation which is clearly taught in the Scriptures. The doctrine of Bible separation involves *personal* separation that pertains to our everyday lifestyle (2 Cor. 7:1; 2 John 10-11), *ecclesiastical* separation from apostate churches (1 Cor. 10:20; 2 Cor. 6:14-17), and sometimes *family* separation from those brethren, and if necessary, those churches

where brethren promote worldly worship and a pagan form of Christianity (1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; Titus 3:10; Eph. 5:11).

Pastor Dave Moss summarizes:

“Separation has been practiced by God’s people in every era of human history: by the nation of Israel, by First Century Christians, by Reformers in the 1500’s, and by Believers in the early part of the Twentieth Century. It is not a new doctrine and it has perpetual relevance to every generation and to every culture.”

Out of separation comes reverence for God’s House (Ps. 89:7; Heb. 12:28) that is reflected in modest dress (1 Tim. 2:9), godly music (Eph. 5:19), and sound doctrine (Titus 2:1) which have always been part of the conservative church movement.

# Conservative

In our present day the word “conservative” should be used interchangeably with the word “separation.” The word “conservative” is rooted in the doctrine according to godliness (1 Tim. 6:5) and no apology should ever be made for maintaining godly conservatism in our manner of music, dress, entertainments, since God has called us to “be holy in all manner of conversation” (1 Pet. 1:15) or overall living.

The conservative churches and families that want to maintain purity must follow Paul's sound advice.

2 Timothy 3:14

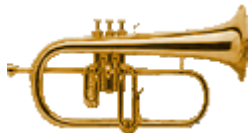
“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.”

## Particulars of Conservatism



### 1. Bible Version

Most conservative churches, who apply a conservative approach to ministry, use the King James Bible in their pulpit ministry. This Bible has led the way in Bible translations and has been historically used by the Fundamentalist Movement. Of course, a person is not a heretic just because he uses another Bible version; however, most conservative churches use the King James Bible to promote the historic conservative approach to pulpit ministry. Other conservative groups also use the King James Bible because they want to adhere to the *traditional* text (received Greek text) which was the underlying Greek text in the major Bibles leading up the King James Bible and which primarily supports the majority of manuscript evidence. Most conservative Churches do not follow what has been called the “King James Only” movement (a very rigid movement) but would conclude that they are “Only King James” because of their desire to follow historic conservatism and the traditional text used by Christians down through the centuries.



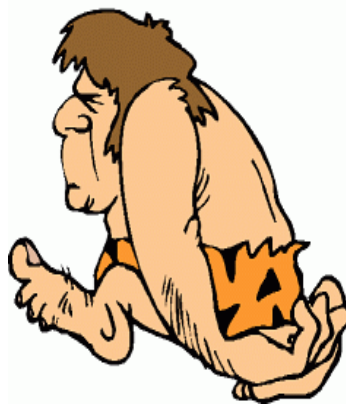
### 2. Music

The conservative church movement believes that all secular rock music and the contemporary rock music in the church today are destructive to the spiritual growth of Christians (2 Pet. 3:18). The conservative church embraces songs that portray God's holiness (Lev. 11:44), peace (Heb. 13:20), order (1 Cor. 14:33, 40), and which reflect reverence for God (Heb. 12:28) in the best possible light. They are spiritual songs (Col. 3:16) in both

words and sound that musically reflects the new way of life in Christ (Ps. 40:3; 2 Cor. 5:17). Conservative churches do not promote musical rebellion and offer strand fire on God's altar (Lev. 10:1; Num. 3:4) or sacrifices which are not pleasing to Him (Malachi 1:8). Therefore, in most conservative churches, those who become members and serve in the local church, are encouraged to adopt strong musical convictions based upon unchanging ethical and Biblical principles.

### 3. Dress

**Welcome to  
Church**  
  
**"Come as  
You Are!"**



This is still a popular marketing slogan that is used which is designed to bring people into the church. Most modern churches that promote this are more concerned about *marketing* people than *mentoring* people. They are more concerned about *reeling* people in than expressing *reverence* for God. They also seek the *salvation* of souls at the expense of the *sanctity* of God and His House. God wants us to win souls, but not at the offence of His character (Lev. 11:44), and the expense of the sacred meeting place for His saints (Lev. 23:2; 23:37).



In conservative churches there is no dress code for guests or visitors (nonmembers) of an assembly. Of course, clothing is mandatory! Furthermore, even visitors should remember to be morally discreet and respectful in some manner when attending a church. For example, we take our hats off when singing the national anthem; therefore, we should expect unsaved visitors to remove their hats, when attending a church, out of a general respect for God. Nevertheless, any "people-oriented" pastor of a conservative church would want others to come, visit, get saved, enjoy the services, feel

welcome at the church assembly, experience the love and unity of the saints, and begin to see and sense what God is doing in the hearts of people at the church. Conservative church members are not concerned about the particulars of unsaved people but the precious souls that need to be saved (Prov. 11:30).



Most conservative ministry leaders and church members follow a dress code or standard which reflects traditional “Sunday” attire. In many conservative churches ladies agree that wearing a dress or skirt is very traditional, a wonderfully distinct part of a woman’s attire, and they wear a skirt or dress, not to compare themselves with others (2 Cor. 10:12), or indicate spirituality over others (Luke 10:11-12), but to keep a sense of decorum, and a conservative approach to ministry, while at the same time expressing love and sensitivity toward the convictions of others in the conservative movement who espouse this type of conservative dress (Gal. 5:13).



Those men who participate in the church ministry will often wear a suit and tie as a conservative way to express worship toward God. Again, there is never a desire to compare oneself with others (1 Cor. 3:3-4) who do not dress in this manner. The aim and desire of dressing in a more traditional and conservative way is to maintain a level of decency, respect, and order when attending God’s House (1 Cor. 14:40). Most people dress in a respectful way when attending a funeral or wedding and it should be no different when attending God’s House.

Psalm 89:7

“God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.”

Generally speaking, what we wear to church for the corporate gatherings of worship, does reflect what we think about God. Our clothes can be an expression of our worship to God (1 Pet. 2:5). Our manner of dress does send a message to God. Dress tells God what we think about Him, how much we respect or reverence Him, as His children, and what our values are in life (Zeph. 1:8).



#### 4. Standards

In many conservative churches those who desire to become members or serve in some capacity within the church ministry are asked to sign a “standards statement” and agree to abide by a basic “code of conduct” list. The list itself is never designed to measure a person’s overall spirituality (1 Cor. 2:15), replace the Spirit’s power and assistance for daily living (Gal. 5:25), or deprive Christians of their true personal freedom in Christ (John 8:36; Gal. 2:4), as the opponents of conservatism so often suggest. The lists will normally reflect some basic areas of separation from worldly vices, which can be easily avoided, in order to establish a good testimony as a Christian in the community, and as a member of a conservative church (1 Tim. 4:12). Avoiding certain entertainments will enable us to maintain a good testimony (1 Tim. 4:12) and keep another brother from stumbling (1 Cor. 8:8-13).



Don’t be so surprised about some basic standards! Everyone has standards in their church. Even the most lenient and “easy-going” evangelical churches of today have standards. I know of no church that allows women to wear bikinis while singing in the church choir or youth directors to smoke marijuana with the teens during youth activities! Every church has some level of standards that they observe. You may not like the standards of the conservative church, but you must confess that every church has some form of standards. So don’t get “hung up” on the standards bandwagon.

Most conservative churches still adhere to the traditional and unchanging worldly taboos which the Church has looked down upon for many years, such as attending the Movie Theater, dancing, social drinking, the use of tobacco, long hair on men, and the blending together of the sexes. Conservative Christians have always wanted to maintain Biblical manhood and womanhood in the best possible light. This means that men wear their hair short and women longer (1 Cor. 11:14-15) and men do not wear jewelry like a woman does, nor does a woman seek to look like a man in her overall dress and appearance (Duet. 22:5).



During Bible times there was little difference between the wearing of garments; however, there was a distinction in the overall appearance in order to maintain the necessary distinction among the sexes. Men and women wore the same kind of clothing (2 Kings 2:8-13; John 19:24), but it differed in detail. They both would wear an inner garment, a girdle, and an outer garment, but the dress of the woman was more elaborate and ornamented. However, the women wore longer tunics and larger mantles than the men. Also the women would often wear a veil covering their faces.

Sadly, our present Christian generation has jettisoned most cultural standards of dress which have reflected traditional and important distinctions among the sexes and family values. When boundaries and definitions begin to change the conservative Christian does not seek to change and distort God's basic order for the sexes. The conservative Christian steers away from making changes, which would distort and no longer reflect a clear picture of Biblical manhood and womanhood, and seeks to maintain traditional and Biblical values and standards, which are rooted in the doctrine of Bible separation and God's unchanging ethical and moral code.



The members of conservative assemblies want to avoid taking on the *appearance* (1 Thess. 5:22) that they are identifying or associating (1 Cor. 10:20; Eph. 5:7, 11) with the questionable, extreme, radical, worldly, and unbiblical movements of today, such as long hair on men, the rebellious rock culture, and the unisex philosophy in our present day society. In light of the day in which we live, the believer should present the least questionable testimony before the world, "approve things that are excellent" (Phil. 1:10), and represent Christianity as a movement of people that are radically different



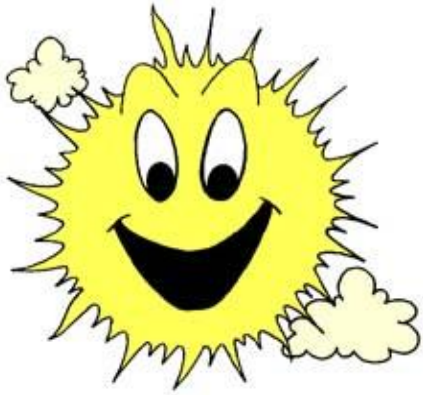
than the world and its cultural standards, which represent rebellion against God (1 Sam. 15:23).



New families that join a more traditional church should not attempt to set more lenient standards for the conservative church ministry and cause division among assembly life (1 Cor. 11:18). Also, the established church families are expected to maintain the practice of ministry standards, so the newcomers will follow in the same pattern, and so the church can keep moving forward in the unity (Psalm 133:1; Eph. 4:1-3) and traditional standards of church life and ministry.



Lighten up! We must remember that standards are levels of requirement that are placed upon us by others within the family (Eph. 6:1 with Col. 3:20; Col. 3:18), government (Rom. 14:1-7), everyday work world (Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22), Biblical institutions of learning (Gal. 4:1-2), and to some extent, the local church setting (“obey them that have the rule over you” - Heb. 13:17). Paul placed some basic standards for living upon the saints within the stated gatherings so that they might keep order (1 Cor. 14:27-35). Paul also placed various standards and restrictions upon the saints outside their regularly stated assembly meetings, so they could corporately function together as a unified, holy, and separate body from the world (1 Cor. 10:20; Acts 15:28-29). Standards are also Biblical in order to promote courtesy, love, and edification among God’s people (Rom. 14:1-19; 1 Cor. 8:1-13). We also have standards to promote order, decency, and reverence in God’s House (Ps. 89:7; 1 Cor. 14:33, 40). None of these standards will discredit or destroy our true freedom in Christ, which is to live free from sin’s power (John 8:36), nor will they place us under the Mosaic Law, as a means to gain salvation and sanctification before God (Acts 15:1; Rom. 7:10-25).



If we keep standards higher in church ministry we can represent modesty in the best possible light. Also, if we keep the standards higher we can represent separated and conservative Christianity, along with reverent worship, in the best possible light. We can also represent salt and light in the world as Jesus commanded us (Matt. 5:13-14). Conservative Christians do not experiment with how close they can get to the line; instead, they move away from the line and

do not live on the borderline of compromise and borderland of worldliness (Gen. 13:12-13).



Once again, standards are never erected to compare ourselves with each other and determine the level of one's spirituality (2 Cor. 10:12). Standards (levels of requirement) are simply rules that help set

the house of God in order and keep it pure in over-all practice and leadership (Titus 2:5-8; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Acts 6:3). We also have Biblical standards to promote and practice the doctrine of Bible separation (2 Cor. 6:14-17), declare a stand (2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6), help us discipline our lives (1 Cor. 9:24-27), promote love (Gal. 5:13) and unity (Eph. 4:1-3; Romans 14:19-21) among the saints, and keep us from offending another brother (1 Cor. 8:8-13). Some standards are arbitrary (possessing no law or principle) and they are established as a general guideline to follow to make group living more pleasant.

The fact that believers in the New Testament were told to not attend certain places (1 Cor. 10:20; 1 Peter 4:3-4), commit various sins (1 Cor. 6:18, 7:1; Gal. 5:19-23), practice disorderly actions (1 Cor. 11:20-21; 1 Cor. 14; 2 Timothy 3:1-7) and dress in a certain immodest or ostentatious way (1 Timothy 2:9-10; 1 Peter 3:3) would indicate the need for these people to establish both corporate and personal standards that would accommodate these Scriptural teachings.

John Miles again states:

“Rules are made in times of quiet to protect and guide us in times of stress. Rules are simply goals, fulfilled through God’s power, that can

help discipline and direct us to God-honoring lives. Rules can make group living more pleasant, declare a stand, and help establish order in lives that are undisciplined.”



## Opposition to Conservatism

There are those who oppose conservative Christianity, which reflects the Bible doctrine of separation. Some do so out of ignorance (1 Cor. 14:38) regarding the historic and Biblical roots of this movement, while others do so to discredit the movement as being legalistic, unloving, or unkind, in order to sanctify and promote their own worldly goals and agenda (Titus 2:12). Of course, these are just straw man arguments and smokescreens that many Christians hide behind, which have no substance or truth attached to them.



There are six arguments or smokescreens that are given which are designed to discredit the practices of traditional or conservative Christianity and churches. Let's take the time to examine these conclusions of contemporary Christianity in light of conservative Christianity.

### 1. Legalism



This is an “old argument” and misunderstood term that has been floating around since the 1970’s. The bugaboo word of our present generation is

that whenever someone raises a standard in church ministry they are promoting “legalism.” In short, they become a legalist by trying to run the lives of other people. However, the erection of standards does not constitute legalism.



Let’s think this through Biblically. If setting rules constitutes legalism, then God is the biggest legalist that every lived, since He gave a total of 613 commands in the Old Testament. One must understand that a list or code of conduct does not create the problem of legalism any more than the Law created sin (Rom. 7:14). It’s our *wrong attitude* toward any law or code of conduct that creates legalism. If my motive is to discipline my own life in order to obtain salvation (Acts 15:1) or sanctification (Rom. 7:14-25; Phil. 3:6), and

forget about God’s inner power and my relationship with God, then I will become a practicing legalist, who follows law/works/self, as a means to salvation and sanctification. If my desire is to erect a standard in order to judge the overall spirituality of others and promote myself among others, then I will act as the legalists did, during Bible times (Luke 18:11-12). However, a church and pastor can erect various standards for personal living and ministry without becoming legalistic. The charge of legalism is simply a smokescreen that many hide behind today in order to promote their worldly agendas and contemporary lifestyles that dishonor God and His Word.



Most discerning people in conservative churches who love God are not claiming to live their lives in *wooden conformity* to a list of standards, thinking that there is power in a list of standards, which will make them holy (Rom. 7:7-14). They live by

the constant application of God’s Biblical principles to their lives (2 Thess. 2:15; 1 Thess. 5:21) and the continual appropriation of God’s inner life and Christ’s power to their daily living (Phil 2:13; Gal. 2:20). Most conservative Christians are trusting in the inward power of Christ’s life (Phil. 1:21) and seeking to live by the power of the Holy Spirit for daily victory (Gal. 5:16).



All lists are a means to an end. Strict adherence to a list will not assure us of inward holiness (2 Cor. 7:1) and the Spirit’s empowering and fruitful ministry (Gal. 5:25). On the other

hand, to ignore the testimony of holy living and obedience, which might be presented in some measure within a code of conduct list, expresses a wrong heart attitude toward God's holiness and the Spirit's ministry of sanctification through the application of Scriptural truth to your life (John 15:3; 17:17; 1 Sam. 15:22). The goal is never to get anyone to live by a list but to help people live by Biblical convictions (Dan. 1:8; Heb. 11:24) which a list may highlight in some measure. There is a vast difference in having rules and living by rules. Let us never forget that it's not legalism to live by spiritual virtues (2 Pet. 1:5-9), values (Heb. 11:24-27), and valid Biblical commands (John 14:15) and principles (2 Thess. 2:15). God's Word sanctifies us (John 15:3; 17:17) as we apply it to our daily lives through structured living.

Winston Churchill once said:

"I spent the first twenty-five years of my life wanting more freedom, and the next twenty-five years of my life wanting more structure, and the last twenty-five years of my life realizing that structure is freedom."

A church can have standards for membership without being legalistic:

- If it does not create a list of standards as the way of salvation (Acts 15:1; Phil. 3:9) and the sole identifying mark of one's sanctification (Gal. 5:22-23).
- If it does not promote following a particular list of regulations through self effort and discipline (Rom. 7:7-25).
- If it does not use a list of standards as a way to compare one's spirituality with other assemblies or saints (2 Cor. 10:12).
- If it does not burden people with unbiblical, unreasonable, and unbending rules which have no relevance to godly living (Matt. 23:4).

## 2. Liberty

Another popular standards and "grace way" of a liberty that Christianity



smokescreen that many erect today is that conservative Christianity keep us from living the living which is a life of liberty from all laws, and is has been promised for New Testament Christianity (Rom. 6:14). However, this simply is not the case. The New Testament believer has been liberated or freed from the condemnation of the law's sentence of death (Gal. 3:10; 13; Rom. 7:6;

8:15; 2 Cor. 3:17), the observance of law for salvation (Gal. 5:1), and the many multifaceted practices of the Mosaic Law (Col. 2:16), such as dietary regulations, days, and distinctions between the clean and unclean (Lev. 11:47). These laws have been rescinded (Acts 10:9-16; Rom. 14:14; 1 Tim. 4:1-5) for New Testament living, but the principle of holiness which they taught remains intact (1 Pet. 1:15-16). Furthermore, the moral character of the Mosaic Law has not changed and should be worked out in the believer's heart and life (Rom. 8:4). In short, the freedom from the Mosaic Law does not mean the absence of all laws and standards for Christian living. It simple means we are no longer bound to the laws condemnation (Gal. 3:13), enslaved to the law's standard of perfection for salvation (Gal. 5:1), and to the intricate rules and regulations that were required to be observed under the Mosaic Law (Col. 2:16).



God's New Testament saints, who live under the grace dispensation, are no longer called upon to live in the shadows and teachings of the past (Col. 2:17; Heb. 10:1). We don't use animals and object lessons to guide us in our spiritual growth but the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18) and the New Testament Scriptures which are given to the Church (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:16). We don't bring animals to the altar and slay them nor are we required to make distinctions between clean and unclean meat for consumption (Acts 10:11-14). The church is never commanded in the New Testament to follow the many tedious rules that pertained to God's dispensational purpose for Israel, under Law, which have no further purpose or typical lessons behind them under grace (Matt. 23:23; Exodus 30:19-21; Lev. 5:2; 11:29-32; Numb. 6:18). However, this does not mean there are no rules, standards, and laws under grace. To come to this conclusion is a gross misunderstanding and misconception of grace living. *Grace living is not unrestricted living. It is not lawless living.* People can allow grace to change their lives, while possessing certain standards and rules, which are designed to point them to a Scriptural command or principle and keep them from sin. The grace way of living is still the Bible way of living! Grace still has rules to follow; however, the way all standards and rules are followed "under grace" (Rom. 6:14) is in the context of God's sanctifying power (Rom. 6:1-14).



The mindset being promoted today says, "Live and let live." This is a skewed form of Christian liberty which is not taught in the Bible. Living by grace (Rom. 6:14) and

not law does not mean the absence of all lists and restraints; it simply means we rely on Christ's life to produce sanctification in our lives (Rom. 6:1-7). It means living free from sin's power (Rom. 6:18-22; John 8:32; 36) and not freedom from all rules and regulations. Grace always teaches and motivates us to live lives of holiness and separation unto God.

Titus 2:11-12 declares:

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

Living under grace results in believers practicing holiness (1 Pet. 1:14-16; 2 Cor. 7:1), separating from and refusing to support apostasy or unrighteousness in any way (2 Cor. 6:14-17), respecting their bodies as the dwelling place of God (1 Cor. 6:19-20), repudiating fleshly lusts (1 Pet. 2:11), refusing to conform to the world (Rom. 12:2), not fellowshiping with the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11), and proving all things (1 Thess. 5:21). This is grace in action. Grace takes us away from sin. It does not promote rebellion and sin in our lives.

A false expression of liberty can turn into license or fleshly and carnal living (Gal. 5:13; 1 Pet. 2:16). There is no such thing as freedom without responsibility! Whoever or whatever promises you freedom, without adding self control (Gal. 5:23; 1 Cor. 9:24-27), will lead you into bondage and misery. The Prodigal Son wanted freedom, but he didn't want responsibility. As a result, he lost his true freedom, and ended up in the pig pen (Luke 15: 12-16). There can be no true freedom without discipline and responsibility. Satan offered to Eve a false freedom that lacked responsibility (Gen. 3:1, 4-5) and basically said, "Exercise your freedom. You can get away with it!" The trouble is this; we never get away with sin, and sin is not true freedom. Sin robs us of true liberty. Don't let the devil deceive you into thinking that you can label sin as freedom.



Let's set the record straight. Preachers and those in leadership are given the authority to promote various regulatory standards and expect their people to uphold them (Acts 15:29; 1 Cor. 10:20; 1 Cor. 11:20-21; 1 Cor. 14; 1 Timothy 2:9-12; 1 Timothy 3:1-12; 1 Peter 3:3; 5:5; 2 Tim. 4:2; 2 Cor. 13:10; Heb. 13:7, 17). There is no such thing as *radical individualism* (autonomy) seen in New Testament living which

rejects and neglects church authority (Heb. 13:17), discipleship training (Matt. 28:19-20), and godly example (Phil. 3:17; 1 Thess. 1:6).

John Cawood said:

“The point is clear. The Word of God says that men are set as standard setters over others, and we are to obey those rules with joy so that it would be joyous for them as for us. It is biblically right according to Hebrews 13 for one group to set a standard for another.”

### 3. God only looks at the heart.



Another idea and myth being modern churches today is that God heart in our time of worship;

promoted by many only looks at the therefore, we don't

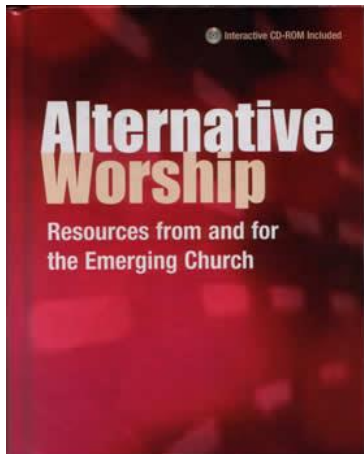
have to be concerned about maintaining traditional worship or even separated living. This argument is once again another smokescreen that is designed to sanctify a person's own disobedience and personal agenda in life. This is an argument that is based upon a fault interpretation of 1 Samuel 16:7. This verse teaches that God is more concerned about a person's heart being pure and acceptable in His sight than the outward physical characteristics of an individual. However, those who use this verse to promote their contemporary and worldly agenda in the church have carried this truism way too far, since the Bible also states that God is concerned with what we do with our body and promote in our Christian lives (1 Cor. 6:19-20; 2 Tim. 2:21). In fact, what we do with our bodies is often a telling sign of the condition of our heart. The Bible passage in 1 Samuel 16:7 has nothing to do with God refusing to look on the sinful acts committed by the body.

A man once said to me he was part of a contemporary Christian rock band and that God knew his heart was sincere. I told him he was absolutely right. Only God can know the sincerity of the heart (Jer. 17:10; 1 Cor. 4:5). However, sincerity of heart does not mean an action is right in God's eyes (Judges 17:6). If this were true a convention room filled with 25,000 Jehovah's Witnesses would be something God accepts and condones. *Sincerity does not sanctify our actions.* A person may be sincere but sincerely wrong in what they believe and practice. Only truth can sanctify a person's conduct in life (John 17:17). Truth is the measuring stick for what is right and wrong – not our feelings or sincerity.





Many of God's children come to the conclusion: "God accepts me the way that I am and any kind of worship is pleasing to Him." This alleged truth somehow frees them from taking any responsibility for their outward actions and decisions in relationship to their living and worship. It's true that God always loves and accepts us as His children (Rom. 8:38-39), but it's not true that God always accepts the way that we live out our lives, and even our worship (1 Cor. 3:1-3). God never accepts and condones carnality! There is a vast difference between God accepting us and loving us as His children, in spite of what we do, and God accepting or condoning carnal conduct within our lives.



We need to remember that the Bible makes it very clear that God does not accept all worship (John 4:22; Malachi 1:7-13; Lev. 10:1-2) and that the things that we do with our body do matter to God.

1 Thessalonians 4:4

"That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour."

#### 4. God can use anything for His glory.

Another modern smokescreen and myth of contemporary Christianity is that God can use anything. This certainly is not true. Does taking drugs and being addicted to drugs bring glory to God? Of course not, and do you know why it does



not bring glory to God? It's because God is holy (Lev. 11:44). A holy and impeccable God does not use sinful practices or rebellious music for His glory and holy purposes (1 Cor. 10:31). Can God use crack cocaine, child molestation, and pornography for His glory? God receives no glory in these sinful actions and deeds. His holy name is misrepresented by these wicked and terrible deeds. It's ludicrous to conclude that God can use anything. Does God use the devil to lead people to Christ and help them along in

their Christian lives? Let's stop this senseless, immature, and fruitless talk. "God forbid" (Rom. 6:1) that any Christian would ever think that an infinitely holy God will actually use sinful deeds and wickedness to honor Him and that God can turn anything around and use it for His glory. This type of thinking is twisted and perverted to say the least. We are called upon to hate the evil and love the good (Amos 5:15) and approve only those things which are holy (1 Thess. 5:21). We are called upon to be holy as God is holy (1 Pet. 1:15).



#### 4. The end justifies the means.

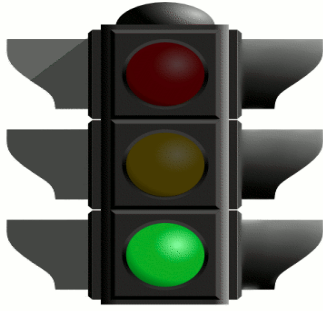
The end does *not* justify the means. This worldly philosophy (Col. 2:8; 1 Tim. 6:20) actually leads to a dead end! It produces carnality, worldliness, and skewed results in God's harvest and work. Many contemporary Christians conclude that if some people get saved (the end) then what we use in our evangelistic outreach (the means) does not matter. The Scriptures make it clear that it is not enough simply to do the right thing (evangelism, worship, loving); we must also do it in the right way (2 Tim. 2:5 – "lawfully"). A righteous end never justifies an unrighteous means. It is not enough to do a right thing. We must also do it in the right way! We might be sincere in what we are doing but still dishonor God. A practice may be directed to God but it must also be acceptable to God (Rom. 12:1-2).

God wants evangelism to be done in a righteous and holy manner since "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works" (Psalm 145:17). The question is not: "Does it work?" but "Is it holy?" (1 Pet. 1:15-16) and "Is God pleased with it? (Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:4; 1 John 3:22). God's work, done in God's way, produces only good results. God's work, mixed with man's way, can produce both good and bad results. We must also remember that results can be the results of man (man's doings and ways) instead of the results of God working in the hearts of people (Isa. 3:8; Isa. 55:8; Prov. 14:12; 16:25; Matt. 13:20 - compare Acts 2:37; Nehemiah. 8:9).

Someone once stated:

"It's never right to do wrong in order to do right."

## 5. We must reach the unchurched.



Christ's Great Commission is to “go” into the entire world and proclaim the Gospel message (Mark 16:15). It's often said that we must become like the unsaved or unchurched so God can use us to reach them. This is another modern misconception and smokescreen that is used by undiscerning Christians today, since it is the Gospel that reaches people (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18-21) – not worldly pragmatism and the methods of men. We must also remember that God does not need any help in saving souls. He is Lord of the harvest (Matt. 9:38) and He is the One who gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:6). Our manmade methods do not bring people to Christ. God draws people to Himself by His own power (John 12:32; 16:8) and not by the clever gimmicks and gadgets of men.



It's assumed by many today that conservative and separated Christianity cannot reach the unsaved masses and that these types of Christians are out of touch with the lives of everyday, common, and ordinary people. It takes worldly syncretism and sameness to reach the unsaved for Christ. Of course, this is one of the greatest hoaxes of contemporary Christianity. Jesus taught in Luke 16:15: “for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.” If we get the praise of man in our evangelism, then we had better check up on the presentation of our evangelism. Jesus has called us to “fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19) but at the same time He does not expect us to “walk as men” (1 Cor. 3:3).



When will we realize that the world is not impressed with the religious version of itself!! Our greatest effectiveness is not in being like the world but living differently than the world (1 Pet. 4:4). It's not sameness but a different way of life (1 Pet. 3:1-2) and light (Matt. 5:13-14; Eph. 5:8) that catches the attention of sinners. We don't need body-piercings, tattoos, and rock music to win the lost as many suggest today. If we must become like sinners to win them to Christ, does this mean we must also use drugs, become a prostitute, or drunkard in order to win lost people to Christ? The whole philosophy is

unbiblical and mocks God's holiness and the change that is to be manifested in the life of Christians (1 Pet. 2:12; Eph. 2:10).

We must face something. Our holy lives will be an offense to sinners (2 Cor. 2:15-16; 1 Pet. 4:4) but this will ultimately bring them to the place of repentance. Conviction of sin doesn't feel good, nor does it sell well. The peril or danger of pragmatism threatens the general purpose of evangelism, which calls people to repent of their sins and believe on Christ for salvation (Acts 20:21 – "... repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"). This type of evangelism is being replaced by entertaining and non-confrontational preaching that does not call for repentance which in return does not save souls or change the lives of people.



Conservative Christians do not ride around in wagons on the frontier. They do not live in some kind of past era which no longer understands modern-day society. A conservative church is not "out of touch" with society; it actually reaches out to a lost world with the message of repentance (Luke 24:47) and new life in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), which transforms the lives of people, instead of keeping them in the same, old, sinful patterns of life. Jesus came to save sinners "from their sins" (Matt. 1:21) – not keep them bound to their old sinful lifestyles. Conservative churches across America are reaching out to the lost. They are not remaining in their ecclesiastical castles but are using the Gospel message to change the lives of people. The modern contemporary church must stop entertaining sinners and making deals with sinners!



#### **6. The young people won't come to church if we don't play their rock music.**

This is a pathetic argument and another smokescreen for compromising Biblical separation. This argument will not stand when pastors are examined at the Judgment Seat of Christ (James 3:1). All the wood, hay, and stubble associated with contemporary Christianity will go up in smoke and not bring reward (1 Cor. 3:9-15). Did you ever stop and think that not everybody should be in church on Sunday? The church is primarily for believer's growth (Acts 2:42) and not for winning souls (Acts 8:4; 1

Thess. 1:8). This is why we are called to go into the world (Mark 16:15). Furthermore, where do we find in Scripture the apostles and elders accommodating the lifestyles of the heathen, unlearned, undisciplined, and entertaining sinners in their church services? Let's set the record straight; kids and young people don't run the Church! Elders who reflect wisdom and truth are to run the church (1 Tim. 3:1-6; Titus 1:5-9).



There are families visiting conservative churches that have come from previous church ministries which have let down the standards of music and dress in order to please the younger generation. They have come from churches which have allowed the youth to overrun the church and govern what takes place in the local assembly. This certainly is a pattern that has been established in many contemporary churches of today and one that is absolutely wrong. Those families that visit a conservative church will discover that the older generation within the church is respected for their beliefs and examples of godly separation and living. They will also discover that the standard of Bible separation (Rom. 12:2) is promoted among church and assembly life in submission to a godly pastor's teaching and example (1 Thess. 1:6), who seeks to disciple and train the younger generation, and next generation, in the ways of godliness and righteousness (2 Tim. 2:2).



1 Peter 5:5 says, "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." In the context of church ministry, the church family needs to submit to the pastor or elder. In the context of the home, the child must submit to the authority figure (Eph. 6:1-4). Children are not to run the home and they certainly are not to run the church.

1 Peter 5:5 brings out several important principles that we must remember for church life and ministry.

**a. Submitting to church authority will purify us.**

We have church authority or "elder" leadership to keep a ministry pure (Titus 1:5) as we follow God's spiritual leader in the steps of

separation and sanctification (Phil. 3:17; 2 Thess. 3:9; 1 Thess. 4:2). Submission to spiritual leadership (“submit yourselves unto the elder”) and certain standards is a Biblical and necessary part of church ministry (Heb. 13:7, 17) in order to maintain purity in the local church setting. The younger generation should submit to an elder minister within the local church setting who is seeking to disciple converts, maintain order, and establish Bible separation or holiness in God’s House. To overthrow the wiser and older generation always results in spiritual calamity (1 Kings 12:8-10).

**b. Submitting to one another will unify us.**

We are also called upon to be “subject one to another.” We should seek to maintain unity by being willing to submit to the general consensus of others, within assembly life, regarding such issues as dress and standards within church ministry. We should never seek to harm or divide God’s work by insisting on our personal preference (Rom. 14:19-20).

**c. Submitting to the devil will defeat us.**

We are also reminded that “God resisteth the proud” even as He resisted the devil when he rose up against God (Isa. 14:12-14; 1 Pet. 3:7). Rising up and saying, “I’m going to do it my way” is nothing more than pride. This is the devil’s way for the devil fell from his position because of his pride (Isa. 14:12-15). A popular eating place used to say, “Have it your way.”



This slogan represents the attitude of many Christians. Have it your way! This sounds like a modern mentality that the church has adopted and applied to its church services. However, your way, may not be God’s way. What you like may not be what God likes! Did you ever stop and think that your way may not be the right way? Maybe your contemporary rock music is only temporary and will not stand the final test at the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10). Remember, if it *sounds* like the world and *looks* like the world; it is the world (Rom. 12:2).



There are many excuses that some Christians give for not attending a conservative church ministry, but in the end, the families and personal lives of people, who do not attend the conservative local church, may miss the importance of godly discipline, growth in Bible separation, and bringing up children who possess godly values and virtues. Churches that support the same standards of home life (Deut. 4:10; 6:7) will provide a consistent testimony for children to follow and will make a lasting impression upon their lives.

More families are returning to the conservative local church as they witness the increasing entertainment and worldliness associated with modern Christianity on the far left. Perhaps it's time for you to visit a conservative local church and rediscover the loving friendship, uncompromising Biblical preaching, commitment to God's holiness, and the evangelistic burden that these churches share for the unsaved.

There are conservative church families who are waiting to encourage and assist you in your Christian life (Heb. 10:24-25).



Come join one of these growing congregations and find a new start and way of life that revolves around Christ and godly worship, which reflects God's original pattern for local church ministry and life. Conservative Christianity is not only "The way church used to be" but "The way church should be!"