

I Still Remember the Time When Church was Church

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I was born and raised in Shreveport Louisiana. Macedonia Baptist Church was my church home from childhood and I was a member until I graduated from high school and left Shreveport Louisiana.

I sang in the Choir since I was a child.

Our church was a place to learn about God the Father, Jesus the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit the Comforter and Counselor.

Macedonia Baptist Church members were obedient to the complete Word of God.

We went to Sunday school, worship services and we visited other churches.

We had missions, ushers, and deacon board. We had BTU (Baptist Training Union) which was been a part of the African American Baptist Church since it's early beginnings.

We went to Choir rehearsal and we rehearsed the songs to perfection.

We took Choir rehearsal seriously. So when we entered God's house we prepared ourselves for rehearsal as we prepared ourselves for Sunday Worship service.

There was a Spirit in our Church that is like none other I have experienced since then.

I remember being so excited about going to Church. I got up early in the morning, bathed and got dressed and was ready and raring to go. No one had to threaten us or coax us to go to Church we went willingly.

The worship was so real, so spiritual, and so Godly, I felt like I was floating up to Heaven.

The congregation worshiped from the heart. We never looked at our watch to see what time it was because the Spirit of The Lord was all over the congregation. No words are good enough to describe the way I felt when we sang Zion songs and they prayed the prayer of faith. And when our Pastor Willie Ford started preaching and the Holy Ghost got inside him, people shouted all over that Church. Yeah, the Worship was for real.

When I was a child Church Services at Macedonia Baptist Church were held on 2nd and 4th Sunday. Then on the other Sunday's we would go to sing and worship with other Churches. We stayed on the go because our Pastor and our choir were invited to sing all over the city.

I remember we had Church at our house. Daddy used to tape our prayer and worship on his reel to reel. When Daddy died mama gave me his reel to reel. I still have it today.

I guess it would be fair to say that we worship *old fashion style*. We were taught to honor our father and mother *and* each other. We were taught to stand up for what is right at all cost. We were taught to respect God's House. We were taught to praise The Lord with all our heart because He was worthy of all the praise we had to give and more. We were taught to support each other and give honest opinions about what we felt. We were taught to respect *ALL* adults.

I saw people shout all over that church. Ninety percent of us were family by blood or marriage so I guess that is why we did not feel the need to pretend to worship a Real God as some do today.

Our worship was for real! I guess by some of today's form of worship some might call us country. Country is a word people used to describe loud people or people who shouted until they were full. Well we were loud, but we were also filled with The Holy Ghost so maybe we were country. We were grateful for having a God to serve who loved us and taught us the right way to love and serve. We were grateful for having a God who would allow sinners to be His children and servants.

Back then we served The Lord gladly, and with a grateful heart. We did not hold back our praise to The Lord for we were positive that He was worthy of Authentic praise.

We use to have Revival at our Church every summer. Our parents were wise and at the perfect age, they put us on what we called the *Mourning Bench*. I say that our parents were wise because they put us on the Mourning Bench at an age when we could understand why were there and at an age before there would be any outside interference from unbelievers.

My oldest brother Billy & I were the first two kids in our family to go on the Mourning bench. In a way that was kind of scary because it was our soul that was as stake here and we understood that very well.

We had to stay in our bedroom on our knees until it was time for the Revival service to begin. We were allowed to come out for meals and bathroom breaks only. Thank God I had good knees then.

My brother and I were afraid of going to hell so we were serious. Our parent told us to say, repeatedly, Lord, if You save my soul, I will serve you until I die. I was so afraid to mess us things with God, I was the last one to walk off the Mourning Bench. I still remember the deacon saying, "if you trust God and just take one step, God will take the rest". He was right. I remember taking ONE STEP and the next thing I knew I was facing the congregation. I thought My Lord and My God!!! Then early on Sunday morning I was baptized in a muddy pond only a few blocks away from our house. I felt different, I felt new! I couldn't explain but I knew I had been changed . . .

What happened to the days of yea and nay, when we plainly saw the way?

Today we don't have all types of ungodly things going on in The Lord's House but we

allow ungodly behavior such as worship of self for the approval of man and not our God.

No, we are not sacrificing our children in the fire of Molech (2 Kings 23 v10) but we allow them to stay at home and not insist they go to church with us and learn about the Father, Jesus the Son, and The Holy Spirit. Satan tries to trap those who have a relationship with the Lord, what do you think he will do to you or your children who have no relationship with the Lord?

Remember that Satan is out to sift them as wheat. In Luke 22 (New King James Version) verse 31: And the Lord said, Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. Since Satan asked for a believer and follower of Christ to sift them as wheat, what more will he do your children. They don't know anything about Jesus because you haven't told them anything about Jesus, have you?

All they know about is X-Box games, running around with other people children that don't go to Church or Sunday school, walking around with their pants hanging to far below. They have not been taught to honor God or you. Remember if this does not apply to you, praise God for your love for Him, your love for your children, your strength and your wisdom.

We are living by the law of men and not God's law

Where are your children? Do you even know where they are while you are away from them? Take me back to the days yea.

If there was someone in the church who was sick or needed any type of assistance, Church members were there to help him or her in any way they could. I remember my Mom and my Aunts and other women from our church going all through out the neighborhood visiting the sick. My Mom and my Aunts cooked for them and/or ran errands and cleaned their home until they were healthy enough to take care of themselves again. I use to tag along and not once did I hear anyone complain that they were tired or that one was doing more than the other was doing. There was great unity in the Body of Christ back in the day.

My Mom and my family used to feed everybody. We had all sorts of fruit tree and a very large garden. We fed the hobo's, the neighbors, everybody that wanted some good home cooking, my Mom fed them. People don't do that much any more. People don't feed the hungry as they use to feed the hungry. There are a few, but not nearly enough. So now people stand on street corners begging for help. The government has taken over a job that should have always been our job. The government gives food stamps, welfare checks, etc. As people of God we need to do more. My pastor Anitha Jones says when you know better you do better. What are we gonna do? We know better now don't we? Are we going to do better?

Dana (1993) said that the United States' mainstream emphasis is on individualism. Individualism and self-determination are values of the dominant society (most but not all European or White America). However in stark contrast with the dominant perspective of individualism, African- American consciousness as well as other people of Color has always emphasized the significance of group identification.

We need to go back to olden days only in the sense that we begin to think like a group. A group of people of all colors that God has chosen as His Own. We must learn to be people of God and not like many of the people in the world. In slavery days we thought like a group. We were determined to bring about change.

The makeup of African American has always been a traditional view of family structure, which includes the nuclear family and extended family. Back then there was cooperation through collective efforts to achieve goals.

African American household had addition of family members beyond nuclear family and there were also beyond individual household boundaries. The family is an intimate association of persons of African descent who are related to one another by a array of means, including blood, marriage, formal adoption, or by appropriation. Come take me back where I come from again. We do not mean to separate we mean let us unite as a people and as a world. Think like a group and not an individual. I think we have become educated and seasoned to the world's definition of worship.

Since my childhood and young adult years, I have not experienced worship like they worshiped back home. Sometimes I have felt like I was in a foreign land right inside of what y'all call God's House, God's Church.

I am happy about the positive changes made in the Church because now women can preach and become pastors of God people and His House. However I am deeply concern with the work that does not go on in God's House. I am deeply concerned with the lack of support that members deeply need at time when trials, injury and other needs are not met or addressed. So much of the worship is fake and or theatrical. Some of us have forgotten what true worship really means. Today people sing a song or listen to someone else sing a song and they wave their fancy little handkerchief and say Hal-a-loo-yer (not Hallelujah!!! Thank you Jesus!!!) They don't shout in the Church, they don't lay hands on people, they don't smile, and they don't speak in tongues.

If someone comes in the door off the streets, a little dirty or not dressed by our standards, we turn up our nose. Some come in drenched in the smell of alcohol or pot and we quickly move away from them. We forget when we were out there back in the day. And for those of you/us who were not drenched with the smell of alcohol or pot we were doing some kind of ungodly act. Yeah we were. So if you don't fit in one of the behaviors or looks or smells in this list here, take your nose out of the air because, The Lord said in Romans Chapter 3 verse 23 "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God".

So many preachers don't teach the Word of God or the Gospel of Jesus, they preach about stuff. They preach messages meant for someone they are angry with or at odds with or for some other personal reason. Oh, they will read scriptures from the Bible to begin with, but after that only Jesus knows where they are going with that thing. I have sat there and experienced it for myself and I'm thinking, Lord I read that scripture this morning during my personal worship with you today and that is not what you said. I pray and ask The Lord to Bless my reading and understanding of His Holy Word too and that is not what they say it said. Lord Ham Mercy!!! Many preach messages to get people to do stuff, not God's laws or

what God says. Not God's love or His Promises or Commandments, just stuff. They don't preach what thus says The Lord, they preach what thus says me, myself and I. They defined grits as someone with guts (rude) instead of realizing that grits is just a breakfast dish.

When we were children we and our parents and the rest of the members worship as a congregation. When we were children we were disciplined. Our parents and our congregation stood up for what was right and spoke out when we knew some one was not acting in the Will of God. When we were children our parents and any other adult discipline us in right behavior. We were not beaten to death with scars all over our bodies. We got a whipping, not a beating.

I believe we have become educated and seasoned to ways of the world. When we were children we did not even know what rapists or pedophiles were. We knew everyone in our neighbor and their company. If anyone came through our neighborhood we didn't know, we gathered to inquire who he or she was. Maybe that is why there were no pedophiles or rapists or reports of any type of assaults in our neighborhood.

As we sat out on the porch or walked down the street, We fellowshiped with everyone. We said yes sir and yes ma'am to adult men and women. We stopped to talk for a while, maybe catch up with events in each other's lives.

I never remember anyone saying that there was a bad kid or person throughout our neighborhood. That was probably because disrespectful, bad kids got their butts spanked (not beaten or abused) by any adult in our neighborhood. And any adult whether it was a neighbor or a teacher had our parents permission to spank out butts. Spankings didn't kill us and contrary to what people say today, it did not make us violent adults. I have never started a fight in my life, nor has any member of my family. Though I have finished a few fights started by other against my younger sibling or other family members.

We need to bring back the days of yea and nay

CeCe Winans sings about the days of yea and nay. I agree with CeCe when she said, bring back the days of yea and nay when we could plainly see the way, then it was up to us to choose whether to win or to lose. CeCe said in her lyrics, she remember when life was so simple, Parents were a light and through them we saw what was right, But it ain't like that anymore. CeCe said she remembered when life was so easy when Boys grew into men, little girls to women then, But it ain't like that anymore . . . Somewhere we lost the score . . .

Don't listen to what the law of man says. Remember what God says, spare the rod, and spoil the child (Proverbs 13 v 24). That is why so many of our young people are in jails or prisons now because parents didn't use the rod and now prison officials are using something stronger and more humiliating than the rod. We have settled for tradition of men and not of God. We have settle for the ways of the world and not the ways of God. Scripture says that God chastises those He Loves. The reason the Lord's chastises us is because He Loves us. It is also because the Lord disciplines those He Loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son (Hebrews 12:6.)

God doesn't chastise every person, but He does chastise His children. We are part of a new family in Christ. Discipline is a proof of our *sonship*. Chastisement is all about love. God loves us enough to correct us and so should our parents. We should not despise the discipline of the Lord or the discipline of our parents. For The Lord has a purpose in Disciplining us. This purpose is to correct us. To teach us. It is instructional. It is not just a punishment for the past but it is instruction with a look toward the future.

I remember a time when people said what they meant and meant what they said. I remember a time when neighbors were extended family members. We looked out for each other. We ate together, we played all kinds of sports activities together, bingo, tennis, lot of physical activity (baseball, basketball, tennis). We were all physically fit. No one was overweight in our family then.

We worship the Lord with all our hearts. We supported our church and other churches. Parents looked out for each other children. We did not even have to lock our door when we left home. Now we lock our doors if we go across the street.

What happened to the Church and us?

What happened to the days when we supported one another as neighbors and as a church family? What happened? God didn't change. We changed and some for the better and some for the worst. We don't take care of our own like we use to. We don't take care of our neighbors, we don't love our neighbors as ourselves as God instructs us to do in His Word (Mark 12:31). That is the second commandment. We don't have to read long to find that one, do we? We don't visit the sick or feed the hungry in our community like we did when I was younger. What Happened? I was raised to help anyone in need and I was raised by example. If someone was a little dirty or unkempt we still welcomed him or her in our house. We trusted God then and we trusted people. I remember my mom feeding our next door neighbors children and they use to steal from us. That did not stop her from helping them or feeding them.

If there was a welfare system in place then we didn't know anything about. We always had more than enough. We were not rich. My dad could even read or write, but he paid our mortgage off when we were young kids.

God Blessed our families, church members and neighbors because we were obedient to His Word. We were not perfect, but we obeyed God's Word and His Counsel.

We must make our way back to God. We must make our way back to honor, trust and obedience to The Word of God. We must learn to love our neighbor as ourselves again. We must turn back to God's Commandments. We must turn back to God's Laws. God's Commandments and God's Laws are for our good. If we continue at the rate we are going, with the fake praise and worship (some, not all) to a Real God, He will remind us as He did the Israelites of Bible days.

Today, in the year 2008, I know that my description of praise in my youth must sound like fiction to some of you but it was the real deal!

My brother, my sister, what happened to old fashioned, down home fellowship? Was it too country for you? Too personal?

Some of us, not all, have lost our way. We have forgotten what we were taught as children. Let us take time out to remember our neighbors, friends and family and last but definitely not least The Father in Heaven, The Son and The Holy Spirit.

*As for me I say,
Give me that Old Time Religion, It's good enough for me.
It was good for Mama and Daddy, and it's good enough for me.
Makes me love everybody and it's good enough for me.
It has saved our fathers and it's good enough for me.
It will take us all to Heaven, it is more than enough for me*

Since I became a citizen of Denver Colorado, I have left two churches. I refuse to settle for anything less than what a Church should be to the Lord first and its congregation members.

I was raised to believe that when someone was sick you visited them in their home and the hospital as well. I was raised to believe that when someone said they loved you, they meant just that.

I was raised to believe that when someone said they loved you, they showed love by example.

The first church I left, I left because, although they were quick to say love you, love you, but I found out that many of them wouldn't know love if it jumped up and and bit them.

In 1998, my second year of college, as I walked across Colfax and Hudson street, I was run over by a hit and run driver, (look at the article on *How to Achieve Greatness* on my website). I had 5 surgeries in one day. A few people who are still friends of mine came by the hospital as well as our home to visit me. However, not the ones that I expected to visit, the one who were always so quick to I say, love you, love you didn't come to visit me. I remember my husband stopping one man who will remain nameless and asking him to come in and say hello. He did so reluctantly and he spent more time looking at his watch than he spent listening to my words.

I thought to my self, "what kind of person who throws around the Word of God love like that, would show such an uncaring attitude while they were in my presence. I left that church and never looked back. That was the major reason I left, but definitely not the only reason. Much more than I wish to share that is for sure. Unfortunately, that surely turned my husband off towards ministers and Church.

Then I joined another church and I was a member there for a short time before the worship turned empty and fake. The worship seemed so fake and phony. After years of being in the choir I dropped out because I just knew at any minute God was going to send a bolt of lightening through that fake worship and send somebody packing. Well it got worse. I

voiced my opinion of the lack of preparation during rehearsal, lack of cohesiveness to someone in control of authority but nothing was done. I refuse to pretend to fake worship to a Real God!!!

God is worthy of Real Praise from the heart

Then in January of 2007 I fell and broke my ankle. I was gone for 6 or 7 weeks and not one phone call from the ministry. A few of the members called (the Mothers of the church). However considering all of those fake phony people up in my face Sunday after Sunday, saying luv you, luv you . . . I am not surprise they didn't call. They cannot even show The Lord true love so I wasn't really surprised. I was disappointed, but not really surprised.

But God is a Good God. I wrote an article in *Body of Christ News* - *When I think of God's Grace*. My goddaughter's mother Angie called me after she read the article. We had lost touch with each other after I moved from that neighborhood. She left a message and when I called her back I was telling her about the fake worship and how I could not tolerate it any longer. Angie told me about her Church and her Pastors.

Two Sundays later I went to visit. I was amazed and thrilled at how that choir sang praises to The Lord. It was so spirit - filled. It had been so long since I had been at a church where people really praised God like that. I said to my self, this is too good to be true. And then the pastor came out and preached a Sermon so strong, I thought I had died and gone to Heaven. I said Lord, God this is too good to be true.

I went to worship with them for 6 weeks or longer and there was the same kind of authentic worship each Sunday. I have never seen anyone sing with all their hearts like that since I left Louisiana. Pastor Anitha, that woman is Good!!! She is a messenger and a Pastor/Preacher from God, of this I am sure.

Whew!!! Praise God!!!

I Joined that church and I have learned more since I have been there that I learned in all the churches that I was a member at before put together...

One of the things I like about my Pastor Anitha is that she Loves The Lord and is clear that she loves Him in the way she prepares people who will serve as part of the Church Ministries. You cannot just up and join a ministry there. You must go through the Foundation classes. You are taught about, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We have a great teacher and when she is finished teaching this class you are ready to serve. You must attend classes to further your learning of The Master... then you are ready to be a part of one of the ministries. Now that is how it should be done.

Tithes

Our Parents gave their Tithes willingly and even when we were children we gave our tithes. Back then our Pastor didn't even have to preach a sermon on Tithing because the members gave freely because they knew the Word of God said in Malachi 3 verse 10: *Bring*

ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it (King James Bible). We never borrowed money because it all came from tithes and offering. We used to get so mad at Mama for making us give when we picked a little extra money up from working in the summer.

I still remember the time when Church was Church, when we worshiped The Lord with all of our heart. What happened to us as a people and what happened to us a church, sisters and brothers, ministers and the rest of you too?

Today we read God' Word and use bits and pieces of it to suit our goals or our cause. Misinterpretation of The Word of God is so common today and this is not good news. The Word of God is Perfect. When we deliberately misinterpret His Word, It is like being given a prescription from your family doctor to take blood pressure medicine, potassium, baby aspirin, vitamin D, etc . . . to stay healthy and you decide you will only take the blood pressure medicine and say you don't believe you need the rest of that stuff . . . this doctor is someone who went to school for 12 years or longer to earn his or her medical degree and you are saying what you will and won't do.

Well God is Almighty, the creator of Heaven and Earth, the doctors, you and me and everything that we see that is great, so His Written Word will Stand forever. You can twist and turn if you wish but His Written Word will Stand forever. Amen? Amen!!!

In Bible days God gave certain people the command to observe and write His Word down so we can read the whole Word Of God, not just the part that we find pleasant. We must stop being so unworthy of God's Blessings. It is time for us to do what The Lord Commands us to do. We must clean up the House of God and return to The Lord and worship Him for who He is.

There is nothing quiet about worship.

God knows what we need and all we have to do is study His Word and ask for understanding. The Lord wants us to understand so He will help us to do just that. We need to clean up the Temple and bring The Complete Word of God back just like Josiah did (2 Kings chapter 23). We must renew our Covenant with The Lord.

We must stop being half of a Church

"Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for" (Hebrews 11:1). Praise our Saviour with all of our heart, soul and mind. Praise with that Old Time Religion.

We should speak up and support all whom God calls

I realize that some changes are necessary and should have always been a part of the Church activity and structure. I believe women should have always been allowed to be

preachers and Pastors. God *DOES* call women to preach just as He does men. As a people we should read the entire Bible, ask for understanding and read about, Ruth, Naomi, Esther and Debra. God is the same God that led them to be faithful and speak up and speak out. God uses whom He pleases! He doesn't need our permission, He is God!!! My Pastor is a woman and her anointing is so strong I cannot even put it into Words.

You must come and visit to hear her preach and see for yourself. My Pastor's name is Anitha Jones. Her husband Pastor Tom is a Pastor also. She is real, respectful, honorable, friendly, and on fire for God. She preaches while she teaches, so bring your Bible. Our address is: 445 S. Lansing St., Aurora, CO 80012. You can go to <http://www.forhisglorychurch.com/> to learn what My Pastors and Church family believes. Our Pastors care for their members

We have care groups so that if any one is sick or in need they have a contact person to call or who calls them. I have not experienced anything like this kind of authenticity, Godly worship and support since I left my hometown in Louisiana.

Someone I know who just joined the church and two weeks after she joined she got sick and called the pastor. The pastor called her personally, right away. Now that's a woman of God. That is what you do, support your members when they are sick, injured or hurting and that is what she did.

In order to please God, We as a Church of Christians must get back to the days of old. Days when we visited the sick, fed the hungry, stood up for what was right at all cost. There is an old saying which is, if you don't stand for something, you will fall for anything.

Conclusion

Our country is headed for an unnecessary crisis. There are large numbers of churches closing down, school closing, people being incarcerated in the millions (especially People of Color . . . read *Pharaoh of 2007* on my website . . . click on the links page), more violence and homelessness that there has ever been before.

There is a great threat to God's Church and to His people today. As soon as our children are old enough to understand our words, we must teach them the Word of God, take them to church with us, and live by God's example. We should worship God in front of them, witness, love and teach our children about believing in The Triune God. We must show children how to love others and respect their elders like it was taught when I was a child.

We must turn back the clock to the way we used to worship God. We must renew our confession of Faith in The Lord Jesus, Life, Death and Resurrection and teach our children to do that with us as well.

Let's return to the similarities between the people of olden days. There should be no spiritual wavering. The truth is just the truth. When it comes to an issue such as this today, I refuse to waver between speaking out against an action or inaction let alone keep quiet all together. For I am throughly convinced that either we are for The Lord and His Word and His

ways or we are for the ways of the world (Satan's ways). As for Me I open my mouth and ask God to speak for me and through me.

Pastors and other church leaders, shepherd your sheep. Counsel them with love. Visit them when they are sick, feed them when they are hungry. Support them when they are falsely accused. Don't turn your back on them when they sin, for all sin and fall short of The Glory of God.

Do not allow empty, fake worship to go on in your church any longer. The Lord is worthy of real praise, Total praise. He is the one that's keeping you, your children and other you know and love from harm. Praise him with a grateful heart. We who know God and have a relationship with Him must not allow the things of the world to saturate their relationship with their Creator, Provider, and Deliverer. Today we are given chance after chance, after chance to tell others what thus says The Lord. Please don't hold back because you may be held accountable. What happened God's people? Why have we turned into such a me, me people? What happened to lovers of the Word, lovers of God the Father, Jesus the Son of God and The Holy Spirit - the Comforter and Counselor?

Reference

Dana (1993) *Individualism*.

Tillman, Charles D. (1861-1943). *Give Me that Old Time Religion*.