

“WHOSE CHURCH IS IT, ANYWAY?”

Campmeeting Intro., GGSDA, 7/18/15

INTRO. A. HENRY WRIGHT—At the pastors’ meeting in Texas, before the GC—they had a great speaker. 73 years old. Been a star preacher for 50 years. I was this at 29, Conf. President at 39, Union President at 44 or whatever it was—**then a FOOL at 50. Made a terrible mistake, affair, baby.** Said—Had to be broken down to nothing in order to be built back up again. Slowly found his way back, now pastoring again. Preached a great, great message. **A few days later**—the Church voted NO to letting women be ordained. The Church found room for a man who made a terrible mistake. But no room for godly young women who, all they want, is to pastor people. **What are we supposed to do with that?**

B. One of the preachers was from Texas. Talked about how people from Texas are always bragging about how big their **ranch** is. One guy was bragging about his ranch, then the other guy started—“Well, my ranch is so big, I can start out with my truck before sunrise, and when the sun goes down I still haven’t reached the end of my property.” Other guy says—“**I used to have a truck like that!**” **Here’s the question today—Is the Church more like the huge ranch—fantastic, powerful, something to be totally proud of—or is it more like the beat-up pickup truck?”**

C. A retired pastor—lives close by, wrote an article this week about the vote against women in ministry. Asked—**Does this vote make us PROUD?** Make you feel proud of our Church, proud to tell everybody about it? Wednesday night, we all began to get texts. Twitters. **That’s it. I’m done with the Church.** I had a niece—“I’m out of here.” “Someone else—I’ll still keep going—but just to see my friends.” I did a premarital counseling Friday night back there, guy is not an Adventist—studying with him—asked, “How can they expect to join their church—when they can’t treat women equally?” Sara-May told me, had friends—just hanging on by a thread, waiting to see what our church would do.

D. One of my sons texted me, had been following the vote on Twitter while he was sitting in his Masters Class—“This is why they’re losing my generation.” Spent an hour, til midnight, calling my two sons—didn’t want to lose my two sons. Please don’t leave the Church. Still better than everything else. Fight for justice and equality wherever you are. They have no right to define who you are. We can make the Church whatever we want it HERE, even if they don’t want it back there.

E. DICK WINN—Wrote an article about this many years ago—What to do when you’re disappointed with the Church--**#1—You can STAY.** Stay for your family, stay for your friends—even if you don’t agree with where the Church is going. **#2—You can PRETEND.** Go through the motions, stand up and sit down like everybody else, go through the motions—everybody thinks you’re in, but you’re really out. **#3—You can leave by the BACK DOOR.** Don’t make a big speech. Just sneak out, don’t go back. **#4—Leave by the Front Door.** Own it, stand up, this is wrong, this is not what I signed up for, and stand up and walk down the aisle and walk out. **#5—PICK & CHOOSE what you want.** A la Carte. You don’t have to agree with everything to stay in the Church. Don’t throw out the baby with the bathwater. It’s like a cafeteria buffet line, choose what you like, throw out whatever you don’t like. None of us agree with everything. But we still love Jesus and the Sabbath, still the best picture of God and mission trips and feeding the homeless. **#6—STAY AND WORK TO MAKE IT BETTER.** What I decided, years ago.

F. I don’t think any of you can ever get madder at the Church as I was sometimes, as a young pastor. 1980. 1985. The Church fighting over the Investigative Judgment. Asked **Dr. LARRY GERATY**—if there was room in the Church for people like him and me. Said—There’s room for you, room for us. If we leave—then they win. Then the Church becomes them. Legalism. Control. Discrimination. If we leave, then we don’t have to vote. So we stayed, stay and fight, long as they give me a pulpit, little TV program, go around the world speaking—trying to help make the Church what it ought to be.

G. Elder—Had a lady, we elected her an elder at La Sierra, came to the day for the ordination, said she couldn’t do it. Upset at something the church was doing to some of her friends, professors at Walla Walla. Like a witch hunt. I said—Are you happy with the church here? Comfortable with what we believe and stand for here? Yes. We’re not ordaining you for there. For here. Embrace this here. She went ahead with it.

I. WHOSE CHURCH IS IT, ANYWAY? **A.** Peter and all the others thought, the new church members, the Gentiles, had to become Jews in order to become Christians. He’s praying on top of a house, sees the vision about the sheet with all the animals, God says to eat, no, You know I can’t that, unclean, Don’t you call unclean what I call clean. The next minute someone knocks on the door, come preach to our group—all Gentiles, they

all accept Christ, all get filled with the Holy Spirit, all start speaking in tongues. And Peter gets it—he was wrong. Don't have to become a Jew to come to Jesus. Goes back to Jerusalem, tells them the story. **ACTS 10:47** “Can anyone object to their being baptized, now that they have the Holy Spirit just as we did?” **ACTS 15:11** “We believe we are all saved the same way, by the undeserved grace of the Lord Jesus.”

B. Acts—Which direction does the “Church” go? Does it come from Jerusalem out to the pastors and members, or did it go from the pastors and members back to Jerusalem? Where did the change come from? Who got it right first? Where did the Holy Spirit reveal the Truth first? Never starts at the top, never starts at Jerusalem. It starts out in the churches, in the real world, the world changes, the Church has to adjust, answer the new questions—and gradually it works back to them.

C. The Church leaders would like to think—that they are at the Center of the Church, and that everything that happens should come through them, come out from them. They are where Jesus is, at the Center of the Church, and if we want to get close to Jesus, we have to get close to them. No, **they are not the Center of the Church. And, no, you do not have to go through them. Jesus said, MATTHEW 18:20** “Where 2 or 3 are gathered in My Name, there am I in the midst of them.” Wherever Jesus is, that's the Church. We are the Church. And we have as much right to define the Church as they do.

1. **JERRY KRAUSE**—When we were living in Chicago, The Chicago Bulls, world champions 6 times. This was the General Manager. Begin to think—this all had something to do with him. Taking credit, their marketing, the music when the players came out. Somebody had to say to him—No, maybe that has something to do with **Michael Jordan and Scottie Pippen. You are not the Game, They are the Game.**

D. Please understand—the Church leaders are wonderful, good people, godly people, God has called them there, I respect their office, and 99% of the time they are doing exactly what God wants them to do. But they have to understand—**THEY ARE NOT THE GAME! THE CHURCH OUT HERE IS THE GAME.** AND--Change in the Church never starts with them. That's what they want—nobody do anything until they vote it, until they change the policy. No, it never starts with them. It starts with a Martin Luther, with a Joseph Bates, and then slowly it works back to them. The church leaders didn't figure out the world was round and the earth went around the sun. Started with Galileo, finally 100 years later church leaders have to admit it.

E. They would like us to think, that they are the **heart & soul of the Church.** And that we need to get permission from them in order to be the Church, in order to do whatever we are supposed to do. No, they are NOT the heart and soul of the Church. We are the heart & soul of the Church. And they have to get permission from us in order to do what *they* are supposed to do. Our job is not to help them—their job is to help us! They are not the Real Church. They are part of the Church, but that is not the Real Church. This is the Real Church, out here. Their job is to take care of all the legal issues and move money around and print the SS Quarterlies. We need them. But they are not the Real Church. This is the Real Church out here.

F. STARBUCKS. Josh and the people serving the food are the Real Church. The two Naranjo ladies and all the others who did VBS—that's the real church. All those 400 booths, and the kids out in the street.

APPEAL: **A.** And so the message we have for you today is very simple—stay with the Church. Don't judge the Church just by what happens in San Antonio or Washington DC. The Church starts here. We are going to do the best we can to make this Church as close as we can to what God wants it to be, **ACTS 2 Church, a MATTHEW 16:18** “I will build My Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.”

B. I wish the vote had gone the other way. 200 votes short. Someday. I believe it has to happen before Jesus can come, Joel 2 says in the Last Days both young women and young men are going to dream dreams and have visions, world has to hear the whole picture of God, takes men *and women to do that.*

C. But I refuse to leave the Church, I refuse to let them have the whole church, I refuse to lose my vote. As long as the Church still believes in the Bible, and Jesus, and grace, and the Sabbath, and has missions all over the world and the best picture of God—I'm staying. We can live by equality—here. Our Conference is not going to go backwards. Our Union is not going to go backwards.

C. Pastor Sara-May is Elder Ted Wilson's goddaughter, grew up with them. AND maybe next year—**PASTOR SARA-MAY** will get ordained. And she will fly back to Washington DC—and take him out to dinner—and ask him to come. And show him, from the Bible—why God doesn't discriminate. And then his daughters will say to him—Dad, you need to go to this. And he will come. And he will see and hear how God has used her. Filled with the HS. And when it comes time for people to come up, and lay hands on her—he will stand, and walk down the aisle. And, like Peter, he will have to go back to Washington DC—and say—I

was wrong—God is using women. Maybe we should stop fighting God. And one by one, around the world, it will happen. It will go from here to there. I hope it happens in my lifetime. Please don't leave.