

## Why I Left the Methodist Church

By Raymond A. Howard

Like many, or I might say most, I played church for a number of years. I only went because my friends did or it was the right things to do. After I married, my wife is probably the reason I went to begin with (I realized the man is the head of the house, but so many times the woman takes the lead in going to church). She had always gone to the Methodist church, so I went with her (sometimes), then our attendance got more regular and we began to learn of things going on in the Methodist church. The National Council of Churches was the topic of discussion at that time - some were for and some were against - I was against. A group had pulled away a few years back who called themselves "Southern Methodist", and one of these was located in Muscle Shoals. We visited this group and liked what we heard. There was more Bible preached there than we had heard in a while. It was only a short time until one of these churches was located in the Petersburg area of Florence. We thought now we had at last found what we wanted, so we moved our "letter" to Trinity Southern Methodist Church. After making this move I was also baptized by immersion because I was not happy with the sprinkling I got in the United Methodist church.

Things were going just fine until I became a Steward and Trustee. The only reason I can figure that I was made a steward was that I was twenty-one years old, for I was not qualified in any other way! As I continued to study the Bible, I noticed that a man in "authority" must be tried (I Tim. 3:10), but every time we had a new man to come (novice or not) he was made a trustee and a steward. I wondered about this. Then I began to teach the adult class (although I hardly knew what book followed the other in the Bible), I began to think about some other things: (1) I thought my wife and I left the United Methodist because of a man-made organization, and now in the Southern Methodist we had a Conference and had to pay \$5.00 per member per year to belong. I asked why - the answer I got was, "Where else could we get preachers?" I accepted this at the time. (2) Then, as I would talk to members of the church of Christ, they would get me to thinking. They would ask, "Do you take the Lord's Supper every first day of the week?" I would answer, "No, we do not". I asked why - and I was told that it might take some of the importance away from it by doing it so often. I wondered if we prayed every day - or without ceasing - would it cause prayer to become unimportant! (3) In my class I began to teach first and second Timothy, and I wondered where our elders were! I was told that after a man studied for a while and the conference thought he should be one, then he was made one, but the men who were made elders were the preachers. I did not see it that way. We began to try to decide who had the authority. Some said a democratic vote was the way. The preacher said this was true to a certain point, but that he would have the last say. My question, after studying first and second Timothy, was "Why were the elders to be preachers only?"

We had a problem so we had a meeting to settle it and had to call the president of the Conference in. I did not feel he had anything to do with our problem, and I wanted to get out of the conference. This was not popular, so I told them at the meeting that I was going to the church of Christ. A short while later I came to a full understanding of the plan of salvation and the church as it is revealed in the New Testament, and was baptized at the College View church of Christ. I feel if many would study and have an open mind, they would see what God's word has to say, and if they would ask themselves some questions in light of Bible teaching they would soon come to the truth as my wife and I did. Some questions that need to be asked are:

Where in the Bible are those in authority called stewards and trustees?

Where in the Bible does it say that only preachers can be elders?

Where do you find the Conference in the Bible?

Where do you find authority for not eating the Lord's Supper every first day of the week?

Where do you find instrumental music in the New Testament worship? (If you say in the Old Testament, then why aren't we under the whole Law of the Old Covenant and still stone people?)

Where in the Bible do you find sprinkling for baptism?

Where in the Bible do you find infant baptism?

Where in the Bible do you find "formalism" (candles, etc. and robes)?

Can all sing and give praise to God when only the choir sings?

Where in the Bible do you find only the ordained preacher can baptize people?

Where in the Bible do you find authority to use things other than the gospel to teach people what to do to be saved and how to behave afterwards?

Where in the Bible do you find "church ball teams, picnics, the bus ministry, camping trips" and so many other things that so many are engaging in? (And I might add that even some of my brethren are not a wit behind the Methodists in practicing many of these things!)

COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM, FOR WHAT FELLOWSHIP HATH LIGHT WITH DARKNESS?