

# A Word on Wednesday from Pastor Tonia

## "Religion or Relationship?" 1/18/23

*This people honors me with their lips,  
But their heart is far from Me. (Matthew 15:8)*

I've had people tell me they don't go to church because religion is just a bunch of do's and don't's. Did someone tell them that or is that their perception? What did they hear? It's sad, because God came to earth to set us free. Christ fulfilled the law. God invited us into relationship. He doesn't stand over us with a whip. We live according to God's way because it is healthy. It sets a boundary within which we are free to live and to love. It keeps our hearts open between each other and between us and God.

What do we do with religion? How are we church? Is our faith in our hearts or just on our lips? Do we keep the Sabbath? Is Sunday just for sports, either living in it or reliving it? Is church about the color of the walls or the prayers being lifted up? Is it about if the liturgy is spoken or sung, or about the meal received? Is the music for our entertainment or so we can worship God with our souls? Is it about being served or about serving others? Is it a popularity contest or a time to hear from God? Is it about my being in control or my caring for others? Is it a matter of talking the talk or not walking the walk? Is it speaking of religion or being in a relationship?

I don't know. I don't know why some people attend church or why others don't. I just know it is not a part of our culture anymore and I think that's too bad.

Do we walk the walk outside the walls of our church, or just for the hour we're inside the walls? Do we feed the hungry and care for those in need? Are we aware of our call to serve? Have we placed God's word in our hearts? Are we looking to meet God or to have our ego stroked? Do we complain instead of support? Do we keep our good ideas to ourselves or work to make the church vibrant in the community?

Wherever you worship, whichever church you call home, choose to be in relationship with God and with others. Join them in worship and in ministry. Be church together.

What we put into church has a lot to do with what we receive from church. Don't just say with your lips you went to church. Don't let going to church just be a dose of religion to check off your list, like taking your meds each day. Let your place of worship draw you closer to Godself, take it to heart, let it strengthen your relationship with God and with God's people, let it be a vehicle by which you love others.

## **Please pray with me.**

Lord, thank You for Your house where I can come and sit with You. Where I can pray and worship. Where I can hear a message from You. Where I can dine at Your table and be fed the bread and the wine, the body and the blood of Your dear Son, so I will be strengthened for the journey. Thank You that ours is a relationship which sustains me, not just a religion to which I belong.

**Amen**