

# Viewpoint by Victor Knowles



# The Knowlesletter

Celebrating 20 Years (1992 - 2012)

A Monthly Report from Victor & Evelyn Knowles, Founders, Peace on Earth Ministries.  
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## A FALSE DICHOTOMY VS. A TRUE DOCTRINE

When I was a student in Bible College in the 60s I remember Donald G. Hunt telling us that the word *religion* meant “to tie back” or “to bind back.” I just checked Webster and that is still the root definition. Jesus came to tie us back to God. Now Brother Hunt was as conservative as the day is long, and had little time for false or vain religions, but I distinctly remember him saying one day, “If this world is so bad with religion, just think how bad it would be without religion.” I wonder what he would think today of all the talk about how bad the religion of Christianity is and how all that matters is relationship? I hear it nearly every week in churches I visit and I am appalled at the ignorance and even vitriol that is coming from some pulpits. Excuse me, from some stages (pulpits are not in vogue anymore).

Christianity is the religion of Christ. Jesus came to earth to bring us back or tie us back to God. He said He would build His church and He did. The church is the bride of Christ and I am not into bashing the bride. What would you think of me if I badmouthed your wife? What does Jesus think of those who disparage His bride? People who say “I love Jesus but I can’t stand the church” are walking on mighty thin ice. Those who say, “It’s a relationship, not a religion” are likewise on dangerous ground. If religion binds us back to God, what do they want? A Declaration of Independence from God? Freedom to be one’s own god and do one’s own thing? Augustine said, “Sin is believing the lie that you are self-created, self-dependent and self-sustained.” Despising the church is a form of individualism and individualism (idolatry of self) has no part of true Christianity. The church is a body of believers serving God and others, not an individual railing against religion.

In January 2012, a video called “Why I Hate Religion, But Love Jesus” went viral on Facebook. The young man who made it said, in essence, “Jesus came to abolish religion. Then the church came along and re-instituted it, telling people there was a particular way to live in order to be a Christian. Now we need once more to be liberated from the shackles of religion in order to be able to freely worship Jesus.” The word *religion* appears five times in Scripture

but never once is it said that Jesus came to abolish religion. In fact, Jesus plainly said, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill” (Matt 5:17). James 1:27 speaks of a *pure and undefiled religion before God* that involves helping the needy and keeping oneself unspotted from the world. Is that what the critics of the church want to abolish in the name of Jesus? By what authority would they hate or abolish a religion that is pure in the sight of God? As Evelyn pointed out in her column last month (by the way, we both decided to write on this subject unbeknownst to each other), Jesus did not have a problem with religion *per se*; He was concerned about hypocrisy and legalism.

I like what Kevin DeYoung has written. “Jesus was a Jew. He went to services at the synagogue. He observed Jewish holy days. He founded the church. He established church discipline. He instituted a ritual meal. He told His disciples to baptize people and to teach others to obey everything He commanded. He insisted that people believe in Him and believe certain things about Him. If religion is characterized by doctrine, commands, rituals, and structure, then Jesus is not your go-to-guy for hating religion.”

And now a word about *relationship* (which is not found in the Bible). I think I know what the pro-relationship, anti-religion crowd is saying. “It’s all about having a relationship with God.” Is that something new? Give some of us credit for understanding the First and Great Commandment (Matt 22:37-39). “It’s all about having a relationship with Christ.”

Again, we are quite aware of having a vital connection with our Lord (John 15:1-8). But having a relationship with Christ does not mean we are about to sever ourselves from the church that He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28). The religion of Christ binds us back to God. Who would want to sever those ties that bind? Why would they want to sever those ties that bind us to God and to each other?

Religion or relationship? That is a false dichotomy. Pure religion and a Christ-centered relationship? That is a true doctrine.

**“If religion is characterized by doctrine, commands, rituals, and structure, then Jesus is not your go-to-guy for hating religion.”**

## BOB RUSSELL SAYS, “QUIT BASHING GOD’S CHURCH!”



Michael Moore is a rank hypocrite. The radically liberal movie producer made millions of dollars through the American free enterprise system and yet spends his life bad-mouthing American capitalism and greed. It’s perplexing why anyone would be swayed by his sanctimonious propaganda. Yet he influences many who pine for anti-establishment reputations.

Let me just put this bluntly...I feel there are some trendy Christian authors and preachers who are as phony as Michael Moore. They have benefited from the church since childhood, yet now spend their ministries trashing it. In their minds the church has been irrelevant, intolerant, legalistic, racist, hypocritical, judgmental and self-centered. So they attract anti-establishment audiences, sell CD’s and books and demand high speaker’s fees by constantly ridiculing the church.

Now, admittedly, many churches are flawed and some church leaders have really embarrassed the Kingdom of God. Yet rather than working to counter that stereotype, many self-appointed judges find it easier to just bash the church altogether. One critic insists he’s found more authentic fellowship in a commune than a church and frequently apologizes to the world for the attitudes of church people.

Sadly, numerous immature believers have become convinced that yesterday’s church was a total failure and pursue a relationship with Jesus apart from any involvement in a local congregation. It’s hip to say, “I am a spiritual person but I’m not into organized religion.” Or “I don’t go to church – I am the church.” Or “I’m a Christ-follower but I’m not a part of the institutional church.”

Of course the church has been imperfect because it’s made up of human beings like you and me. Yet while the bride of Christ is flawed, thankfully Jesus is perfect. And, if it weren’t for Christ’s church these self-appointed critics wouldn’t know Him, wouldn’t have experienced the joys of salvation and, in many cases, if it weren’t for generous church people they wouldn’t have an income!

In Matthew 16:18 Jesus told His disciples, “Upon this rock (the truth that He was the Messiah) I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” Jesus did intend to build a church – a church so powerful that even

death and hell couldn’t stop it! A church so permanent that in spite of vicious external attacks and inept internal mismanagement it would survive and thrive.

When Jesus talked about building a church he wasn’t just referring to a universal, invisible body of followers. The Greek word, “*Ecclesia*” which means, “called out ones,” is used over a hundred times in the New Testament; and ninety percent of the time it refers to a local congregation.

The New Testament church was structured enough that it had elders who were assigned to oversee it and teachers who were to edify it. The church was organized enough that when one member suffered the others were to suffer with it. It was visible enough that when one member strayed the others were to hold that member accountable. It was systematic enough that they weren’t to forsake the regular assembling of themselves together.

I’m old enough to remember some of the spiritual giants of the church for the past two generations and, in my opinion, most of the contemporary critics aren’t worthy of untying their shoes! Many local congregations in the past made invaluable contributions to their communities, faithfully honoring Jesus Christ in their ministries.

Did you know that 106 of the first 108 colleges established in America were established by the church? Do you know who was responsible for building most of the hospitals in our country? Not the atheist society but the church.

The church has funded most of the inner city missions,



**(Traveling spiritual “Route 66” with Victor in his 66th year of life)**

**MAR 21-24**

Tulsa Workshop  
Tulsa, OK

**APRIL 13-14**

Men’s Retreat  
West Central Christian Camp  
LaMonte, MO

**APRIL 15**

Northland Christian Church  
Kansas City, MO

**MAY 1-4**

Bible Lectures  
Pepperdine University  
Malibu, CA

**JUN 23-24**

All-School Goldfield  
High School Reunion  
Goldfield, IA

**JUN 25**

Park Church of Christ  
Goldfield, IA

**JUN 29 – JUL 1**

Midwestern Heritage  
Homecoming II, Ottumwa, IA

**JUL 10-13**

North American  
Christian Convention  
Orlando, FL

**JUL 15**

First Christian Church  
Winter Park, FL



food pantries, prison ministries, orphanages and homes for the elderly. Over the past thirty years churches have established scores of crisis pregnancy centers and saved thousands of unborn lives and tenderly ministered to unwed mothers.

When Hurricane Katrina ripped through the Gulf coast, Christians from scores of churches were the first on the scene and the last to leave – all the while scraping no money off the top for themselves. And guess who is still in Haiti assisting in the clean-up after the devastating earthquake two years ago? You got it – the church.

Sure, local churches could do much better but let it be said that because of local church ministries millions have been saved for eternity, countless families have been solidified, teens kept off drugs and suicides prevented. Hurting, grieving people have been comforted and weak souls strengthened by the weekly preaching of God's word in little-known churches across the land. The church has sent thousands of missionaries around the globe who combat AIDS and improve living conditions while still bringing the hope of the gospel to third world countries.

So let's be perceptive enough not to be influenced by the anti-church rhetoric of our day. Let's give thanks to God for the faithfulness of church leaders who led us to the Lord and taught us God's Word. Let's appreciate our heritage and build upon the foundation of the past and be determined to make the church of tomorrow an even more effective representative of Christ on earth. Let's imitate Jesus who loved the church and gave Himself up for it and rejoice that the gates of Hades will not overcome God's church.

*Please see Bob Russell's blog at [www.bobrussell.org](http://www.bobrussell.org); Copyright 2012 Bob Russell Ministries (Louisville, KY). Used by permission. Russell is the Retired Senior Minister of Southeast Christian Church. Additional books and materials are available through the Living Word Ministry ([www.livingword.org](http://www.livingword.org)).*

## POEM BOARD MEETS

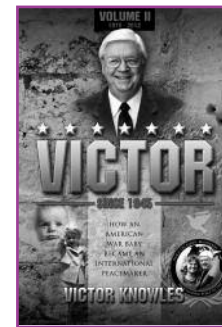
The directors of Peace on Earth Ministries had their annual board meeting on January 30. Present were **John P. Brown, Gary L. Bryant, John M. Hunter, Boyce Mouton, and Mareese Robbins**. Hunter replaced **David O'Grady** who stepped down last year. We spent a rich time together in Scripture and prayer before looking at the Annual Report, discussing the future, and approving the budget for 2012. *One Body*, the flagship publication of POEM, will unveil its special Centennial issue in July at the NACC in Orlando, Florida. A special Appreciation Banquet, recognizing POEM's 20th Anniversary Year, will be held October 1 at Ozark Christian College. I'm so thankful for the candid direction, wise advice, and godly counsel that the directors give this ministry.

## TEACHING AT TULSA

It's always a joy to be at the Tulsa Workshop and visit with hundreds of people who come by the exhibit for *One Body*

magazine. It only doubles my joy when I'm invited to teach at this well attended event. This year I've been asked to teach two workshops. The first is "Cords That Are Broken: The Crushing Load of Islam." Millions of Muslims are saddled with guilt, don't know there is a God who loves them, have no concept of grace, and possess no assurance of salvation. This class will be a candid look at what the religion of Islam has done to its adherents. The second workshop will be "Touched by a Loving Heart: The Lifting Power of Love." "Cords that are broken will vibrate once more!" Practical suggestions on sharing the power of Christ's love with those that are held in sway by Islam's love of power. These back-to-back workshops will be taught at 9 and 10 a.m. on Friday, March 23 in Expo 3. I hope to see some of you in Tulsa March 21-24.

## VOLUME 2 OF "VICTOR" GOES TO PRESS



"A desire accomplished is sweet to the soul" (Proverbs 13:19). I'm happy to report that Volume 2 of *VICTOR* has been sent to the printer right on schedule. The 500+page book should be ready sometime in April and will be officially released at the Pepperdine University Bible Lectures in May. Volume 2 (1978-2010) contains 12 chapters: "Expanding Our Borders," "Filling God's House," "The Great Adventure," "A Place to Call Home," "Between Two Worlds," "A Ministry is Born," "Life in the 'Naughties,'" "Editorially Speaking," "The Peacemaker," "The Message Glorious," "Speaking Frankly," and "Just My Type." An Epilogue ("If I Had Life to Live Over"), a Timeline and a Picture Section round out the book. **Jerry Rushford** is writing the Foreword for Volume 2. The price is yet to be determined but will be announced on our Website at [www.poeministries.org](http://www.poeministries.org) and on POEM's Facebook page.

## SONGS FROM MY YOUTH

"EVERY MOMENT OF EVERY DAY"  
*Only to be what He wants me to be, Ev'ry moment of ev'ry day;*  
*Yielded completely to Jesus alone, Ev'ry step of this pilgrim way;*  
*Just to be clay in the Potter's hands,*  
*Ready to do what His word commands,*  
*Only to be what He wants me to be, Ev'ry moment of ev'ry day.*  
 (Norman J. Clayton)

## "AT HOME"

**Anna Wilson**, 94, godly wife of the late **Seth Wilson**, mother of 10 children, went home to be with Christ in February. We always enjoyed seeing Anna at church activities in Joplin. She always had a smile and a kind word for everyone she met. What a legacy of faith, labor, and love she has left for her family and the family of God at large.

We also extend our condolences to **Linda Gehrig** in the recent passing of her husband **Dr. Harold Gehrig**, Greenville, IL. Dr. Gehrig was a strong advocate for Christian unity.

## "OCCUPY TILL I COME!"

The much ballyhooed "Occupy" movement has dominated the headlines as of late. But there is a spiritual "Occupy Movement" that demands our participation. Jesus said, "Occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13 KJV). "Occupy" means "to busy oneself." Here at POEM we are keeping busy in the work of the Lord...I will be teaching the Homebuilders Class at Fairview Christian Church in Carthage during the month of March...There are about 40 house churches in Cuba that are keeping busy; 93 baptisms since last report. The Cuba Bible Institute is training leaders, and **Mario Medina** has started a new prison ministry...**Kostek Jakoniuk** is keeping busy in "village evangelism" in Poland...A new furnace was installed in the church in Bielsk Podlaski, Poland, keeping worshipers a little warmer...It was just in the nick of time for a blast of Siberian air has claimed 163 lives in Eastern and Central Europe...Ukraine is the hardest hit with 101 dead and 29 are dead in Poland...Thousands are homeless in Ukraine...**Kazik Barchuk** keeps busy with teaching and evangelistic trips to Russia and Israel, reaching out to Jewish people, young and old, with the gospel of Christ...**Evelyn** keeps busy with her volunteer work at Life Choices and faithfully keeps a prayer log of the requests you send us...I have started work on a new book. The tentative title is *Called Out: The Case for the Church*...As the old hymn says, "There is much to do, there's work on every hand. Hark! The cry for help comes ringing through the land." Your gifts to POEM will help us and others fulfill Christ's mandate to "occupy till I come!"

## NOW YOU'RE TALKING!

I still have fond memories of your dear old father. He was a great encouragement to me when I was a young preacher in Iowa. Use this gift for the work in Poland and/or for tornado relief for the brethren in Joplin. **Lloyd & Liza Jones, Winchester, KY** • I'm increasing my giving to POEM. I'm enjoying your book *VICTOR*. Many things you did and liked were some of what Dick and I liked also. **Pat Torrey, Culver, OR** • I do so enjoy reading both *The Knowlesletter* and *One Body*. Thank you for all that you do for the kingdom of God. **Joyce Stock, High Hill, MO** • Evelyn, I so enjoyed your article about going to sleep while praying ("Falling Asleep in the Arms of God"). God bless you in all your endeavors. **Helen Sloan, Bloomfield, IA** • God bless you as you continue to "press the battle!" **Earl & Shirley Chambers, Greenwood, CA** • Evelyn's column is really well thought out. The quote by Washington is so appropriate for the age in which we live. **Sandra Naugle, Sellersburg, IN**

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY!** March 10 is **Evelyn's** birthday! She shares that date with our office manager **Linda Kinney**. If my mother were still living March 14 would be her 90th birthday!

## BAMBOOZLED!

by Evelyn Knowles



I learned something last summer from the stand of bamboo growing in our back yard. As the new shoots came up in the spring, I immediately started thinning out the old ones that were looking spent and straggly. They had had their day! Clearing them out would make room for the new ones to grow and thrive. Or so I thought!

What I *didn't* know was that bamboo grows up fairly tall before it is seasoned and strong enough to stand on its own. While it did indeed have some height, it was still very tender. Sadly, the young stems caved under the strong winds and driving rain. Some stems completely snapped in two while other simply bowed to the elements and were never able to stand erect again. If only I had realized that those new baby shoots of bamboo needed the older, mature bamboo to lean on for support as they grew.

So it is in the family of God — the church. Those who mingle and grow in Christ together, lean on and/or support one another. Those with differences need each other for the sake of the body of Christ. "From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Eph 4:16).

Question. Is it really in the best interest of the family of God to compartmentalize by age groups? If when we come together the older ones are always doing their own thing, the young marrieds are doing their own thing, the teens their thing, and the little ones theirs, how is that being "joined and held together by every supporting ligament?" I need to learn from your faith, but I barely know you. The tender shoots (children) could so benefit from the godly, aged saints. The older Christians could be greatly encouraged by the vision and exuberance of the young. Just like the young bamboo shoots freshen and enhance the older bamboo canes.

I love the church. What a dark world it would be without it. Orderliness is a biblical principle but I wonder if too much structure is crippling the body, making the church a dysfunctional family? Have we been bamboozled?

## SPEAK OUT!

First they came for the communists, and I did not speak out— because I was not a communist;  
 Then they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out— because I was not a socialist;  
 Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out— because I was not a trade unionist;  
 Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out— because I was not a Jew;  
 Then they came for me— and there was no one left to speak out for me.

- Martin Niemoller, prisoner at Dachau 1941-1945