

Structure or Stricture?

Arthur Barry

Structure: *a. Something (as a building) that is constructed b: Something arranged in a definite pattern of organization*

Stricture: *A restraint, limit, or restriction.*

Here are two words that look almost identical, and can seem to be very close in meaning, or very far apart, depending on one's attitude. One of the arguments we hear when we are sharing our faith sounds like this, "I don't need organized religion. I just worship God in my own way." What does that mean?

"Organized religion" is a term by which people refer to church. The idea is that if there is such a thing as "organized religion" then there must be a "non-organized" religion. If we accept that proposition, then it must be OK to belong to non-organized religion. So, you and I may see the church as providing valuable structure (organization) to our lives, but another person may see it as enforcing unnecessary strictures (limits) on his or her life. In other words, how can Jesus promise to set us free if He demands that we belong to His church?

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Matthew 16:18.

To me Jesus is talking about a valuable structure, but to many people He is talking about a restrictive meddling group of people.

Psychologists tell us that structure is necessary, and by that they mean that we need to have boundaries or limits. This idea of establishing boundaries in behavior definitely applies to children. Not all children feel like going to school, but we actually have laws that say they must go. A regular daily schedule, established times for eating, going to bed, etc., makes a child feel secure. How about adults? Well, most of us prefer to live in houses than to roam the streets, and when we go to bed, we like to have a bed to get into instead of just lying down anywhere on the floor. When we drive, we usually prefer to stay within the confines of the road rather than to just let the car go where it wants to. We choose law and order and structure for the most part because if society and our lives were not controlled there would be chaos. Unfortunately, when it comes to religion, particularly Christianity, many people adopt a different approach.

Freedom in Christ is freedom from sin and death (Romans 8:2). However, many prefer to be free *to* sin rather than be free *from* sin.

One of the cultural clashes that is going on in this country right now is the debate over whether society is better off with more government or less government. Some believe that freedom is eroded by more government whereas others believe that freedom is protected by more government. It is sad that most people tend to spend lots of time thinking about how to live their physical lives yet seem to arrive at a belief system that impacts their spiritual lives without giving it much thought.

What do you think? Is church structure or stricture – or both?



That meets at 701 South Wilbur, Sayre, PA 18840

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March 20, 2022

WELCOME!

Sunday

Bible Class- 9:30 a.m.

Worship- 10:30 a.m.

Wednesday

Bible Study-6:30 p.m.

All the churches of Christ greet you.

Romans 16:16

Today's Sermon: LORD

Paul will be preaching this morning.

Scripture Reading: Acts 22:1-16

Sermons are recorded and are available for listening on the church website.

Bulletins are archived on the website.

valleycitieschurchofchrist.org

Find us on Facebook:

www.facebook.com/valleycitiescoc

Headphones are available for the hearing impaired.

ANNOUNCEMENTS / UPCOMING EVENTS...

- ❖ **Sunday Morning Bible Class:** Paul will be continuing his lessons on the **Psalms** and stopping to sing a song from our songbook when appropriate.
- ❖ **Wednesday Evening Bible Class:** March 23rd, on Zoom, 6:30pm- Arthur will be continuing the study of Hebrews that we began last week.
- ❖ **Next Potluck and Bring-a-Friend Sunday April 24th.**
- ❖ **Ladies' Class on Tuesday, March 22nd, on Zoom.** We will meet at 10am. We will study the words of the Apostle Peter, using the study book **Living Stones by Casandra Martin. Lesson 7, Day 3.**
- ❖ **Next 5th Sunday Singing- May 29th, here at Valley Cities.**



MAGI BOX NEEDS:

Keep checking the list in the front foyer on the bulletin board. We can still use some tubes of toothpaste, underwear sized for ages 5-7, boys' shorts, 5 more dresses...

SIX WEEKS TO GO

Today, there will be a special contribution for Christians in Ukraine for rescue efforts, relocation, generators, and supplies.

Please plan to stay for our fellowship potluck meal today following worship. There is always plenty to go around. Our theme today is **SPRING!**

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TODAY TO AMY!

PRAYERS

- **Please continue to pray for our brother Jerry Lowe.** He is home with his son Greg now after a stay in the hospital. He has lost a lot of weight. Jerry would like to find a church local to where he is staying where he can get a ride to worship.
- **Please continue to pray for Arthur, as it seems there is still some cause for concern about the cancer.** His next visit with the surgeon will be on the 30th by phone.
- **Dawn is recovering from her bout with Covid but may not be able to be with us yet today.**
- **Dan Myers** had a lung scan over a week ago. He is still waiting for a diagnosis, which depends on the condition of the mass in his lung.
- Please pray for **Pat Guthrie** because his chemo treatments for lung cancer are becoming hard to bear.
- Please pray for **Deb Barnhardt**, a former colleague of Paul's, as she has lung cancer.
- Pray for:
 - **Linnett Short** (lung cancer, tumor on liver) she is on immunotherapy.
 - **Gail Westerhold** (problems with remaining kidney)
 - **Zachary Cowles** (deployment with the Army)
 - **Steve Noble** (needs lung transplant)
 - **Arthur's brother Chris** in England (Alzheimer's) Pray that Arthur and his sisters will be able to visit Chris this year.
 - **Darlene's friend Connie** (stage 4 lung cancer) Her cancer has spread to other organs in her body.
 - **Jim Sexton** (esophageal cancer)

If you have any PRAYERS or NEWS that you would like included in the bulletin, please contact Sandy at barncat7237@gmail.com or text or call (607) 261-0911.