

# Three Arrows in Satan's Quiver

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	3
Arrow # 1 - The Offensive Words of Others .....	3
Arrow # 2 - The Victim Complex .....	7
Arrow # 3 - The Spectator Mentality .....	10
Conclusion: .....	13



## Introduction

I was recently in a gathering of people. Many of those who name the name of Christ were there from many churches. It was, in some ways, like a reunion because some of those in attendance had attended this church in the past. Yet, unlike other reunions of friends and family, I did not walk away encouraged and refreshed from the reunion, because some of those people who were once so much a part of this or some other church, are not in church at all now, and that depressed me.

People in such a state should expect Christians to ask, "why?" For it is not a normal state for a Christian to be out of church. Unless God hinders them via health or some similar issue, GOOD CHRISTIANS GO TO CHURCH. For a Christian to say they can be a good follower of Christ and not attend church is like a football player saying he can play the game well without a football, or a doctor saying he can heal people even though he never darkens the door of the hospital. It is ridiculous. But it is also sadly common.

I am, therefore, constantly pondering on why people who name the name of Christ leave churches. I believe I've got it narrowed down to a set of common reasons that are usually provided - three main issues, which I would like to call Three Arrows in Satan's Quiver.

DISCUSSION - Before I share the Three Arrows from Satan's Quiver, though, let's talk about it. If you could list the top 3 reasons why people leave churches, what would they be? (list on whiteboard)

Here is my list:

1. They were offended by something somebody said.
2. They were hurt by something bad that happened in their life, and they just can't get over it. Often this is something in the past, maybe the distant past, which colors every part of their life from then on.
3. They did not get what they wanted from the church. This one is usually stated as, "I just wasn't being fed," or "My needs were not met," or something similar.

DISCUSSION - Do you agree or disagree with my list? (Compare it to the list they previously provided - show how most of their answers which seem different can be lumped into these three main categories.)

I've thought about this some, and am convinced that these three excuses are responsible for many empty churches today, either by getting us to leave our church, or perhaps more ominously, by influencing our children to grow away from Christianity. As our kids reach their teenage years and adulthood, and as they watch how mom and dad respond to Satan's arrows, they respond in kind! How we react to the offenses of others teaches our children far more about our faith than anything we could ever say to them.

Meditating even further on the subject, I believe we can make a case for these three excuses being the cause of many marital problems. Marriages are often in disarray, and when the two parties at odds are questioned, the reason is often "something he / she said that I just can't get over," "he / she hurt me and I just can't get over it," "my needs are just not being met." Right?

These three excuses are Three Arrows in Satan's Quiver. If we can dull the points on those arrows, we can take away three of his choicest weapons - weapons he fully intends to use on you.

## Arrow # 1 - The Offensive Words of Others

Here is a piece of news: people are going to say mean things about you and to you. Not just once or twice, but probably quite a few times during your walk on this earth. And your children watch how you respond, and learn from it, everytime it happens.

Don't bother telling them later on that they should respond differently. Don't bother telling them to do as you say rather than as you do. They will learn from what you do. So, how do you respond when others verbally abuse and offend you? We need to learn to deal with the speech of others, and not be offended everytime somebody says something we don't like, disagree with, or that hurts us.

Solomon gave wonderful advice along these lines in *Ecclesiastes 7:20-22* - *For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not. Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee: For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.*" There are some wonderful concepts that Solomon shared in this passage, and properly understood, they can really help us when we are dealing with the offensive speech of others.

DISCUSSION - What do you see in this passage that can help you the next time somebody says something that is hurtful or offensive?

Consider these concepts:

1. EVERYBODY SINS ("*For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.*" (vs. 20)). (And that includes you.)

Plenty of other scripture comes to mind, teaching the same thing. (HAVE CLASS MEMBERS READ: *Romans 3:10-12, 23; Isaiah 64:6-7*)

It is ridiculous for us to cry out to God for salvation, recognizing our own inability to live righteously all the time, and yet deny that the same frailty exists in those around us. CUT PEOPLE SOME SLACK. THEY ARE SINNERS, JUST LIKE YOU, no better and no worse.

2. You shouldn't pay attention to things people say. "*Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee.*" (vs. 21)

DISCUSSION - This is simple advice, but putting it into practice is the very thing that we struggle with. What are some ways we can do this? How do we learn and practice the art of "not paying attention" to offensive words from others?

Just the other day I heard a popular preacher speaking on this subject. He used a wonderful illustration about how we should handle nasty things that happen to us, or nasty things people say about us. He said we need to learn to change the channel. Just as we are able to skip right by something on television if it bothers us or offends us, we should practice the same thing with people's words to us. Change the channel. Move on to something else. We are not offended by things on TV that we don't want to watch, we just move on by! But if a Christian says something we don't like, we turn on the VCR, record it and put it into an infinite loop so it plays over and over and over and over in our minds. We dwell on it. CHANGE THE CHANNEL! We need to not dwell on things other people say! "*Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken...*" (vs. 21)

Do you remember the old LP records? Some people still collect them and testify vehemently that they prefer the sound of vinyl to the digitized tunes of this modern era. Beth and I have a few old records, ourselves, and once in a while we take one out, lay it gently on the turntable, drop the needle into the groove, and listen to sounds of the past. Well, those LP records had a habit of getting stuck. Remember that? You'd be listening along, tapping your foot to the strains of your song, when a phrase would just start repeating... over and over and over and over, until you walked over to the turntable and moved the needle out of that groove. "Amazing grace, zing grace, zing grace, zing grace, zing grace..." My friends, sometimes we need to move the needle - we need to break out of that loop - and quit listening to that repeating phrase. We need to not dwell on things other people say. "... *take no heed unto all words that are spoken...*" (vs. 21)

When people say nasty things to you, don't dwell on it Christian. Change the channel, move the needle, do something to get past it, but do not dwell on the negative things said! "... take no heed unto all words that are spoken.... " (vs. 21) I would suggest, Christian, that when you dwell on the negative things others say, you are guilty of what Howard Hendrix called "stinkin thinkin." It will tear you up. It will hurt you. And, get this, it is sinful. "... take no heed unto all words that are spoken... " (vs. 21)

3. And here's the convicting part - you say things, yourself, that you should not. Solomon says it like this, "*For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.*" (vs. 22) Do you dare deny the truth of Solomon's words here? I certainly cannot. There are many things I've said, whether in anger, emotion, ignorance of the facts, or just plain meanness, that I wish I could take back. But words can never be taken back. And if I am guilty of saying things that should not be said, how in the world can I be upset with somebody else for doing the same?

QUOTE "Since you have many offensive words to be forgiven, do not keep strict accounts of others' offensive words against you." (John MacArthur - MacArthur Study Bible)

I guess it all boils down to forgiveness, doesn't it? I forgive others because Christ has forgiven me so much. I am able to change the channel and ignore the unkind or offensive words aimed my way, because I know I have the done the same, and my Savior forgave me without hesitation. And when those unkind words come my way over and over, I must forgive, over and over. Jesus explained this concept to Peter in *Matthew 18:21-22* - *Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.*

This was kind of a difficult requirement. Perhaps the look on Peter's face prompted Christ to explain more fully, for He proceeded to tell a story that illustrated the importance of forgiveness. *Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took [him] by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. (Matthew 18:21-30)*

Too many of us are like that unjust steward. We have been forgiven so much, an impossible debt. Yet when somebody wrongs us in a small or trivial way, we forget all we've been forgiven, and refuse to forgive them. These things ought not so to be. We need to forgive. We need to remember the words of Solomon, "*For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.*" (vs. 22) We need to forgive much, for WE HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN MUCH!

Oh, and if that's not enough to convict us, here's another convicting thought to ponder. The Bible says that people who take offense easily are usually that way because of a lack of the Word of God in their lives. The psalmist said, *Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them. Psalm 119:165* So, if we are offended by what others say, are we telegraphing to the world that we are not reading or internalizing our Bibles?

So, what was said that offended you?

Did somebody say something mean about you, personally?

Forgive them. Change the channel. Run right back to them and be their friend. But most of all, refuse to dwell on the negative comment.

Did somebody say something mean about a family member?

Wow, this is far worse. If you insult my beautiful wife to her face, she will probably smile meekly back at you, maybe mumble some sort of apology, and drift away to nurse her wounds in private. But God help you if you insult me or one of our children to her face. To quote the advertising campaign of the US Army, she will become an "army of one" and you will hurt for a long long long time.

But that's not right, either, is it? We need to let go of things people say, whether they say them about us or about those we love.

Did the preacher preach something you disagree with?

It is interesting how many people can sit and shout AMEN to month after month of a man's teaching, and then one day he says one little thing that they disagree with, and suddenly he is a heretic.

Quit being so pious. We Baptists are ridiculous about this kind of thing. No student of the Bible worth his / her salt is ever going to be right all the time. People make mistakes. Preachers make mistakes. And sometimes, as they get some years under them, and continue to study their Bibles, they might even (gasp) change their positions on things as they learn more of the Word.

If you are offended, let it drive you into the Word in study, but don't let it drive you away from church. Satan wants to use doctrine to divide us, but Christ wants it to unite us. Don't let Satan get his way. If you don't understand something, study it. If you don't agree with something, that's ok. But don't be offended. Keep listening, and you'll hear things you agree with far more than things you disagree with. Concentrate on those things, and keep listening. After all, if you ever try to share your faith or teach what you believe to others, you'll be guilty of error from time to time, too.

DISCUSSION - I have emphasized how this arrow of Satan impacts our church attendance, and our walk with God, and I've given some illustrations of that. However, in our introduction we noted that this can also drive husbands and wives apart. What are some examples of offensive speech patterns that tear marriages apart? And do the words of Solomon help us in dealing with such offenses and keeping our marriages on track?

*Ecclesiastes 7:20-22 - For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not. Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee: For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others."*

There is a thought provoking illustration that sums all this up for us in a neat little package. King David was going through a very difficult time. His rotten son Absalom had initiated a nasty coup and wrenched the kingdom from his own father. David was forced to flee for his life from his own son. As David fled, a man named Shimei who had some axe to grind with David suddenly appeared and began to heap verbal abuse on his head. One of David's men offered to go over and remove the offender's head from his shoulders, but David said something interesting. (READ - 2 Samuel 16:5-10) Notice what David said. He said, in effect, "Perhaps God told him to say that." Now, I don't know if God told the little creep to say mean things to David or not, but I do know that David showed forgiveness and charity there. We need to respond the same way when others say unkind things to us.

In so doing, we blunt one of Satan's most powerful arrows. He loses one of his prime weapons in knocking you and I out of church. He loses one of his most potent means

of pulling husbands and wives apart, and he loses a powerful tool that he often uses to disillusion children from Christian homes.

## Arrow # 2 - The Victim Complex

**Note:** DISCUSSION - Satan's first arrow, the offensive words of others, explains why many people leave churches. It also explains why many homes break up, and why many people are turned off to the claims of Christ. We learned how to deal with the words of others, but before we move into this second arrow of our adversary, let's take a minute or two to think about how OUR words affect others. If the offensive words of others are so powerfully used by Satan to hurt us, how are our words used to hurt others? What can you and I do to ensure our words are not used by Satan to hurt others in our church? What can we do as couples to ensure Satan does not use the words we say to each other to drive a wedge into our marriages and break them apart?

How do these verses apply? Would application of these verses in our churches and homes ward off Satan's arrow? How? - *Ephesians 5:1-4; Proverbs 17:27-28; Ephesians 4:29*

Our churches are filled with people who have experienced bad things in their past. Sometimes these experiences are the result of personal sin in their lives, and they then live with the shame of that sin until Christ calls them home. Sometimes these experiences are the result of sin in somebody else's life, such as when a husband or wife is hurt by the actions of their spouse, and live with that experience. Sometimes it is not sin at all, but rather God working through the temporary pain and suffering of an individual to bring glory to Himself. (cf. *And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. (Johns 9:1-3)*)

DISCUSSION - Should any of these things in our past color our lives in the present? Why / why not?

DISCUSSION - Is there anything that happened in the past that is a reason for leaving a church?

DISCUSSION - Is there anything that happened in the past that is a reason for leaving a marriage?

We are NOT VICTIMS OF OUR PAST. No matter what has happened, we can rise above it. The Bible is filled with people who suffered from sinful failure, either in their own walk with God, or that of others', and they continued to serve God.

DISCUSSION - Consider the story of Joseph's imprisonment (cf. *Genesis 39-41*), and how he dealt with it. What was the reason for the bad things in his past? Do we learn anything from him that helps us be victorious over the failures and difficulties in our pasts?

**Note:** (For each of the following Bible illustrations, poll the class for details of the story, and then discuss how that person dealt with bad things in their past. Try and determine if there is anything we can learn from them that will help us deal with issues in our past.)

DISCUSSION - How about Job's disasters? (cf. *entire book of Job*). Do we learn anything from him that helps us be victorious over the failures and difficulties in our pasts?

DISCUSSION - How about David? After his tryst with Bathsheba his life turned into a seeming disaster. His son turned against him and tried to take his kingdom. He lost a child that he loved. He seemingly suffered from the results of that one moment of passion with Bathsheba for the rest of his life. But was he a VICTIM from that point on or a VICTOR? Do we learn anything from him that helps us be victorious over the failures and difficulties in our pasts?

Paul said, *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.* (2 Corinthians 4:8-10)

There are many many many others in the Bible who experienced great problems in the past, but overcame them and lived a victorious life rather than a life of defeat. THAT IS OUR MODEL. We are Christians, indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, filled with His very Presence! We know that the end of the story is total and complete victory! How then can we allow ourselves to be defeated by some trivial thing that has happened in the past?

And yet many leave churches for that very reason - they were hurt in the past, and they just can't get over it. And many leave marriages and enter into divorce because of something that has happened in the past. "He hurt me..." "She should never have done that..." My brothers and sisters, these things ought not to be. We need to be VICTORS not VICTIMS! Satan is laughing as he flings this arrow at you and I!

ILLUS - Vernon Grounds told of an incident that happened while he was in seminary. Since the school had no gymnasium, he and his friends played basket ball in a nearby public school. Nearby, an elderly janitor waited patiently until the seminarians finished playing. Invariably he sat there reading his Bible. Vernon recalled how one day one of his friends asked this man what he was reading." The man answered, "The book of Revelation." Surprised, the friend asked if he understood it. "Oh, yes," the man assured him. "I understand it." "What does it mean?" Quietly the janitor answered, "It means that Jesus is gonna win." (Source unknown)

Christians! That is how you and I should view things! Jesus is gonna win! (As a matter of fact, He has already won.)

ILLUS - Lyle Arakaki of Honolulu, Hawaii tells the following story about himself. "In Hawaii, because of the time difference with the continental U.S., the National Football League Monday night football game is played in mid-afternoon; so the local TV station delays its telecast till 6:30 in the evening. When my favorite team plays, I'm too excited to wait for television, so I'll listen to the game on the radio, which broadcasts it live. Then, because they are my favorite team, I'll watch the game on television too. If I know my team has won the game, it influences how I watch it on television. If my team fumbles the ball or throws an interception, it's not a problem. I just think, 'That's bad, but it's okay. In the end, we'll win.'"

What an illustration. We can view failures as temporary set backs, but we already know the ending! WE WIN! We are victors, so why act like victims?

QUOTE - "Grief is the agony of an instant; the indulgence of grief the blunder of a life." - Benjamin Disraeli

And yet, so many believers indulge their grief and their pain and let it color their lives from that moment on. What a mistake! We are VICTORS, not VICTIMS, as Satan would have you to believe.

And so, what is the pain, the suffering, the sin, the hurt that infects your life? What failure occurred in the past that has you thinking about leaving your church, your Christian friends, maybe even your soul mate? Whatever it is, you do not have to be a victim to it.

ILLUS - Most of us know Babe Ruth set a record with 714 home runs in his baseball career. But few remember he struck out 1,330 times on the way to that record. Most people know Jonas Salk discovered the polio vaccine, but few realize he had to fail two hundred times before he found the right one. Nearly everyone who watches professional basketball agrees Michael Jordan is one of the greatest players of all time. But most people don't realize he failed to make the basketball team his sophomore year in high school. He didn't quit playing because of one failure. Henry Ford went bankrupt five times before he finally succeeded. Thomas Edison failed over ten thousand times in his attempts to find the correct filament for the light bulb. When an aide urged him to quit after several hundred failures, he replied, "Why quit now?"

We know of at least a hundred things that won't work." Learning from our failures is part of the process of being successful. None of these people could have accomplished what they did if they had listened to the fear of failure. (Kent Crockett, The 911 Handbook, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003, 69)

DISCUSSION - It all sounds so good. But how do we really do it? How do you and I turn a blind eye to the pain that screams so loudly from past experiences? What can we DO to practice our role as VICTOR rather than wallow like VICTIMS? How do we ward off this arrow of Satan?

Here are some suggestions which may help. Feel free to discuss them. Also, feel free to add to the list.

1. Sometimes, failing and sin in our past limits our service in the present. For example, *1 Timothy 3* lists qualifications for pastors, and indicates that if there is something in their past, they should no longer be considered qualified for that office. However, that does NOT mean that a person can do NOTHING or is justified in doing NOTHING because they feel bad about their past. The formula for victory is simple - If you can no longer do what you did before, DO WHAT YOU CAN!

ILLUS - David. READ - *1 Chronicles 22:1-11*. Note especially David's response when God said, "No, you cannot build the temple, for something in your past prohibits you doing that for Me" - *And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for the LORD must be exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death. (1 Chronicles 22:5)*

2. If the sin or failure in your past does not prohibit your serving God, then "Keep on keeping on." Whatever it is you did before, keep doing it. Just because you don't FEEL like doing it, doesn't mean you should stop doing it. Feelings follow obedience. Failure and defeat will come. You are not perfect. Be ready to get up again and keep on going.

ILLUS - When I was younger I had a good friend who loved to ride motorcycles. And he was excellent with them. I asked him once how he got to be so adept at maneuvering his bike. He said that he had spent time practicing how to crash. He would take his little dirt bike behind his house, in a nice soft grassy field, and crash it. He attributed his skill to that. And there came a day when a real crash came into his life. A large dog ran out in front of him, and because he knew how to handle the crash, he walked away - torn to pieces, but alive, and with no major injuries. He knew how to get up after a crash. We Christians need to learn how to get up after a crash. They happen. And too often they ruin us for the rest of our walk on this earth. If Christ is done with you after a crash, He'll call you home. If you're still here, then He wants more from you. Get back on the bike.

When the day is dark and gloomy  
And the fog obscures your view,  
And you feel there is no challenge  
Waiting anywhere for you;  
When it's routine you must follow  
Through a dreary weather chart,  
And you feel the hand of duty  
Like a millstone on your heart;  
Face the skies however darkened,  
When you ache to turn away  
Do the job that lies before you,  
Keep your courage one more day.  
You can never guess how often  
You affect another's life  
By the fact you are a doer  
Not a quitter in the strife.

Author Unknown

3. Familiarize yourself with the Bible's promises of victory. When Satan flings this arrow at you reminding you of past hurts, stirring up feelings of defeat, you can flee to these verses for strength. Remember how Jesus defeated Satan's arrows in *Matthew 4*? He responded to Satan's arrows by quoting the Word of God. Learn these verses, and use them against the adversary.

**Note:** (Have individual class members read each of these passages.)

*Psalm 44:5*  
*Isaiah 25:8*  
*1 Corinthians 15:57*  
*1 John 5:4*  
*Romans 8:35-37*

Too many who name the Name of Christ, are quitters. Too many are weak, and easily beaten down by failure and defeat. It seems ridiculous for a Christian to be that way. Let's determine to be VICTORS and not VICTIMS. Let's be ready for this arrow of Satan and deflect it everytime he sends it toward us. Let's not let it be the reason we leave churches and Christian friends. Let's not let it bring down our marriages and taint the love we have for our spouse. Let's not let it discourage our kids and disillusion them to the claims of Christ. They cannot possibly be attracted to failure and defeat, but they will be attracted to a life of VICTORY!

### **Arrow # 3 - The Spectator Mentality**

Here is a story you may have heard before.

A man went to the doctor after weeks of symptoms. The doctor examined him carefully, then called the patient's wife into his office. "Your husband is suffering from a rare form of anemia. Without treatment, he'll be dead in a few weeks. The good news is, it can be treated with proper nutrition."

"You will need to get up early every morning and fix your husband a hot breakfast - pancakes, bacon and eggs, the works. He'll need a home-cooked lunch every day, and then an old-fashioned meat-and-potato dinner every evening. It would be especially helpful if you could bake frequently. Cakes, pies, homemade bread - these are the things that will allow your husband to live."

"One more thing. His immune system is weak, so it's important that your home be kept spotless at all times. Do you have any questions?" The wife had none.

"Do you want to break the news, or shall I?" asked the doctor.

"I will," the wife replied.

She walked into the exam room. The husband, sensing the seriousness of his illness, asked her, "It's bad, isn't?"

She nodded, tears welling up in her eyes. "What's going to happen to me?" he asked.

With a sob, the wife blurted out, "The doctor says you're gonna die!" (Source unknown)

Funny? Yes. It also, though, describes an all-too-common attitude which Satan uses as the third arrow in his quiver. We'll call it the spectator mentality. It's the idea that we do what we do, whether it be in our church or in our marriage relationship, for what we get in return. As long as we get out of it what we want, we are willing to serve. The idea of serving selflessly is foreign to those who suffer from the spectator

mentality, just as the idea of selflessly serving her dying husband was impossible to accept for this fictitious wife.

There are many ways that this spectator mentality is expressed:

*"My needs are just not being met."*

*"There is nothing for me at that church."*

*"I did not get anything out of that service."*

All of these are common sentiments amongst that group of people who call themselves Christians, and yet find themselves moving from church to church. They are also, interestingly, the reasons many divorced or divorcing couples give as their reasons for leaving their spouse. And those statements are indications of a person who, at heart, is a spectator rather than a servant - a person who has fallen prey to Satan's third arrow - the Spectator Mentality.

DISCUSSION - Do you agree or disagree that this arrow of Satan is a major reason why people leave churches?

DISCUSSION - Let's consider how this arrow of Satan affects marriages. Is this a reason for failed marriages? Do people leave spouses because they feel "their needs are not being met," or "they just don't get anything out of the relationship?"

DISCUSSION - How about our children? How do you think children are impacted when their parents make decisions related to church or relationships based on such factors as "my needs are not being met?"

I guess it all boils down to two competing concepts - SERVANTHOOD versus SPECTATORSHIP. Some people attend church because they believe that is what God wants them to do, AS SERVANTS, regardless of any perceived benefit to them personally. Others attend church like it's some sort of classroom, only continuing if they feel they are learning something... or as some sort of performance, only continuing if they are being "blessed" or "challenged" or feeling some perceived need is met by their attendance. The same thing is true in our marriages. Many of us vowed to love honor and cherish our spouse. Yet the minute the words escaped our lips we began watching to see how much our mate loves honors and cherishes US, and when they get deficient we feel our needs are unmet and want to bail!

I challenge you to provide me a verse from scripture that teaches you are to attend church for what you get out of it. Can you find one?

**Note:** Allow some time for discussion here.

No... I am unaware of any verse in the Bible where church is described as a place where we get our needs met... where we go to obtain personal benefits, or where we go to have "our needs met." However, there is lots of scriptural support teaching that we are to be SERVANTS rather than SPECTATORS.

DISCUSS - I came across an interesting quote. Let me read it to you, and then you tell me what you think of it. Is it a true characterization of our churches today? Here is the quote:

The assistant to one renowned media pastor, when asked the key to his man's success, replied without hesitation, "We give the people what they want." This heresy is at the root of the most dangerous message preached today: the what's-in-it-for me gospel.

Though I know there are plenty within the church of Jesus of Christ that are appalled at the statement, "we give the people what they want," it is nevertheless a sad commentary on a people who ought to be committed to pleasing God and giving people what God wants instead.

**Note:** (Allow some time for discussion of the above quote)

Christ is our example. Consider the following passages. What do they teach us about the need for servanthood? What do they teach us about the concept of serving regardless of what we get out of it? What do they teach us about the benefits we are to expect and reap? Is there a place in any of these examples for "my needs being met?"

*Matthew 20:20-27*

*Luke 22:24-30*

*John 13:2-17*

It is important to notice that there ARE benefits to our serving God. Notice what Jesus said in *Luke 22:28-30* "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." There IS a reward... there IS a benefit, and every need we have now and forever WILL BE MET in Christ. I do not mean to leave you thinking that we serve in silence and never receive anything from it. Certainly, the rewards of Christianity are immense and eternal and beyond our wildest imaginings. *But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. (1 Corinthians 2:9)* (I love that promise, don't you?)

We look to the future for that reward, though. Never forget that. And even if God chooses to shower us with benefits in the here and now (and He often does), it is never to be the REASON that we serve God. We are to serve Him regardless.

ILLUS - Have you ever heard of Dwight L. Moody? Here is an interesting story that applies to our topic:

A large group of European pastors came to one of D. L. Moody's Northfield Bible Conferences in Massachusetts in the late 1800s. Following the European custom of the time, each guest put his shoes outside his room to be cleaned by the hall servants overnight. But of course this was America and there were no hall servants.

Walking the dormitory halls that night, Moody saw the shoes and determined not to embarrass his brothers. He mentioned the need to some ministerial students who were there, but met with only silence or pious excuses. Moody returned to the dorm, gathered up the shoes, and, alone in his room, the world's only famous evangelist began to clean and polish the shoes. Only the unexpected arrival of a friend in the midst of the work revealed the secret.

When the foreign visitors opened their doors the next morning, their shoes were shined. They never know by whom. Moody told no one, but his friend told a few people, and during the rest of the conference, different men volunteered to shine the shoes in secret. Perhaps the episode is a vital insight into why God used D. L. Moody as He did. He was a man with a servant's heart and that was the basis of his true greatness. (Gary Inrig, *A Call to Excellence*, Victor Books, a division of SP Publ., Wheaton, Ill; 1985, p. 98)

God wants servants. Our churches are failing because of lack of servants. Marriages go down the tubes because spouses forget their vows of service and concentrate only on what they want out of the relationship. Children are disillusioned because their parents are even more selfish than they are, and the cycle gets repeated as they learn to do the same and grow up selfishly seeking benefits to themselves, rather than determining to serve the God Who loves them more than anything. Satan flings the arrow, and he laughs. And we fail.

The Apostle Paul is another example. *For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, (Acts 27:23)*. Read the epistles, and you will find Paul describing himself as a servant over and over.

Jesus draws a pretty clear distinction between His idea of servanthood, and the world's idea of spectatorship in His sermon on the mount. Notice *Matthew 5:46-48* "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." THINK ABOUT WHAT HE TAUGHT THERE! Doing things for the benefits we receive is not a Christian concept, but a worldly one. He pointed out that the publicans (who were

despised and held in very low esteem in society) would love others if they were getting something out of it. The Christian has a higher standard though. We are servants, not spectators. We do not serve for what we get out of it. We serve because *"the love of Christ constraineth us."* We serve because we love the Lord and it is what He asks of us.

DISCUSSION - So, let's talk about this from a practical perspective. If this "spectator mentality" is a reason why people leave churches (and it is), and if it is a reason why marriages fail (and it is), and if it is a reason why our children become disillusioned with the faith (and it is), then we need to learn to avoid this arrow when Satan shoots it our way. What can we do, then, when we feel our needs are not being met in our local church? What about in our marriage?

**Note:** (Allow some time for discussion here - list ideas on the whiteboard. Try to solicit practical activities... things we can DO... to avoid this arrow of Satan.)

## **Conclusion:**

We have been talking about the three things Satan often uses to disturb relationships - Three Arrows in Satan's Quiver.

We started out learning Arrow # 1 - The Offensive Words of Others.

Then we saw Arrow # 2 - The Victim Complex.

Today we finished up with Arrow # 3 - The Spectator Mentality.

In each case, we found that if we fall prey to Satan's arrows, we face the very real risk of damaged relationships. If we allow ourselves to be hindered by the offensive words of others, or if we fall into the victim complex and allow past hurts and experiences to influence our present behavior, or if we, like so many today, allow the spectator mentality to color our activities and relationships, then those relationships are damaged, the work of Christ is damaged, and Satan wins a victory in our lives.

I'm preaching, today, to the HomeBuilders Class. You are young. Some of you are married and some are single. Some of you have children and some do not. However, all of you are young. May I challenge you today to really pray about these three arrows in Satan's quiver? I believe your marriage depends on it. And I believe that your children will be influenced by how you respond to these arrows, and your brothers and sisters in your church will be influenced by how you respond. Your neighbors, who might be lost and seeking answers, need to see us rising above these 3 things in our lives. Our unsaved family members need to see it. This rotten, sin-enslaved world needs to see something that WORKS, and that something is the life of the Christ-follower, demonstrated in a people who are not offended by the words of others, who are VICTORS and never victims, and who are SERVANTS rather than spectators.

You can turn the world upside down, class. This age group is the key. If something is going to be done, you must do it. Some of the others around us are too old and tired to respond, and some others are too young and immature to do it. It is up to you.

*Three Arrows in Satan's Quiver*