

Taking Church for Audit

By Bob Young

Twenty years after I graduated from college with my bachelor's degree, I decided to go back to school to earn a master's degree. My Hebrew was a little rusty (OK, very rusty!) so I decided to audit a Hebrew course at the local university. There are two ways to audit a course. The first way to audit a course is not demanding—you go to class, you sit and listen, but you don't have to do anything during the class or during the week between classes. You have the advantage of sitting in class, along with a more relaxed attendance policy, no tests, no compulsion to do homework, and you still get an AU on your transcript. The problem is that when you audit a course that way, you don't learn much and you can't do much when you finish. There is a second way to audit a course. You attend every class; you do all of the homework and the teacher grades it. You take the non-mandatory tests to measure your progress. You put pressure on yourself. You benefit, you learn, you grow, you are changed, you act. My ultimate goal in auditing the Hebrew course was to be able to do something—read Hebrew using a minimum of helps. The class was not the goal—the goal was what could occur when I finished the class.

A lot of folks are auditing church using the first method. They sit in class (church) sixty minutes every week, unless something else comes up. They believe they are fulfilling the requirements of their religious duty. They are almost always present, but they are content to let someone else study for them. A week or two after attending a class, they cannot not take and pass a test over the class content (preaching). They do not bring their textbook to class, they do not do any homework between classes; they are not diligent students of God's Word. They are content to let someone else pray for them—they leave with the same prayer life they came with. They are content to let others prepare, study, pray, and do the work after class.

How can you tell the difference between the academic auditor and the serious student? How can you tell the difference between the church auditor and the serious Christian? Just as in my Hebrew class, the difference is in the results. My goal was to read Hebrew. My success or lack of success was measured by reading Hebrew. Going to church is a good thing, but it is not the ultimate goal. Our commitment to the goal is reflected in how seriously we pursue the course—studying, participating in the discussion group, sharing, practicing, and reviewing. And ultimately, the goal is reflected in how we live, what we do, and how much our lives look like Jesus as a result of our encounter with the Master Teacher.