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# CHURCH HISTORY MONTHLY

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## Timeline of Topics

- Quote
- William Law, "A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life
- Early Church
- Stylites
- American Church History
- Revivals & Big Tents: How they started

Free, online class for the fall:  
"Overview of the Old Testament":

- This class will cover the OT from a larger perspective, how do all the books work together to prepare for Jesus.
- 5 weeks
- Starts August 8
- 3-4 hours a week



Camp meeting painting from 1839:  
Notice the people in the middle of the picture who have fainted or are laying down weeping over their sins.

## Revivals and Big Tents: How they started

--Imagine this: It is 1800 in the USA and only about 20% of Americans were church members. At that time, the USA contained two different social structures: the wilderness of the west (including Kentucky and Tennessee) and the settled cities of the east (along the coast).

--This produced two different religious situations, which resulted in two different solutions. In the wilderness areas, churches were few and scattered. Sometimes people traveled great distances to get to church.  
--Then a change occurred: in 1801, in Cane Ridge, Kentucky, a worship service that began as a communion service turned into a spirited service. People began crying out and falling on the ground as they wept about their sins. Many people accepted Christ and went home and shared their stories.

--Rather quickly, this new type of service, known as a camp meeting, became popular. People began traveling even greater distances to join, with the result that people began staying for many days or even a week. These camp meetings took on a life of their own as some grew so large that over 10,000 people joined, bringing food and supplies to live in their tents throughout the entire service.

--Meanwhile, along the coastal states of the USA, a different movement began. Instead of you traveling to the revival, the revival came to you. Pastors and revivalists did that by using large tents. They traveled to a populated area, set up their tents, and preached for days or even a week in the same spot. Then, they packed the tent and moved to a different area.

--Thus, camp meetings and big tent revivals both started at the same time in the early 1800s. Together, these two worship meetings are known as the Second Great Awakening.

A good short description of the reality of growing in spiritual maturity:

"This is all a measure of how much you want to follow God. People subconsciously choose a percentage of how involved they want to be involved with God. Many times people increasingly increase the percentage. Sometimes the percentage increases greatly quickly, a young dedicated Christian for example. But the increase in percentage inevitably slows for the vast majority of us. For some, it plateaus and for others it decreases."

William Law, "A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life"

FEEL FREE TO ASK!

If you see something practiced or believed in a church but don't know why, ask me. Everything practiced or believed in any church started for a reason. Think about it this way: on the Day of Pentecost, Christianity did not have any buildings, leadership (except for the Apostles), music, youth programs, retreats, New Testament, etc. All practices and beliefs, therefore, developed over the last 1992 years and has an origin. I will be happy to tell you why, so feel free to email me. (I don't have all the answer but will do my best.)

Questions, comments, or want to join a free class contact Mark at [marknickens@gmail.com](mailto:marknickens@gmail.com)

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## So you think you are dedicated?

--In its almost 2000-year history, Christianity has produced many different types of groups. Most of these grew out of different ways of understanding Scripture, but not always. Sometimes people simply developed a different way of being Christian which fit their circumstances.

--One of these groups, and it was tiny, is known as "stylites"; this unique method of Christianity existed from the 400s to the 900s. It wasn't a very popular Christian lifestyle and you probably would not have joined it. Why not? Read on to find out.

--But first, we have to talk about monks. Protestants do not have monks (well, the Episcopalians have a few in England, but that is a different story), but Catholics and Orthodox do. This idea first developed in the Egyptian desert in the 300s. Christian men and women in Egyptian cities sometimes fled from the busy-ness of a stressful urban life by moving to the desert. Their purpose was to reduce the stress and "noise" of the city so they could focus more clearly on God.

--This type of quiet life became so popular that the number of monks and nuns living in the desert swelled. The first monks lived by themselves, but they soon gathered into small communities as the numbers increased. (This is origin of monasteries.)

--So, the deserts got more and more crowded (like the suburbs of today). Yet some still wanted to live a solitary life. They could not get away from people by moving further out, and so they decided to move in the only other direction they could: up.

--No, they didn't kill themselves in order to be with God. Instead, some individuals decided to go higher. But they didn't go to the mountains, instead they went straight up--they started sitting on pillars (think about a column in front of a large house or some public buildings).

--I am not kidding and this is not April 1. A few Christians began sitting on pillars in order to get away from crowds. (They didn't sit in small groups, instead each person had his own pillar.) They were known as "stylites" because the Greek word for "pillar" is "stulos." Often the stylite had a small structure (very small) built on top of the pillar on which he could lean. Stylites usually had followers and disciples who stayed on the ground and provided food and water. They engaged in conversation with the people below, and many came seeking wisdom from someone who was closer to God (pun intended). Stylites often remained on their pillars until death.

--The most famous (and first) stylite was Simeon (390-459). He started low and gradually moved up to living on a pillar about 40 feet tall, which is where he was when he died.

--Whether or not you agree with them, those people were dedicated. They found a unique solution to the problem we all face of having too many distractions.