

# Mayor Refuses to Allow Church to Open So Christians Have 100 Services in Front of President's Home

At the heart of the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation, in the megacity of Jakarta, Indonesia, a church this Sunday will hold its 100th open-air Sunday morning service next to a main road—because a city mayor is afraid to insist that a Supreme Court order is carried out.

Bogor City, 60 kilometres south of the Indonesian capital Jakarta, is said to be one of the world's most densely populated areas. In April 2010, Bogor's Taman Yasmin Indonesia Christian Church (GKI Yasmin) was sealed and padlocked by order of the mayor of Bogor and the city government. According to a national paper, the mayor claimed that the previous sub-village head had falsified community signatures and that the church brought trouble with local Muslim neighbors. Later he said that the church should not be built on a street with an Islamic name.

In December 2010, the Indonesian Supreme Court affirmed the church's constitutional right to freedom of worship; however the mayor refused to reopen the church. The Indonesian Ombudsman's Office also urged the Bogor city administration to withdraw its later 2011 decree annulling the church's construction permit.

GKI Yasmin's congregation resorted to conducting services on the pavement in front of their former church for more than two years. During services outside the church, they constantly faced harassment from groups of protesters—including from Islamist extremist groups such as FORKAMI (Indonesian Muslim

Communication Forum), GARIS (Reformed Islamic Movement) and the FPI (Islamic Defenders' Front).

Fearing further aggravation from hard-liners, members of the Protestant church then held clandestine services at the houses of congregation members. In 2012, they started to conduct Sunday services in front of the State Palace, to further their case with the government.

The Bogor City Government reportedly allocated land for the replacement church some seven kilometers from its previous location, and a budget of up to 4.5 billion rupiahs (\$305,000) for a new church. The West Java regional government said it could provide up to 10 billion. But it is by no means certain that, even should the church agree to relocation, which so far they utterly refuse to do, they would be allowed to build a new church. Among other things, they would have to obtain a new building permit, which would require them to obtain approval signatures from 60 local residents and 90 of the church congregation itself (all proved by local ID cards).

Indonesian President Jokowi, who completes one year in office in October, has introduced some improvements for the country's minority faiths, but a case like this one still shows how much room there is for progress. A recent report says he has the power to enforce the highest court's order on Bogor, but so far he has taken no action. The report continues, "As Human Rights Watch noted, Jokowi has also sought to "outsource a solution to Indonesia's religious intolerance problem to NU and Muhammadiyah, [Indonesia's two largest Muslim organizations]." While they both promote tolerant versions of Islam, the report says "some of the growth of extremism, which has many facets, can be dealt with only with the power of the state".

For World Watch Monitor, Vishal Arora went to visit the Sunday morning service outside the Presidential Palace.

Meanwhile, Aceh—the only Indonesian province enforcing sharia law—is among the most hostile places for Christians to live. On August 18, for the third time in 30 years, the Pakpak Dairi Christian Protestant Church (GKPPD), in Singkil regency, was burned down in a fire that reduced the building to ashes in only 20 minutes.

A police investigation discovered a traditional machete and the wheel traces of two vehicles at the site. Despite this evidence, they announced a few days later that the fire was presumably caused by a short circuit, stopping further inquiry.

Fear of upsetting the majority community is believed to be another factor: after an arson attempt at the church in 1999, a mob threatened to set fire to the police station if arrested suspects were not set free. The demand was immediately granted.

Three hundred and fifty church members now hold services in the church yard. They gathered funds, bought a tent, and set it up for Sunday services.

“We know we are being watched by the extremists. Some even threatened to destroy the tent,” the leader of GKPPD in Singkil, Rev. Erde Brutu, says. “But I remind the congregation: ‘Don’t give in to the temptation of fighting back. If we retaliate, how are we different from those who trespass against us?’”

Rev. Erde says he is almost desperate over the repeated incidents: “Pray that God will touch the perpetrators’ hearts and turn them to Him, as well as for the law to be enforced in other similar cases in my hometown.”

Indonesia ranks #47 on the 2015 World Watch List, the annual list compiled by Open Doors International, which works among Christians under pressure for their faith.

## Video Text

I'm worshipping here in front of our presidential palace because the GKI Yasmin church in Bogor cannot worship [in its own building] on Sundays," said Adhi Nugroho Chandra, a member of the church, which was sealed off in 2008.

The GKI Yasmin church has been meeting outside the president's office in Jakarta since 2012. This month, it will hold its 100th worship service on the street. It holds them every two weeks at 1 p.m., come searing heat or torrential downpour: the two or three other Sundays it meets in a variety of places. Its building in Bogor city, in Jakarta's suburbs, remains sealed in defiance of a Supreme Court order. The mayor of Bogor is under pressure from Islamist groups to restrict the congregation from using their place of worship.

"It's very hard to be a minority in Indonesia, and we have to fight for our rights," said Dwiati Novita Rini, a lay leader of the church. "It's not easy but it will not affect my faith."

While they are holding on to their faith in God, church members are now beginning to lose their confidence in the influence of President Jokowi, who will complete one year in office in October.

"I think the problem remains because the president did not dare to take action," Chandra Juliar, the pastor of the church, said. "The leader should have the courage to take action and enforce the law. We can't afford, as a nation, to let this problem remain if we want peace in Indonesia."

President Jokowi was expected not to repeat the mistakes of his predecessor, Susilo Bambang Yodhoyono, who was criticised for being indecisive and weak before Islamist extremists. Jokowi appears to have the will to enforce the court order, but that involves taking a political risk. To function as president, he needs cooperation from parliament, which is

dominated by opposition parties, including Islamist groups. Going against the Bogor mayor could have political repercussions.

“The mayor, who, I think, is the key person who can decide what happens in Bogor, still has people around him who are intolerant,” explained Rini.

Christians acknowledge that President Jokowi has brought at least some change in the religious atmosphere of the country. For example, extremist groups like FPI and GARIS now appear to be less active.

“In Bogor, the leader of the group GARIS, which protested against our church, is in jail, and the protests against us are now getting lower and lower,” Rini said.

The GKI Yasmin church says it will continue to hold as many worship services on the street as it takes to regain their right to use their church building.

“We are often asked how long we will struggle,” said Pastor Juliar. “We have to carry on until we get justice. Yes, we are very tired and our hope at times starts to fade, but as believers, we won’t give up. Our struggle is not only for our needs, but also for others who deserve peace. So we will achieve our goal to build our beloved Indonesia to be a peaceful country.”

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## **Hollywood Actress Takes on Old Demons in Viral Music**

# Video

Entertainer Tisha Campbell-Martin's powerful new single preaches the freedom of forgiveness.

Campbell-Martin uses the musical poetry of "Steel Here" as a way to purge anger, grudge, pain, low self-esteem, self-deprecation or any negative emotion."

In the video, Campell-Martin inscribes herself with the words her alleged rapist wrote in an apology letter. The star goes from darkness to light, from shame to freedom, in the single.

"It allowed me to FORGIVE and I'm so incredibly grateful," she writes on Instagram.

Watch the video to see what we mean.

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## 10 Questions to Ask Before Judging

Who are you to judge me?!"

This question makes the rounds frequently. On the blogosphere, in the Twitter feed, pinned and posted, the message is blaring: "You have no right to judge me!"

And in one sense, I totally agree. I have no right to judge you.

If I were the authority of the universe, I would have that right.

If I owned the corner on truth, I would have that right.

If you came into existence because of my will and creative effort, I would have that right.

If my word were the final say, I would have that right.

If I were God, I would have that right.

But the fact is, I am not God, but God *has* spoken. He *has* given His judgment on matters of ethics and morality. He is the authority of the universe. He *does* own the corner on truth. We *did* come into existence because of His will and effort. His Word *is* the final say. And God *has* the right to judge.

In fact, God is the Judge.

And He is a gracious judge.

*“Should not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18:25).*

God has provided us with His judgment through His Word. When Christians address moral issues and make a judgment based on Scripture, we are not “judging” that individual on the basis of our own authority. Our judgment is delivered from the authority of God’s holy Word—not our own fallible word. Admittedly, we can mishandle His Word; we can misinterpret it and muddy the delivery or misunderstand the context at times. But delivering clear scriptural truth is God’s Word bringing judgment.

## **Jesus’ Instructions**

Jesus gave some pointed instruction as He warned us about judging others. He didn’t tell us *not* to deliver judgment; He told us *how* to deliver it:

*“You hypocrite! First take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye” (Matt. 7:5).*

He gave these specific instructions to warn us that we’d better not confront someone else’s sin until we first deal with our own hearts. This same instruction is repeated in the Gospel of Luke. Later in the book of Matthew, Jesus gave a process we refer to as “church discipline,” in which the first step involves confronting someone in their sin:

*“Now if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother” (Matt. 18:15).*

That sounds an awful lot like “judging” someone.

In Paul’s letter to the Galatians, he provides us with a bit of guidance in how we approach someone when we need to confront them and “deliver a message of judgment” (a word of truth from Scripture):

*“Brothers, if a man is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, watching yourselves, lest you also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1).*

Paul’s instruction is helpful, it places a guiding principle for us to follow as we approach someone who is “caught” or entangled in a sinful lifestyle. Paul (as inspired by the Holy Spirit) warns us that we are in danger of falling into the snare of sin and we must be careful and watchful of our own hearts. Our motive in having this conversation must be restoration.

# Preparing Our Hearts

Some questions that might help with heart preparation before “delivering judgment” would be:

1. Is my motive pure? Is my greatest concern spiritual deliverance or restoration?
2. Am I approaching this issue as a self-righteous bigot, or am I offering truth as one who is equally in need of God’s transforming grace?
3. Am I more concerned about winning an argument for morality than I am concerned about my opponent’s need for salvation or spiritual growth?
4. Am I prepared to give a biblical and gracious defense of my position?
5. Am I addressing a truth issue, or is this a preference issue?
6. Is this the best time to have this conversation?
7. Have I thoroughly prayed over this conversation?
8. Am I reacting in pride or humility?
9. Are my emotions sinfully involved with this issue?
10. Can I convey love to my opponent as I deliver this message of truth?

Have you been slammed for issuing “judgment”? I hope you’ll run through the questions above when you’re tempted to confront someone. Jesus provides ample instruction for delivering the truth in love, and when we fail to do that, we aren’t being faithful to love Him or others well.

What are your thoughts on “judging others”? {eoa}

*Taken from **Kimberly Wagner’s** blog post “10 Questions to Ask Before Judging” on . Used with permission.*

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# Duggars Sisters Speak Out About 'Helpless' Feelings

They feel "violated," but not in the way you might expect.

Duggar sisters Jill Dillard and Jessa Seewald told Fox's Megyn Kelly their feelings of helplessness do not come from their brother Josh's actions, but the media's response.

Josh, the eldest Duggar son, enrolled in rehab after news surfaced he cheated on his wife Anna through an Ashley Madison account.

In late May, Josh addressed allegations he molested five minors, including sisters Jill and Jessa.

While many have vocally supported the Duggar girls, posting comments about how they "feel" for the victims, the sisters are saying that's precisely why they feel "violated."

Watch the video to see more.

Watch the latest video at .

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## Why Do Christians Compete With One Another for Position?

When I lived in Malaysia, I was given the opportunity to go to a conference in Bangkok, Thailand. While there we rode a tuk tuk, which is a Thai taxi, down to the plaza where they were

selling anything and everything you could think of. With the Thai Baht being 36 to 1 against the U.S. dollar, we felt like millionaires in that place with our minimal money. While there, I found a T-shirt that I liked and it said 'SAME SAME' on the front and 'BUT DIFFERENT' on the back.

Little did I know how true these words were in so many areas of life. As I was blessed to travel to a variety of international cities, like Bali, Indonesia; Singapore; Phuket, Thailand; and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, I came to realize that all cities, cultures and even people are same same, but different.

One of the challenges Christians around the world face is competition in the body of the Christ. People are competing for pulpits, positions and people. We measure success by the size of our church, the title we carry, the amount of money in our bank account or the places we have been and experiences we have had.

Whether in one of the large churches in Nigeria or small house churches in China, believers are battling the same voices that seek to put them in competition with one another, rather than in complimenting each other. It is same same, but different in the church just like in the world. But this should not be, as believers in Jesus Christ, we are to be the light of the world, not the echo of the darkness.

Mark 10:45 says, "For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

Every human being that is called by the name of Jesus Christ is the same, we have the same calling, we carry the same value, we are all called to be servants, but we are different in our function. There is only one calling for a believer and that is to be a servant, but there are a variety of functions that this calling operates out of. In the kingdom of God,

there is no hierarchy, no competition, because we are all servants of the Most High God and each other.

Jesus' calling was to be a servant, but His function was to heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons, and die for the sins of the world. Even though His function changed throughout His life from carpenter's assistant to Rabbi, His calling as a servant never did. That is why John 13 says that Jesus, knowing who He was, took a towel and began to wash His disciple's feet. He knew He was called to be a servant, so whatever function He did had no relevance to His value.

Every person has the same value in the eyes of God, He values us as servants, sons, daughters, and no one has more value than another to God, so where does the challenge arise? The challenge comes because we as people place differing values on differing functions.

We have been taught that the function of apostle, prophet, pastor, teacher, evangelist, president, pope or CEO has more value than that of dishwasher, domestic engineer, street sweeper, or janitor. We decide what functions have what value and so we jockey for position, we speak of promotions, and we have an identity crisis when our function changes, because we see value in function. But God only places value on calling, the calling to be a servant.

If you think about it, every function is just a different way of being a servant. We could end the battle of pride, envy, jealousy and jockeying for position if we realized we all have the same calling, the same value, but different functions and responsibilities.

Galatians 5:25-26 (VOICE) says, "Now since we have chosen to walk with the Spirit, let's keep in perfect sync with God's Spirit. This will happen when we set aside our self-interests and work together to create true community instead of a culture consumed by provocation, pride and envy."

We are the same same, but different.

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## **Forget the Blood Moons, Look at This End-Time Cloud**

Hues of blues, pinks and other pastels encircled a jelly-fish-like cloud over the mountains of Costa Rica.

Spectators pointed with both their fingers and cameras, capturing the sign in the sky.

Some are looking at the phenomenon as the beginning of end-time prophecy. Watch the video to see what we mean.