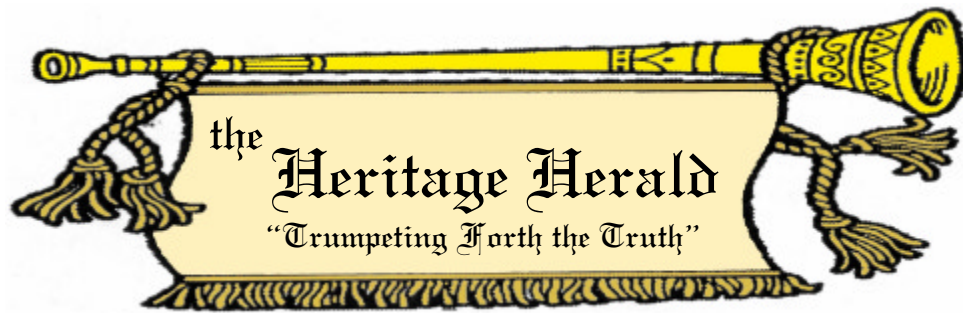




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## The Mafia-Minded Ministry

**INTRODUCTION:** My wife is Italian and has a Sicilian heritage. Her grandmother did not like to speak of the Mafia. If you brought up the subject of the Mafia, she would become irritable. This created a desire in me to learn more about the Mafia.

In my studies, what struck me is the similarities between how the Mafia operated and certain churches, camps, and conferences that I have attended through the years.

### **First: The Mafia-Minded Ministry Is Loyal To The Family Regardless Of The Truth.**

(*1 Timothy 3:15*) Bro. Jack Hyles, who came and preached for me several times and gave me the honor of preaching with him on one occasion, said, "We start movements because of a great cause. Then the movement becomes greater than why we started the movement and then we forget the cause."

The church is to be the up-lifter and exalter of the truth. The church without truth is no longer a valid organization for God,

**Illustration:** Several years ago I had an evangelist cancel a scheduled revival meeting with me. When I asked him for his reason, he replied, "I understand you had a falling out with some men that I trained, I just assumed you would not want me there since I am loyal to them." I asked him, "Don't you even care who is telling the truth?" His answer was, "No, loyalty has nothing to do with truth." *Luke 17:3, "... If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him."*

### **Second: The Mafia-Minded Ministry Seeks To Infiltrate and Then Control The Ministries Of Others.**

(*Nehemiah 6:1, 13:28*) Sanballat and Tobiah finally infiltrated the work of God. One of them lived in the house of God. The other married into the preacher's family. Then they set about infiltrating the work for themselves.

**Quote:** Dr. Vance Havner used to say, "The Devil does not want to destroy a church; He wants to control it."

**Illustration:** Bugsy Siegel was helped by the Mafia to start The Flamingo Club in Las Vegas, Nevada. He thought he was an independent, fundamental Mafia member. He decided to exercise his independence and stop going to the regularly scheduled meetings. He was assassinated.

### **Third: The Mafia-Minded Ministry Will Use You And Then Discard You For The Greater Gain.**

(*Luke 22:1-6*) Observing Christianity over the years, I have noticed a few lawyers, and many evangelists, follow the money trail.

**Illustration:** One evangelist wrote a book entitled *Heart Disease In The Body Of Christ*. Then he embraced the most liberal and compromising group. He has fame and fortune, but not the presence of Christ.

### **Fourth: The Mafia-Minded Ministry Thrives On The Divisions Of Others. (Mark 11:25-26)**

A preacher was commenting on a man that I knew out west. The man had helped start 28 or more churches. What my friend was saying about this man was true, but he did not know the whole story. That particular establisher of churches would visit fundamental churches and find out who the disgruntled members were. These people would form the base of his new church.

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**Point To Make:** Not one of those churches he started is fundamental today.

**Illustration:** According to my King James Bible, we are to try to reconcile brother to brother, not see how we can gain another church or another church member. Not one prayer is answered if you are not right with your brother.

The Mafia would move in and take over the territory of those feuding once they became weak from fighting.

**Fifth: The Mafia-Minded Ministry Will Betray You With A Kiss. (Luke 22:48)**

Through the years, I have led many young people to Christ. I have recommended dozens of these to attend different Christian Colleges only to have them become disloyal to their home pastor and home church. Why? Because I did not come to every meeting at their new church and new college then I must not be right with “The Family.” Yet, without their home pastor, they would never be there in the first place.

Some Terms:

- The Don—known as “The Godfather”, head of the Family.
- The Consigliere—The counselor and legal advisor.
- The Enforcer— Makes sure the “contracts” are honored.
- The Associate—A member of the Family who has sworn an oath of loyalty.
- The Cleaner—covers the tracks of the Enforcer.

**Conclusion:**

Listen for a moment: I am for being loyal, but not at the expense of the truth. In the 1700’s a picture of a black hand would appear at certain homes. The Black Hand meant that the Mafia was threatening you.

Illustration: A few years ago, a famous preacher that I had scheduled to preach began running down Jack Hyles, Bob Gray, and Tom Neal, and for no apparent reason. I said, “I can’t let you preach here with such a critical spirit.” He looked surprised and said, “I preach at over 900 different churches, churches you’ll never preach in.” He was showing me the Black Hand.

Just as the Mafia-Mentality has entered business and government, that same Mafia-Mentality has entered our churches and Christian colleges. Let’s get back to being controlled by the Holy Spirit and loyalty to truth.