

**News and Current Events :: Out-of-Church Christians****Out-of-Church Christians - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2004/8/25 18:37**

[Image: https://www.sermonindex.net/images/forum/2004/may/featured_news.gif]

USA: 12 million with a personal relationship with Jesus, but no church "Many American preachers and TV evangelists speak of a revival apparently sweeping the nation," report Fred Jackson and Allie Martin of Agape Press. But is the 'revival' happening in an unexpected manner? Perhaps even outside the Church? A recent study by George Barna shows that traditionally church-bound Christianity, almost inconceivably, seems to hinder rather than encourage revival. The Barna Research Group's study discovered that the number of adults in the USA no longer attending church has almost doubled since 1991, from 39 million to 75 million. The adult population grew 15% over the same period. "It is mainly the men," says Barna, "who make up 55% of those who have left churches. Around half of churchgoers in the USA claim to have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour," as do 12.5 million, or around 16%, of those who no longer attend church.

Knowing God, not just having heard of Him An evangelist from Colorado Springs believes that many Christians have no real relationship with God. Author John Bevere calls on Christians to no longer accept a dry Christianity which knows about God, but does not know him personally. Bevere points out that the lack of people living as good examples, as well as the main emphases in North American churches - material possessions, entertainment and feel-good worship - have made Christians forget the fear of God and obedience, and given rise to a false image of worship.

Re: Out-of-Church Christians - posted by moreofHim (), on: 2004/8/25 19:30

In my opinion, you can't be an out-of-church Christian because christians ARE the church. You can be "in-the-church" and NOT be a Christian- which many are in this boat. The form of church as a building) has even kept many from learning how to live the real Christian life. :(

From what i have seen from the churches I have gone to, attended, seen, heard about, I can say that it is true that they are a hinderance to real revival. They are a hinderance to more than that.

I just received an email today from an old friend in a "seeker" church. It broke my heart to hear all about what they are teaching the people. How terrible for the newer "converts" to not get fed the real truth- and the more mature are just settling for milk and untruth because they get to feel important.

For this reason, I pray that many find a deeper relationship with Christ ANYWHERE but at a church building.

Here is one of my favorite writings from Spurgeon on the subject of "Church life":

Does God need a 'special house'?

He who made the heavens and the earth,
does he dwell in temples made with hands?
What crass ignorance is this!

No house beneath the sky is more holy than the place where a Christian lives, and eats, and drinks, and sleeps, and praises the Lord in all that he does. There is no worship more heavenly than that which is presented by holy families, devoted to his fear.

To sacrifice home worship to public worship is a most evil course of action.

Morning and evening devotion in a cottage is infinitely more pleasing in the sight of God than all the cathedral pomp which delights the carnal eye and ear.

Every truly Christian household is a church, and as such it is competent for the discharge of any function of divine worship, whatever it may be.

Are we not all priests? Why do we need to call in others to make devotion a performance? Let every man be a priest in his own house.

Are you not all kings if you love the Lord? Then make your houses palaces of joy and temples of holiness.

One reason why the early church had such a blessing was because her members had such homes. When we are like them we shall have "added to the church daily of the saved."

Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2004/8/25 20:36

Quote:
-----In my opinion, you can't be an out-of-church Christian because christians ARE the church. You can be "in-the-church" and NOT be a Christian- which many are in this boat. The form of church as a building) has even kept many from learning how to live the real Christian life. :(

Agreed. I posted that news article because it touches on some interesting statistics. The only concern I have for people that are not affiliated with church groups is their being in fellowship with other true believers and also being kept in check doctrinally, etc. Many are being led astray and relying on mainstream christian materials in their home fellowships :- (but I have been overjoyed to be receiving many emails from home churches that are using the materials at SermonIndex to equip their part of the body of Christ! In this manner this website ministry becomes invaluable. Praise God for what He is doing.

Re: out of church - posted by moreofHim (), on: 2004/8/25 20:43

Quote:
-----but I have been overjoyed to be receiving many emails from home churches that are using the materials at SermonIndex to equip their part of the body of Christ

Wow, this is really awesome!

Yes, I have heard of many house churches that are the same replica as many of the church buildings themselves. The focus is on the wrong things.

May the hungry and desperate be satisfied wherever they are. May we all, including SermonIndex, be able to help feed and steer these hungry ones to the right food! :-)

In Him, Chanin

Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2004/8/25 20:56

Quote:
-----Yes, I have heard of many house churches that are the same replica as many of the church buildings themselves. The focus is on the wrong things.

I wouldn't classify all church buildings 'churches' as wrong or misleading.. there are some churches with leadership that are leading people into truth and preaching a full gospel. But sadly many are not. I am realizing more and more that I should not be opposed to the buildings themselves but by faith see the situation and see that there can be those of the body worshipping and fellowship and the spirit of God comes in the midst of that. I was just listening to a sermon where Raven Hill was finishing up the 500th approx time their prayer group was meeting and they were going to stop the meeting so they could separate and start many home fellowship meetings. But the original meeting was in a home but due to size moved to a facility owned by Last Days Ministries, and just because that was a larger building and it had costs being there didn't hinder the hearts of the people there. I think you get my point. But I am totally with you that overall much of the institutional setup is leading people into a lukewarm shallow gospel without cost, as Bonhoeffer would say "Costly discipleship"

Re: - posted by revival9 (), on: 2004/8/31 1:36

Yes, that was an interesting article. The church scene is so far removed from what we see in the NT, it's really shocking if we look at it bluntly. Can you imagine somebody going around from city to city preaching their heart out wherever people were meeting for prayer --- no prepared sermons, no pre-arranged lodging, in fact no people that he knew? And he winds up staying at some new convert's house, a rich lady, no less, and a church starts meeting there, daily!

The NT is full of off-the-wall stuff! :-)

I often hold my Bible up to Heaven and ask God: "YOU wrote this stuff. YOU said it's supposed to be like THIS. What is wrong with the Christian world, that it doesn't even remotely resemble THIS?"

He says to me every time: "Yes, it's that bad. Yes, what you're seeing is really there. What are YOU going to do about it, daughter? Are YOU serious enough to get serious with ME about it?"

So it's back to God and His Word, fasting and praying with new resolve. There is no other way. Do I really love the people who are being deceived in these lukewarm churches, or am I proud that I'm NOT? Do I love those who are being led astray and truly desire the lies to stop, or am I happy pointing out their faults and going about my business, 'eating and drinking like in the days of Noah and Lot'. It's easy to be concerned from a distance, but how many of us are actually beseeching God with our Bibles open and our stomachs empty. Like He told us. Ouch, yeah, me too. :roll:

Mrs. Fred

Re: - posted by revival9 (), on: 2004/8/31 1:50

Quote:
-----I should not be opposed to the buildings themselves but by faith see the situation and see that there can be those of the body worshipping and fellowship and the spirit of God comes in the midst of that

Hello brother, I agree wholeheartedly. But I have to stick in a snippet from 'Back To Jerusalem', about the Chinese house churches:

The Chinese church... is an army of little ants, worms, and termites who know how to work underground, because that is how we have learned to work in China for decades... quietly loosening the foundations of Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. You will not see any great or small church buildings resulting from our efforts because we are determined to do what the Lord has led us to do in China these past 50 years and establish spiritual fellowships of believers who meet in their homes. We won't build a single church building anywhere, but the Lord will be building up his church of living stones.

(www.backtojerusalem.org) Back to Jerusalem

Mrs. Fred

Re: - posted by disciplejosh (), on: 2004/8/31 5:12

Quote:
-----I often hold my Bible up to Heaven and ask God: "YOU wrote this stuff. YOU said it's supposed to be like THIS. What is wrong with the Christian world, that it doesn't even remotely resemble THIS?"

Over the last few weeks in prayer I keep getting this picture...

"Lord, You tell us in Isaiah 58 that the fast You have chosen for us is one to loose the bonds of wickedness. You quoted at the beginning of Your earthly ministry from Isaiah 61-"The spirit of the Lord is upon Me/has anointed Me to proclaim liberty to the captives."

Is it still true, Lord? Can You still do that? Do You still do that? Is it possible for You to radically set people free? Because I look, not at the lost, but at those who say they are 'free in Christ' or have been set free by Christ...and yet they are in bondage...GREAT bondage.

Then I find myself at the Last Supper. Jesus says, "One of you will betray Me."

"Is it I, Lord? Is it I?"

It IS me! I have betrayed Him.

I look at what I SAY I believe, I SAY I believe in the Word of God and that I serve a God that does the impossible...and yet my life in my actions, betrays Him. If I have His life in me, if WE have His life in us, wouldn't you think our lives would be a little different?

God is wanting to form for Himself a 'peculiar people.' So I've been 'testing myself, examining myself, to see where I am at.

What IS so peculiar about my life?

For this is definitely where God starts a work of revival...me getting out of the way, letting go of all I am and have and do...and it is then and only then that God can move in and take over. That's why He is here...

Re: - posted by PastorEdP (), on: 2004/8/31 6:48

"In my opinion, you can't be an out-of-church Christian because Christians ARE the church. You can be "in-the-church" and NOT be a Christian- which many are in this boat. The form of church as a building) has even kept many from learning how to live the real Christian life."

I think this is very much the case. Churches, especially some mainstream denominations, have changed their theology and their regard for Scripture so radically that I would feel uncomfortable even setting foot in, say, an Episcopal Church. Denominationalism (sp?) is man-made, but the Church is the bride of Christ. I may feel that a certain church is right for me, join it and work for it only to discover down the road that the hierarchy has decided that unrepentant gays can supply a pulpit or that maybe abortion isn't such a bad thing after all.

The only Church, as far as I'm concerned, is Christ's Church. There is no other and He doesn't change His doctrine to satisfy society. I know many who agree with this and I think this may be one of the reasons why church attendance has dropped.

In Christ,

Ed

Re: Out-of-Church Christians - posted by RobertW (), on: 2004/8/31 8:17

Quote:
-----A recent study by George Barna shows that traditionally church-bound Christianity, almost inconceivably, seems to hinder rather than encourage revival.

There are a multitude of reasons for this and I hope sometime soon someone will write a comprehensive study on the subject.

Revival takes effort and it upsets the apple cart. Everyone has to get right with God and many don't like that. Some leaders actually feel threatened by revival. Others fear the baggage associated with some of the 'revivals' of North America paralyzing their church. They fear that people on the fringe will come and it will be hard to control. I suppose no-one wants to be in Hank Hanegraaff's next counterfeit revival book. :-)

Revivals also call for great sacrifice. Services that may last well into the morning with people praying through to God. Services on Sunday that last past their favorite football game.

Others can't stand the level of conviction needed to see a real revival. They can't stand the solemn environment when people are weeping and crying out for their sins. People want a happy :-) revival. We'll all go out the door feeling pumped up with joy unspeakable. That is great- but we will have joy when people really get born again of the Spirit. We'll have a reason to praise when many are saved and delivered from sin.

Lastly, the fields have been somewhat burnt over by evangelists that have come in and left a bad taste in the mouths of pastors. There is a mindset that exists that Pastors need to 'way guard' the pulpit. True it must be guarded, but there is some things that need to be said that are from God that the Pastor simply could not get away with saying or the people would not receive it from him. We have to overcome these fears in our churches. This is why the Purpose Driven life thing is so popular- it is so much less threatening than a genuine revival that upsets everything and everyone.

Re: - posted by Gideons (), on: 2004/8/31 9:36

My fear is for those who aren't connected to other believers and aren't attending church. Since Christ is the head of the church and we are all part of the body, we need each other. My heart goes out to those who are not connected in some significant way. It doesn't have to be in a building but there needs to be fellowship and some degree of accountability to each other.

Let's pray for those who have a heart for Jesus Christ but have been so turned off at all the sin in the church and have said something like "Jesus if this is Christianity, I don't want any part of it."

Oarsman you said

Quote:
-----I look at what I SAY I believe, I SAY I believe in the Word of God and that I serve a God that does the impossible...and yet my life in my actions, betrays Him. If I have His life in me, if WE have His life in us, wouldn't you think our lives would be a little different?

This is unbelief and I'm praying for deliverance from this myself. It seems like it's going away in chunks. I believe that unbelief is the most pervasive sin among true believers today (including myself of course). The reason this sin is so terrible, is that it literally impugns the character of God. It's more than rebellion and says something like "God is not who He says He is."

The sad thing to me is that most believers don't even recognize this in their own lives. God bless you brother and I pray that he will purge this from our hearts.

I am apologizing for diverting off the topic a bit but I saw this and it touched my heart.

Re: - posted by riki (), on: 2004/8/31 13:35

Quote:

revival9 wrote:

So it's back to God and His Word, fasting and praying with new resolve. There is no other way. Do I really love the people who are being deceived in these lukewarm churches, or am I proud that I'm NOT? Do I love those who are being led astray and truly desire the lies to stop, or am I happy pointing out their faults and going about my business, 'eating and drinking like in the days of Noah and Lot'. It's easy to be concerned from a distance, but how many of us are actually beseeching God with our Bibles open and our stomachs empty. Like He told us. Ouch, yeah, me too. :roll:

Thank you, Mrs. Fred, for this well needed comment. God has a lot of breaking to do in our hearts and lives...

/Rikard

Re: - posted by 5nva (), on: 2004/8/31 13:46

I thought this tidbit from an article in Herald of His Coming was fitting. It is from an article written by Richard Owen Roberts.

For a brief period in my life, my wife Maggie and I prayed, that if it pleased the Lord, an open door would come where I would be invited to accept a pastorate for a period of time when the children were young so that they would know their dad and he might have some influence upon their lives. My itinerant ministry was taking me away from home much of the time, and my son hardly knew who his father was. In a sense out of the blue, came an invitation to serve a church that had 2,400 members, about thirty of whom we calculated were born-again believers.

What struck me when I read this is at the end when he said he calculated that out of 2,400 members only 30 were born again. I mentioned this to my wife and she said to me, why were the 30 still there?

I didn't have an answer and I still don't.

The article can be read at this link.

<http://www.heraldofhiscoming.org/other/home.htm>

Then go to articles from current issue and the article is called Pleading For God's Mercy.

~Mike