



## General Topics :: My Visit to a Church Last Night

### My Visit to a Church Last Night, on: 2016/6/19 13:15

Last night, someone I know, invited me to a church here in the central Arkansas area. I had heard of the church that we went to visit. I actually went there with some pretty decent expectations. My intention was not to judge. But rather to be encouraged. At least what I had heard about this church I expected there would be some encouragement there.

The church we visited is a mega church. It is evangelical and interdenominational. This particular church has spun off several churches of like kind in Arkansas and different parts of the country. Even in some parts of the world. What follows is my experience of what happened at the church. Please understand these are simply my observations and insights not critical judgements.

First of all when we entered the church Lobby there was the the standard Starbucks type of coffee shop. So one could buy a mocha latte to go into the service. Another thing is I noticed there was a conspicuous absence of people not carrying a Bible. But then maybe they had it on their smartphones. But then I learned later you really did not need a Bible in the church.

As I went into the service I noticed there were comfortable seats. That's fine. One wants to be comfortable in the service. My friend wanted to sit up close to where the worship band was. As we got close to the stage I noticed the nice subdued colored lights. And I had heard of such. But I actually saw a smoke machine. Interesting. Even more interesting was the scent that was coming from the smoke. I guess they wanted little Catholic appeal.:)

The young 20-something hip band came out and amped up the worship service. I must admit a lot of the songs I did not know. Thus I quietly raised my hands and prayed in tongues.

There was one point that the worship band actually played a song that pointed to Christ and the cross. To me this was the high point of the service. I actually got caught up in the words of the worship song. Not realizing and being close to the worship band. I committed the unpardonable sin and started shouting praises to God who had borne my sin on the cross. I was really caught up in worshipping Christ at that point. However I later learned that shouting praises to God was not allowed or acceptable in that church. How on Earth anyone heard me I don't know given the fact that the worship band was quite loud in the church. But a man came to my right side and asked me, and in a not-so-gentle tone, "To be quiet." When I asked him could one not shout the praises of God in the church. He said, "In order Stop being a distraction." I complied with his request. But certainly did not have any desire to continue worshipping in the church. If I had not been with someone else I would have walked out.

The pastor came and spoke some devotional thoughts about Father's Day. In all honesty I can't really tell what point he was making. There was a scripture or to put up on the video. This is why the people did not really need a Bible. But the pastor briefly alluded to the scriptures and then presented some nice thoughts about being a father. The worship leader came up afterwards and started saying this was a great word from the pastor. But then maybe he picked up on something I didn't.

Near the end the pastor spoke about the outreach to the unchurched coming up in July. Not to the lost or of the unconverted. But to the unchurched. The Pastor said that in the month of July they would be talking about movies. And drawing truth about God from the hip movies that were playing. I interpreted this was how they reach the unchurched. I guess they want to show the unchurched how hip church going is.

I left at the church pretty disheartened and sad. Not so much as to me being rebuked during the only high point of the service. But came to realize that it was so shallow. Some have said that the American church is a mile wide and an inch deep. When I look at this particular megachurch that is what I thought.

Thinking what is coming up on the church in America. Thinking about this particular church. But then this particular church being a reflection of the mega church in America. I wonder how such churches will stand in the storm of persecution that will surely come up on this land. But then such churches may very well be the ones that will be doing the persecuting. This paragraph is simply my own insight.

I believe God allowed me to go to the church last night to see how far from Christ and His word the American mega church has really gotten.

I found myself praying for the church. I found myself praying that if there is a remnant there. That they would deepen their faith walk with Christ. For surely they will be a need for such a deep faith in Christ to endure what is to come.

May God have mercy on us.

**Re: My Visit to a Church Last Night - posted by narrowpath, on: 2016/6/19 13:37**

bear it like your Master, bearmaster, welcome to the club!

Last time I shared how I got rebuked by the pastor and an elder for daring to pray in public. These services appeal to man's natural emotions, but not to the spirit. It is really seductive.

These are signs of our times, this is a global trend, we will soon find them persecuting us. Therefore we must find home fellowships. In my house church manage to get by without smoke machines light shows and video walls, subwoofers, and laser canons.

**Re: Was it an Emergent Church? - posted by docs (), on: 2016/6/19 13:52**

I went to one of their services and was impressed with how much it was designed for the comfort of the attendees. Coffee shops entering and coffee tables set up right in front of the pulpit so as to be comfortable during the sermon. Severe dressing down to the point of most being grubby in the house of the Lord. The preacher wore black jeans and tennis shoes and a black tee shirt as he spoke.

I'm convinced though there are some mega churches that are doing right by the Lord. Every single one can't be bad I don't think. Some got large because the Lord gave them legitimate growth in my opinion and they are preaching the gospel in some of them. It's a different thing today with all the mixture.

**Re: Narrowpath, on: 2016/6/19 13:59**

Amazing how our experiences are similar my brother. Don't feel quite so alone now. :- ) also your insights are the same as mine :)

... Therefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. So, let us go to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. But here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come...Hebrews 13:13-14.

I would say brother we are in pretty good company being outside the camp with Jesus at the cross.

**Re: - posted by narrowpath, on: 2016/6/19 16:07**

anyone else outside the camp to join bearmaster and myself :)?

**Re: , on: 2016/6/19 16:08**

I am outside the camp, looks like I am in good company :).....bro Frank

**Re: - posted by Lysa (), on: 2016/6/19 16:30**

I may go visit at times but my tent will always be staked outside the camp!!!

**Re: My Visit to a Church Last Night - posted by DEADn (), on: 2016/6/19 16:38**

I am not into the tongues deal and I would agree that if you were causing a disturbance then the elder was right to tell you to calm down a bit.

The last 2 churches I attended were mega churches. One of them is more in line with Rick Warren type of preaching. I left after 3 years. It felt more like a self esteem type of cult. The other one was a baptist church. It has a concert look to the stage and the main guy on the worship team was a hipster type. That was iffy for me. The songs were more emotionally based and the preaching was somewhat ok but I spotted issues in some of it. I stayed there for 3 months. Then I found myself in a Presbyterian PCA church. Organ and piano only with hymnals. Straight up preaching. It is confessional which can be a bit robotic. My only disagreement there is infant baptism. Pastor always explains what it means but I don't agree with the timing of it. It is essentially the same as circumcision and he says the individual needs to fulfill their calling of their baptism when they get older. I find that just weird.

**Re: - posted by narrowpath, on: 2016/6/19 17:09**

I am not into the tongues deal and I would agree that if you were causing a disturbance then the elder was right to tell you to calm down a bit.

tongues deal? Never knew there was such a thing. What is that?

disturbance: who disturbed whom? Did Blaine disturb the meeting or the elder Blaines worship?

Luke 19:40 And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

If Jesus never took offense at true worship in whatever feeble, raw, innocent human form, why should we?

**Re: , on: 2016/6/19 18:24**

Brothers it was not my praying in tongues that got me rebuked. I was praying quietly to myself and lifting my hands in worship to the Lord while the loud worship songs were being played.

It was when the worship band actually sang a song of substance talking about Christ and the cross. I started shouting praises to God like blessed be the Lamb that was slain who bore our sin. Or shouting something like Hallelujah what a Savior! This is what got me in trouble. And in all honesty as loud as a worship band was. I didn't think I was causing a distraction to anyone except the gentleman that rebuked me. Perhaps he didn't like the message of the cross. I don't know.

But I do look forward to this day in Revelation  
When John writes,

... and they cry out with A LOUD VOICE saying, "SALVATION TO OUR GOD WHO SITS ON THE THRONE AND TO THE LAMB."...Revelation 7:10

I doubt very seriously if we would be rebuked for shouting the joy of our salvation in the presence of God and the Lamb. All I was trying to do was just express that joy my heart that God had given a sinner such as me salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. I was simply praising Him for His glorious salvation.

If I had been in a church that was liturgical or Presbyterian or where exuberance was kept more under control. I would curtail my enthusiasm in worship. Realizing that the saying of an "amen" could be disruptive in the service. But given I was in an amped-up worship service. I didn't think that shouting the praises of God would offend anybody. Imagine my surprise.

Anyway brothers and sisters, Narrowpath, Apolous, Lisa and myself would gladly welcome your fellowship outside the camp. :-)

...CAPS are merely to simulate the shouting of our great joy in heaven...

**Re: - posted by dolfan (), on: 2016/6/19 21:31**

After visiting with those in the Gospel Fellowships/SI gathering in Atlanta I walked away with two overarching thoughts:

1. We are doing the right thing.
2. We are doing it in the right way.

I mean by that our own home fellowship.

Still processing other things and praying, as we have been, for the Lord to show us Himself and for Him to lead us.

Also, we learned something new and we are seeking Him about it, too. Not an -ism, not a technique, but a work by the Holy Spirit and will be praying on it.

**Re: My Visit to a Church Last Night - posted by browny, on: 2016/6/19 22:11**

Yes, I am there also, outside the camp.

**Re: , on: 2016/6/20 1:51**

I have been outside the camp for many years, mainly due to being too sick to survive a whole service through noise sensitivity, inability to sit upright for so long, parking access problems etc and just general lack of interest in making attendance for the chronically sick possible.

Until a year ago when it was pressed upon me that my local church which is two minutes walk away, and Emergent, is at least reading the scriptures publically and in my vicinity and I should support that.

Moreover, the early morning communion service lasts one hour with a very small congregation, so I not only began to attend, but volunteered as a lay reader so I am the one doing the readings.

This has been possible because the Lord has been leading me into ways of bringing healing to my body, through a dietary protocol which is grain, dairy, processed foods free and I have become much stronger.

There are some good things actually in Emergence and the church has been running a course on 'rethinking' evangelism and reaching out to the under privileged and marginalised, and there is a work going on in my city amongst ex-offenders which I managed to attend, which was amazing. It is growing rapidly, and seeing conversions all of the time. They provide a meal, testimony, prayers and worship. There are things like this going on all over the UK.

With my church being a joint Anglican and Methodist venture, the preaching is generally about Jesus to be accessible to

all and some visiting ministers do preach the gospel.

There are plenty of things that I would change, and no prayer meetings taking place, but the people genuinely want to serve the community which I often found lacking in some evangelical huddles I came across over the years.

At least the c of e recognises that things are very seriously wrong in the church and are seeking for answers. Perhaps God will use me, we shall see. At least this church has made it possible for a very sick person to have some contact with other humans, whereas the evangelical churches in the area, do not.

**Re: , on: 2016/6/20 2:15**

Brenda,

When you say your church is "Emergent", do you mean like Doug Pagget, Rob Bell, Universalism, No such thing as Hell, Contemplative Centering chanting, etc.? That's what it means in America & it's a haunt of jackals filled with every kind of unbiblical heresy & if you really study it out (Elliot Nesch? Has a video on YouTube about the roots & history of the Emergent church movement I think called something like "Real roots of the Emergent Church" or something?) it is mixed with New Age & Occult mixture to the core. Not trying to "go all GK Chesterson on you" or anything, & I'm not out "heresy hunting", but the Emergent church movement is full of things the Apostles addressed even in the scriptures & would address no doubt were they alive today. I am sorry the other churches don't make accommodations for you & I hear most of the denominational churches in buildings in the UK (that haven't been turned into mosques) are a lot like many of the ones in the USA - lukewarm or even in outright apostasy. This, among other things, is why I would recommend a good strong, Biblical house church of intimate close believers, elders, real fellowship, etc. Anyways, Joe Schimel also has a good expose on the Emergent Church called "Submerging Church" I Think? Also, one of the brothers in our fellowship wrote a mini-book warning of Rob Bell & his heretical teaching. You can find it at his site: "preachingjesuschrist.com". Anyways, I am not trying to harm you, judge you or pick a fight. Lord as my witness. But the Emergent Church is like the Gnostics the apostles warned of (& some Emergent circles actually are gnostic in some of their beliefs & teachings), so I speak from a heart of love & genuine concern.

God Bless,

Jeff

**Re: , on: 2016/6/20 5:01**

Thanks for your concern Jeff.

The services are pretty innocuous, being either the early morning traditional Anglican liturgy or the later 'modern' cafe church with nothing like the things you mentioned.

Some of the people that go are leaning towards liberalism or are nominal Christians who are merely church attenders who are pretty quiet about their faith, and then some of the people are reading the less extreme Emergent stuff. There is a big variation in it.

I hear the odd thing that disturbed me, like RC being an acceptable part of the church. You can see the subtle influences that will lead to a one world church, but it is all under key and there is nothing greatly amiss. No occultism but one or two are a bit on the new age side but are not trying to change others.

The church is unusual being mainly middle class professionals as it is on a big estate full of teachers, prison workers, police etc so no way out people, they are pretty conformist. Heck, I am much more out there than them with my beliefs on sanctification.

The main thrust is to provide for the community in children's work and the focus is always on Jesus though it is a bit of a middle class social club.

I am reading up on what I can, and have found some of the teaching going round on Fresh Expression good in finding ways to take the gospel out rather than just wait for people to come in. I have been inspired by some of what I have heard going on like the work amongst bikers in Wales.

I have been able to give my testimony and preach the the gospel at the fellowship groups. I have freedom to say what I want and believe what I want which you find in these Anglican liberal churches, but then, with it being Methodist too, I can bring John Wesley into the discussion and tell them what he taught. Very few have done much reading.

I don't have much choice otherwise. I certainly will not go to any charismatic gatherings with the unholy noise they make, completely oblivious to any present with neurological damage or other frail people and besides, they will not have their services accessible to non charismatics by leaving out the things that divide and make people feel alienated. They could do their own stuff midweek.

At least my church have services where anyone can feel welcome which in the present state of spiritual deadness and lack of revival!, is the best you can get IMO. I don't see any church doing much better. The evangelicals may be better doctrinally but cold and judgemental.

Fortunately for me my own faith and beliefs are rock solid and do not depend on what men say, I was taught by the Lord in my many years of isolation. I tell you this though, I think that churches like mine are much more open to revival as they know they have got things wrong and are seeking answers.

There are evangelicals on the estate that travelling into the city to attend charismatic churches (no house churches as such though there are local midweek meetings that I have attended and go to one for fellowship midweek that is another Anglican, non charismatic but evangelical). That church is inaccessible for disabled parking. If they attended our local church instead it would have a huge impact on the community.

**Re: , on: 2016/6/20 5:54**

This morning in my time with the Lord prayed for the particular church I visited this last Saturday night. I believe God all owed me to go or I should say directed me to go there. If nothing else to intercede for them.

When I left the church last Saturday night I kept thinking with such shallowness. They will not withstand what is coming. So I prayed that the pastors as the leaders in this church in their own walk With Jesus would go deeper in him. And then encourage their flock to do so. For surely if we do not have a deep walk with Jesus in this hour. We will not endure the storm that is surely to come up on us in America.

**Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2016/6/20 9:01**

Hi Bear-

Thought I'd toss out a question.

Is it better to be mile wide and an inch deep or zero miles wide and no depth? Because many people go to "mega-churches" that would not go otherwise.

My church is similar to what you describe- however our pastor does preach the word and does preach the hard stuff when needed. In fact we are in a series doing a "bird's eye" view of the Bible for the next 9 months for the sole purpose of getting folks acquainted with what is in the scriptures. We have weekly life groups that go deeper.

Now I have to admit some of the marketing aspects of the church do gag me. However, those same things that gag me get many into the church that would otherwise not go. Once they visit they generally stay. They hear the word, grow in the Lord, and start serving, generally.

Last May over 300 people were baptized on a single Sunday. Hearing their testimonies leads me to believe they have likely been genuinely converted. Of course you can never know for absolute sure. Many were baptized in the clothes they came to church in because they heeded the call to be baptized if they believe and not put it off.

It is not the head pastors job to spoon feed the congregation. As our pastor says, his desire is that people develop into self-feeders. I would certainly agree that when the pastor does preach, he needs to preach undiluted truth. If I felt our pastor was not doing this, I would leave.

I have determined after being part of several churches that there is no perfect church.

In a church like the one we attend there is a "subset" of folks who find each other who want to go deeper and we do. W

e all have similar qualms about certain aspects of the church, but I guess we intend to be part of the solution and not cause dissension by griping and complaining about things that ultimately don't matter. What matters is if people are being saved and becoming disciples of Jesus Christ. And I would have to say that in my church they are. Not everyone, but a good amount.

**Re: Todd , on: 2016/6/20 9:28**

Brother I praise God that you have found a church that is preaching God's word. And that is encouraging their congregation to go deeper. Just because of church is a mega church does not mean there is not good in them. What I was sharing was simply my experience visiting this one church. And I think the Lord had me at in there so I could pray and intercede that they would go deeper in the Lord.

Just sending my thoughts bro.

**Re: Todd - posted by Renee\_is\_His (), on: 2016/6/20 10:03**

I agree brother, that there is no such thing as a perfect church - that goes without saying.

What I have been searching for is not perfection (for it would cease to be perfect as soon as I showed up), but purity of heart. Is there a genuine desire to go on in the Lord, being perfected in the beauty of holiness? A genuine love for the Lord and for His people? A desire to be conformed to His image? To know Him, in the power of His resurrection AND in the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death?

I thank God that He has led me to a small house fellowship that does contain some of these elements. I too am outside the camp.

**Re: , on: 2016/6/20 10:28**

I'm sure we have heard of the camp meetings that used to be held on the 19th and 20th Century. Maybe we need to have some meetings but call them outside the camp meetings. :-)

**Re: , on: 2016/6/20 10:29**

What does "perfection" mean to everyone?

Does it mean that no one commits any sin or does it mean that everyone is holding fast to the Head and walking in love towards one another?

**Re: , on: 2016/6/20 10:46**

Hi Todd, you asked.....

"Is it better to be mile wide and an inch deep or zero miles wide and no depth? Because many people go to "mega-churches" that would not go otherwise."

Its a good topical question considering the days in which we live, for I am sure you agree, we do not live in a vacuum. So, let me answer your question with a question. Is it better to be lukewarm than to be cold? That seems to be what you are suggesting, perhaps it is not, but how would you answer that question or better still, how would you imagine Jesus would answer that question?.....bro Frank

**Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2016/6/20 11:52**

Hey frank-

I guess it depends on how you define "lukewarm."

I would agree going to church on Sunday and forgetting about God the rest of the week is lukewarm at best. The problem is that there is a gradient.

EDIT: I understand Jesus hates lukewarmness and that he set the gradient at hot or cold. But even so there are varying degrees of "hot". Boiling water is hot but molten lava is hotter.



It would seem if a person is actively pursuing the Lord he would be on the right side of the gradient.

**Re: , on: 2016/6/20 13:29**

Todd,

I believe a lukewarm church would produce and attract lukewarm Christians. Not saying that yours is lukewarm, but just stating my opinion. Not going to get into the actual temperature of hot :)..... bro Frank

**Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2016/6/20 15:02**

The matter of "lukewarmness" is pretty interesting.

Is a lukewarm believer a true believer? If so, is it better to be lukewarm than a non-believer?

I think the true import of what Jesus said in Rev is that lukewarm believers make him sick (i.e. vomit). I can certainly understand why he feels that way. The issue I suppose is whether a lukewarm Christian is really a Christian.

Perhaps that is a discussion for another thread.

**Re: My Visit to a Church Last Night - posted by Amastra (), on: 2016/6/20 17:23**

My wife and I had a similar experience two or three years ago while visiting family. My brother went to what is probably a megachurch in the making to which he had been invited and we went with him. It had the coffee shop, strobe lights, booming music, and theater seats (don't recall if there was smoke). As the music was booming the worship leader yelled, "Let's dance!" and everyone started jumping around like a bunch of jumping beans; very strange.

I do struggle with having a critical spirit so I don't want to sound as if I'm self-righteous, but it was tough to sit through.

My wife and I left quietly when everyone was doing their hippety hop but my brother's friend followed us in the parking lot and asked if anything was wrong. I may have been a bit ungracious in saying something like, "if I wanted this I would have gone to the disco last night."

It definitely seemed much more like an entertainment venue than a church. Admittedly, I didn't stay for the preaching.

Scott

**Re: , on: 2016/6/20 17:32**

Todd,

I believe there is only one reference to "lukewarm," in the Scriptures. If Jesus says He will vomit you out of His mouth, I think it can be safe to say that at best, this is a very precarious category to fall into. He goes on to counsel the same people to get treasure that is refined in the fire. They believe that they are rich but they are poor, they believe that they are blessed but they are wretched. They believe that they are clothed but they are naked. They believe that they can see but they are blind.

And so, if they are rich in the material blessings of this world and they are focused upon it, it may be that they desire to be wealthy and are discontent. If the Lord says that the folks in Rev 3 from Laodicea required white rainment or white wedding clothes to cover their nakedness then He also says this in Matthew 20.....

And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.

(Mat 22:11-14)

These are all the words and admonitions of the Lord. So I cannot say who fits into the categories of these words whether it is churches or individuals, but God knows. But they are His words and we should measure ourselves against what the Lord says and not against the lowest common denominator of behaviour in the lukewarm times in which we live. These words of Jesus carry danger with them, for the man in Matt 22 is taken away bound hand and foot and cast into outer darkness.



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rkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Jesus Himself says that many are called but few are chosen.....  
.bro Frank

**Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2016/6/20 18:33**

Indeed- it is exceedingly sobering.