

From: Mike Rice <miker@grubertool.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 14, 2011 1:04 PM
To: leturner@charter.net
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Subject: How do we get people back in church?

Pastor Turner,

I told my 6 year old grandson last Sunday that I was going to church. He asked me "Why? " I told him "To thank God for all of the things He does, after all, He made each of us...and the sun and sky, and the moon and stars." Yea, but the guy just stands up there and talks for an hour." he responded, referring to the Catholic services he's attended. Hmm...I remember thinking the same thing when I was 19 years old. Come to think of it, I remember asking my father why he didn't go to church and he said "I don't believe half the crap the priest says and besides, too much religion isn't good for you. My best advice is to treat others like you want to be treated." Back then, I stopped going to church too.

I bring this up because today's discussion in the Christian community has focused on the question of why church attendance is shrinking. The simple answer is that our society does not value what churches have to offer. Raised by agnostic parents in a society that censors God in the public square, and demonizes those who believe, leaves new generations looking elsewhere for spiritual teaching. With educators, "scientists of the day", and pop culture teaching us that our "animal" instincts are simply part of an evolutionary chain of meaningless chance, it's no wonder there's faith in nothing.

But the Christian churches also share in the decline of attendance because over the past 80 years, the Bible has been revised, sanitized, and franchised in an attempt to conform with new "scientific discoveries" (Scopes trial 1926), to appease different segments of the secular world (atheists, divorce, pro-abortion, adulterers, homosexuals...). Pulpits once filled the sanctuary with the Pure and Holy Word of God, bringing a message of Salvation from Genesis to Revelation. Precept by precept, the building blocks of Faith were taught to congregations, followed by real-life examples of God's work in action; a sort of instruction manual for the congregants.

Most in today's society do not have the basic biblical background to understand a simple sermon. Take the following sermon;

1. My dear friends, I'm here to tell you that God loves you. Yes, God watches over you and cares for your needs.
2. Eons ago, God brought man into being.

3. The greatest of man's abilities is to love, as God loves. We're taught to love our neighbor.
4. That love is demonstrated when we help the poor and help our neighbor.
5. In fact, God tells us to love our enemy
6. We must learn to forgive our enemies so that God will forgive us
7. We should not be judgmental; after all, the Bible says "judge not lest you be judged."
8. When we begin to do these things, people will see God's love in us.
9. God hears our prayers so let us pray; "our Father who art in Heaven..."
10. Go in peace...

An 18th century Christian would understand this message in a positive Biblical manner. Today's secular churchgoer, however, listens and thinks;

1. God doesn't even know I exist, how could he love me? If he watched over me and cared, I wouldn't have all these problems...arthritis, my kids got sick, I got laid off. Yea, god really cares...if there is a god!
2. Eons ago we evolved from some slime. God had nothing to do with it.
3. Love...oh that's great. Jim at work must be a great christian because he loves every woman he meets, married or not! Love your neighbor alright, but if it's my wife, I'll kick his you know what.
4. Help the poor...if they're so poor, why are they all fat? Look at all the welfare fraud. Go to one of those Thanksgiving dinners for the poor and you might find a handful of poor, the rest are fat slobbs sucking off of everyone else.
5. Love my enemy? I don't think so, and shame on me if I did.
6. I'll forgive my enemy when he's dead and buried.
7. I'll judge whoever I want. If we didn't judge, every scumbag would do whatever they want. Where does he come up with this crap?
8. Oh yea...I've seen those hypocrites who smile and act holy on Sunday, but are some of the most vicious people I know the rest of the week. If that's how god is, I don't want anything to do with it.
9. Prayer, are you kidding me? That the last thing you do when nothing else works. I prayed a thousand times when I was younger and nothing ever happened. My grandma still died...my best friend still died in an accident...I'm laid off with no job, and this guy says pray? Oh I can do the lords prayer...I've done this a thousand times.
10. Yea, we'll all go in peace, at least until we get out the door.

In today's world and with today's churchgoers, this message should be broken down into ten basic sermons.

1. Who is God and why does he love me? (What a great sermon)
2. Who are we, what are we, where are we, when and why are we?
3. Love, what is it? Are there different types of love? Why are we to love? Where does it say all of that?
4. Help the poor...my neighbor? Who are they, what can I do, and why?
5. Why should I love my enemy? Where and why does it say that?
6. Same with forgive my enemy. Where and why?
7. Do not judge? There's got to be more to it than that? What is the role of the church, family, and civil government?
8. People will see God's love in me only after the Holy Spirit has convicted me of my sin, showed me the need for the redemptive Blood of Christ, I've repented and received Christ in my heart.
9. Prayer is the power of the Christian. Why, when, where and what should I pray for. Give me examples.
10. What is peace, where does the Bible talk about peace, and how do I find it?

These ten sermons filled with biblical chapter and verse are the types of sermons we need today. Empty sermons filled with meaningless clichés ring hollow with the unsaved.

But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 1 Cor 2:14

Let us show our community how to "Spiritually discern" the things of God. Let's help our community feel the Power of God when they walk through the doors to the sanctuary. Let them feel the Holiness of His presence as they enter.

Lord Jesus, bless this message...

Mike Rice