

Why We're Not Going To Church

There are many reasons why people no longer go to church. According to several surveys, the number of used-to-be church goers no longer going to church is growing, especially in the young-adult, twenty-somethings. The following is a brief list of reasons. Some of them may be found, discussed in more detail, in the book entitled "already gone - Why your kids will quit church and what you can do to stop it," by Ken Ham & Britt Beemer with Todd Hillard. (Available from www.AnswersInGenesis.org) (See also the articles "**Should I Go To Church**" & "**What Keeps People From Believing ...?**")

Years ago before our societies were so busy and so entertainment driven, churches were the center of the community. Church is where people went for social enjoyment, and support & encouragement from friends. Church was often the meeting house for all sorts of town meetings. It was the place to go to see people and discuss concerns of the day as well as to study God's word, and praise & worship God.

Today there are so many other activities which compete with the church and church time. Church no longer has the priority in many people's lives as it once had years ago. We have become a very busy and selfish society which is consumed with selfish pleasures and being entertained. People often sleep-in during church time or go to ball games and outdoor activities (as hunting, fishing and trips) during church service time. [Just because you are away from church doing other activities doesn't mean you can't also worship God, but seldom is time taken to worship God when people participate in activities outside of church.]

When twenty-somethings were asked why they no longer attended church, one of the top reasons was that they were bored there. They are either not entertained or they are not hearing what they want to hear (not enough Scripture teaching, apologetics, life applications, etc.). For several years now our society has put great emphasis on entertaining our kids. Kids feel they must be entertained constantly. Talking and texting on cell phones, playing electronic games, surfing the internet, watching TV and movies, etc. occupy most of their time. Many churches today work very hard to make sure kids are entertained to try to keep them coming to church. Unfortunately though many kids will go to youth activities in the church, but may seldom, if ever, attend worship services with adults. They fail to realize that church is also about worshiping, praising and thanking God. It is not all about getting something for themselves. As they grow up, if they are not used to going to worship services with adults, then there is no place they will feel comfortable going once they are too old for youth programs.

Some churches have a problem truly welcoming visitors or new members; while others are cliquy and tend to ostracize people who are different than they are. When people do not feel accepted by members of their church or by any church, they learn that it is easier to just stay home than go to church and be rejected or ignored and not truly cared for. Such attitudes may cause people to reject God or Christianity or cause them to look for other ways to worship and study God's word. They may find comfort in watching a church service on the television or listening to a preacher on the radio or just reading their Bible or biblical devotional at home. But this is not the same as fellowshiping with other believers who sincerely love and care for them.

Some people question Christianity when they see so many denominations. “If the Bible is true, why do so many groups disagree with what it says?” & “Why aren’t other religions just as good?” & “There must be many ways to get to heaven - not just one.” What they do not realize is that the Bible is God-inspired (with much evidence to support that it is) and more reliable than any other religious book (See **“Is Jesus Really The Only Way?”**). Also we have many denominations due to disagreements in peripheral things, but not due to faith in the basic doctrines (See **“Why Are There So Many ... ?”**).

People often see church leaders and other members as hypocrites - they tell people how they are supposed to live according to the Bible, but they do not live that way themselves. They do not practice what they preach. But everyone must remember that we are all human; we make mistakes. We are born with a sin nature, so it is human nature to do wrong. Christians are supposed to do their best to avoid sinful things and turn away from sinful lifestyles, but they occasionally slip up (See **“What Keeps People From Believing ...?”**).

Kids today have been indoctrinated in the idea of tolerance. So many of them have difficulty with church members who won’t compromise their views - like Jesus being the only way to heaven (See **“Only God Can Form a Basis for Truth”**).

Morals in our society, as a whole, have changed drastically too and the Bible is intolerant to many of the immoral views we now hold as a country. Therefore many people see the Bible as old-fashioned, out of date, and out of touch with reality, so it is not relevant to them personally. Our kids have been taught by society that there are no absolute truths; all truth is relative. Again, our society is being brainwashed by our mass media as Hollywood, television, our news media, etc. Each generation, as a whole, is slipping further in their moral beliefs and not taking responsibility for their actions. They are choosing to ignore the biblical teachings and making excuses for, what they believe, the Bible’s unreliability, in order to make themselves feel better about themselves and their decisions (See **“Prayer in School Affects all of Society”** & **“No Stopping on the Slippery Slope”**).

Liberal, secular, humanistic, non-Christian leaders learned a long time ago how to reach our children and how to influence them. Remove the Bible from schools to remove the basis for absolute truth and moral behavior, then teach them tolerance and acceptance of immoral lifestyles and decisions. Also take away parent notification so kids can learn to do whatever they please without moral guidance. Since children have been given this freedom to live contrary to biblical teachings, they do not want an organization, like a church, telling them that their decisions and actions are wrong. Unfortunately many churches around the country are caving in and showing tolerance and acceptance of such behavior without showing people that such living is contrary to biblical teaching. As a result we are seeing less respect for God and the Bible, for churches and moral teachings. According to a 1993 report in the article **“Prayer in School Affects all of Society”** - we know that the removal of prayer and the Bible are not the cause of all social ills, but “Since prayer was removed from public school classrooms in 1962, we have had a six-fold increase in violent crime, our divorce rate has tripled, births to single mothers have increased five-fold, and the teenage suicide rate has tripled.” Since then it has only worsened along with rates and acceptance of abortion, homosexuality and gay marriage.

Premarital sex has also been normalized by the entertainment industry creating a drastic rise in its consequences of unwanted pregnancies, abortions, broken families, fatherless homes, STD's and emotional disorders especially among teens and young adults.

So What Do We Do?

Churches often tell people *what* to believe, but not *why* to believe. Satan, through a simple idea and suggestion, caused Adam and Eve to doubt the Word of God. Today, doubt in God's Word is what is causing people to distrust God and the Bible. More and more of man's ideas about the origins of things in nature is used to question God's Word recorded in the Bible. People are being taught, even in churches, that man's ideas about historical science (such as the "Big Bang" and life happening by chance, animals evolving from lower to higher life forms over millions of years, and man evolving from the apes) are "fact," so we must reinterpret the accounts in Genesis to make them fit the "facts." So if Genesis must be reinterpreted, other parts of the Bible can be reinterpreted too to fit man's views, since the Bible is obviously not reliable if it has to be reinterpreted. (See "**How To Reach Non-Believers Today**")

Unfortunately, most churches do not know or teach the truth, that there are many scientific evidences which support the creation, flood, and tower of Babel accounts in Genesis and the amazing reliability of the Bible, and discredit man's evolutionary views. Churches need to teach these scientific evidences so their congregations will be able to defend the Word of God when outsiders question His Word and when members of their church have questions or doubts.

We must continue to teach about Jesus and the gospel, but don't let the foundation of members' beliefs crumble because we can't defend the Bible from its beginning in Genesis. Answer their questions by giving them evidence to support the Bible, and watch their faith in Jesus grow due to their knowing they can trust the Bible. What about miracles and fulfilled prophecy in the Bible - did they really happen? Well, that all depends on whether the Bible can be trusted. Do we trust it because our church tells us to believe, or do we trust what it says because we have seen the evidence for its reliability?

When we as a culture no longer trust the Bible, "the structure of Christianity (its morality, its Christian worldview) collapses, to be replaced by a man-centered structure where moral relativism would pervade the culture. That is what we have seen across Europe, and before our very eyes in America." (*Already Gone ...*, p.104)

Where are people going to learn the evidence for biblical reliability and for our true origins? They won't get it from our typical educational system or our mass media, both of which are progressively teaching anti-Christian morals and anti-Christian worldviews. The best way to teach biblical reliability to our society is through our churches. Find ways to incorporate evidences for biblical reliability and the truth of Genesis into Sunday School classes, church services, youth activity groups, Vacation Bible School, and special programs. Repeat successful programs and encourage members to invite others to these special presentations.

Just as we repeat the teachings of Christmas and Easter every year, we must repeat the teachings of biblical reliability to keep it fresh in our understandings and to keep

reaching new members. Have, as part of a new member packet, handouts on biblical reliability. Also remember, we learn by repetition, so find several ways to teach this message and share successful ideas with other churches.

As Ken Ham, in the book *Already Gone ...*, put it, “We see it as our job to defend the Christian faith, stand on the authority of God’s Word without compromise, and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. And when the relevancy of the Word of God is restored, lives will be changed as the power and authority of the living Word of God empowers their lives. Then, we believe, these individuals will permeate the culture by living truthfully and honestly in harmony with godly principles ... and then culture we be changed from the bottom up.” (*Already Gone ...*, p.106)

Our goal in retaining young members in our churches should be to entertain them enough to keep them interested in fellowshiping with church members, but also to teach them about the Bible and the importance of putting God first in their lives. They need to be shown how truly reliable the entire Bible is and how the Bible relates to their lives. They should learn how to defend the Bible against critics and their claims of contradictions and errors in the Bible. We must teach them and present them with material which supports the overwhelming evidence for the Bible’s reliability before liberal professors and others give them contradictory materials and ideas (See “**Evidence for Biblical Reliability**” & “**The Bible Stands Alone**” articles). Also see “**Contradictions in the Bible - Why?**” to show them that there are really no contradictions - just misinterpretations. Once they understand that the Bible can be trusted, then you have built a foundation for teaching the gospel and Scriptures that relate to their life and their problems.

We need to invite and entertain immoral, lost and unconcerned children and adults into our churches. We must learn to accept them, realizing they need to be saved, but we must not tolerate their immoral lifestyles which contradict biblical teachings. We must stress to them our love and sincere concern for them and our willingness to help with their needs. We must show them *why* we believe immoral lifestyles are wrong and encourage them to accept the Bible and it’s teachings. *Warning:* for those who refuse to attempt to leave their immoral lifestyle and pose a threat of influencing our children or other church members, they must be asked to leave with the understanding that someone will be available to talk with them when they are ready to talk. Many hearts are hardened and they will not listen because they are not ready to leave their lifestyle or to accept the Lord yet. You may try to keep in touch with them, but do not give them opportunities to influence others in your church.

Since most kids lose their faith and leave the church (mentally) by Middle School or High School, we must recognize the problems in our church and reach children soon and often. We learn best by repetition. What are our kids being taught repetitively? They are often bombard by secular, non-Christian values many hours a day every day; but how often are they taught Christian values, shown proper behavior, and reminded about the reliability of the Bible and the importance of living by its teachings (and the consequences of rebelling against it). It is the parents’ and churches’ responsibility to teach our children and train them to be responsible citizens and mature Christians.