

Being the Church Instead of Going to Church

What comes to your mind when you hear the word “Church”? Gallup data from 2021-2023 shows that 56% of American adults attend a religious service once a year or not at all.¹ So, it is safe to say that half of the country is unchurched. With this number climbing decade after decade, it is simple to assume that most people my age and younger have never had any significant spiritual influence in their life. I’m afraid that is just the start of the bad news. If you were to ask strangers at your local grocery store why they do not attend any religious service, you would probably get a wide variety of answers, but I know many would sound like this:

- "The church is filled with hypocrites." (Matthew 23:27-28)
- "They're filled with judgmental people who are ready to tell you where you are wrong, and think they are better than you because they have this religious list of things they Do and Don'ts." (Romans 2:1-3, Luke 18:9-14)
- "Religion is for the weak-minded; I consider myself too educated and smart for that sort of thing." (1 Corinthians 1:18-25)
- "I don't see a need for Jesus." (John 14:6)
- "I have family members who say they're Christian, but they aren't any different than I am." (Matthew 7:20, James 2:14-17)

These examples paint a clear picture: the church today could easily be diagnosed with most Christians showing very little of Jesus Christ in their daily lives. Most of our services have been reduced to habits and traditions, where we compare ourselves to one another, wanting to look like we have it all together. (Galatians 6:4)

We go through the motions so much that we resemble Samson, who did not realize that God was no longer with him. (Judges 16:20) There also seems to be a growing number of people who have given up or are close to giving up on the church. I believe there are two main reasons for this. First, people have experienced “church hurt.” It’s no easy thing, but unfortunately, sometimes God’s people—who should be showing fruits of the Spirit like love, patience, joy, kindness, and self-control—are instead described as hypocritical, busybody, phony, or gossips. (Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 4:31-32) Second, a "lone ranger" mentality has brainwashed some to think that "my walk with Jesus is mine and doesn't affect you, and who are you to say anything to me about my walk; we can do church online and it's just fine." This lie completely cooperates with our isolationist culture and goes against God’s design for His church. (Hebrews 10:24-25, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27)

It is time we genuine believers learn how to be the Church instead of just going to church.

¹ Gallup. "Church Attendance Has Declined in Most U.S. Religious Groups." Published March 25, 2024. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/642548/church-attendance-declined-religious-groups.aspx>

Paul reminds us in Romans that the gospel is the answer to all our problems. (Romans 1:16) We must remember that the Kingdom of Heaven on earth is never built through the natural ability of the flesh, or programs, or institutions – it is built by the Holy Spirit! (Zechariah 4:6, John 15:5) The church has made two grave errors. First, the church has been running on the wrong power source, ourselves, and not on the power of the Holy Spirit. We have long forgotten that the same power that brought us out of death into life is the same thing that empowers my Christian life. (Ephesians 1:19-20, Philippians 2:13)

Lost people have no appeal to attend our worship services, and most saved people in our churches are immature, unfulfilled, and miserable, with no supernatural life showing up in our services. We go week in and week out, leaving the same as we came in. Many in our churches live what they think is normal Christianity when it is nowhere close to New Testament Christianity.

The second grave error I believe the church makes is, much like Esau, the church has traded its birthright—the gospel—for a bowl of success and worldly acceptance. (Genesis 25:29-34, Hebrews 12:16) The Gospel has been taken off the high biblical shelf and brought down to our level in the name of acceptance, tolerance, and outreach. We pull our punches, so to speak, to not upset the sinner. We do anything and everything to appease the lost into a comfortable, non-threatening environment, trying to remove any excuse for the sinner not to come to our churches. (1 Corinthians 2:1-5, Galatians 1:6-9) This seemingly small tweak goes unnoticed in most churches, but the disaster it leaves behind has become unavoidable in our country... This disaster is the erosion of the gospel's transformative power, resulting in lukewarm believers who lack spiritual depth, a church indistinguishable from the world, and ultimately, a mission that fails to genuinely draw people into radical discipleship.

If revival is to come to this country, then it must first come to the church. (2 Chronicles 7:14) This path can only be found through self-abandonment and a return to Biblical New Testament Christianity. Dear child of God, we must take God's word and allow it to heal our past and prepare us for our future as a part of a body in a local church. Jesus is not physically present here on this earth, and He has given His bride, the church, the role of being His representative. Despite its flaws and messiness, you cannot separate Jesus, the head, from His body, the church. (Colossians 1:18) Do not think that you can love Jesus and not be devoted to His bride. Now, the question is, what does New Testament Christianity look like? In my next blog, we are going to look closely at Ephesians 4:11-16 in an effort to see what God's word says a New Testament church should look like.