

Crazy for God

Pogo, a once-famous cartoon character, issued the famous and still-appropriate quote: "We have met the enemy and he is us." Truer words could not be spoken about the church and Christians today, and the fact that we are the root cause of all of America's problems. It's true!

It's easy to point fingers in (self-) righteous anger at those making horrific decisions. But they have an excuse: They're lost. As unbelievers, Satan has blinded their eyes (2 Cor. 4:4) to the truth. They see evil as good and good as evil and are unable to see the light of God's glory. They don't know what we know.

That's our fault. They're not going to church. So how are they going to know God loves them and wants them to spend eternity with Him unless someone outside the church (like you) tells them? And who's going to tell them unless someone (like your pastor) sends them? When's the last time one of your pastors told you their job is to equip you for ministry (Eph. 4:11) and sent you into the world as Christ's ambassador? That's a problem!

When the riots were raging across America, my wife, Karen, and I were watching a young man proudly standing on top of a burning police car in triumphant victory. As my anger raged, I was convicted in my spirit that I could easily be that young man, had my knowledge of God been limited to his. Based on what he believed to be truth, he was committing a righteous act. In fact, he was acting on the failure of Christians to tell him God loves him and has a plan to make his life prosper.

How Far We Have Fallen

In 1960, 70% of our population were regular church attenders. From the beginning of our country, the church was the center

of American life, with the Bible and memorization of Scripture being part of every public school's curriculum. In most areas, including mine, grade school kids were bused to churches every week for biblical training. It was "America the Beautiful." Homes were left unlocked and kids played outside after dark. The biggest offense in schools was chewing gum.

Our history books taught us that we were birthed as one nation under God, that all men are created equal, and that our republic would only stand so long as we are a moral and religious people. Churchgoers and non-churchgoers alike viewed the Ten Commandments as the ultimate descriptor of right and wrong. Wrongdoers knew they were doing wrong.

But America has become a post-Christian nation. From 1960 to 2019, half of our population moved from being "regular" church attenders to being "almost never" church attenders. Regular church attenders in America dropped to 20% of our population by pre-COVID 2019, and 30% of those have never returned. And then there's the challenge of finding a church that's still preaching the Word of God. According to a massive study of 50,000 sermons by Pew Research, only 10% of our sermons today even mention salvation. That's a problem!

Only 40% of our pastors, 28% of our associate pastors, 21% of evangelicals, 12% of our youth ministers and 6% of our population still hold a biblical worldview. Biblically illiterate Christians now believe there is no hell. And if there's no hell, there's no reason to save people from hell, which gives every Christian an excuse for not sharing their faith. That's a problem!

The failure of the church begins with our new norm for praise and worship. The great hymns of the church were largely replaced with choruses during the Jesus Revolution. But they were still scriptural and easy to memorize and sing during times of worship. God inhabits the praises of His people. When our worship times allow us to speak directly to God through

the words of songs we already know, feel and sing to God as our own words, our spirits are united with the Holy Spirit. It's a spiritual experience. But most Christians have never once had this experience, when it should be theirs weekly. That's a problem!

The pressure on music ministers to stay up with the times inspires them to focus on new songs every week with little or no thought on whether they will usher people into the presence of God. The purpose of praise and worship is to prepare us for the proclamation of the Word. But with only 28% of our music ministers having a biblical worldview, most of them view worship as a performance, and most Christians across America are now being prevented from worshipping God. That's a problem!

This problem is exacerbated because songwriting has become a huge business driven by sales quotas and marketing time schedules for new songs every week, many of them written by talented writers who don't even know God. This is a world away from the Fanny Crosbys, Isaac Watts and Charles Wesleys, who only wrote songs under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

This is why our worship services have been taken over by new songs that can't be sung unless they're read. They leave no opportunity to close your eyes and worship, if they are to be sung at all. The experience of corporate worship touching the throne of God has become almost nonexistent. Now it's about the energy, sound and beat, rather than the message and the melody's ability to usher us into God's presence. When the predominance of sound is coming from the stage rather than from the people, it's not worship; it's entertainment. And God's people are not stirred. That's a problem!

It's also become all but impossible to find a church that's not preaching mini-sermons for mini-Christians. The norm has become three-point, feel good sermons that will bring you back next week with your wallet to make you feel even better. When

pastors miss a service, their first questions on Monday morning are about how many people were there and how big the offering was. They rarely ask how many souls were saved because souls are rarely saved.

With the unending emphasis from our pulpits on being good people, most Christians believe being a good person makes them a good Christian. And because of the phrase “actions speak louder than words,” it’s also believed that being a good person is sharing your faith. But this is heresy! Being a good person, doing good things, doesn’t get you or anyone else into heaven. “For by grace are you saved through faith: it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8-9, KJV).

Missing: The Spirit and the Word

It’s a paradox: Most Christians believe the Bible is true and yet deny its truth. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6, MEV). Yet most evangelicals now believe there’s more than one way to heaven. Called “syncretism,” this involves the blending of ideas into a unique but inconsistent worldview that represents their personal preferences.

Researcher George Barna suggests that we may have 300 million worldviews in America today, with everyone making up their own version of truth and right and wrong. If pastors don’t have it right, how can biblically illiterate Christians get it right or tell it right to those around them? This is why so many Christians are becoming vocal purveyors of false teachings that depart from the truth. It’s called apostasy, and it’s rampant throughout the church today.

The Holy Spirit used to lead our church services, with no one leaving until He did. So many of my most intimate times with God were at the altars of our church before they were mysteriously removed. We had what was called the “after

service,” which might last for 10 minutes or two hours, depending on how the Spirit led after the formal service ended. At times, the presence of the Holy Spirit was so pervasive that we were afraid to move.

Those were the days when we went to church to worship God and hear His voice out of expectation—if not desperation—rather than obligation. Sunday was an all-day focus on God rather than a 90-minute, check-it-off-your-list experience.

Now the norm is church services that resemble production lines with a countdown clock, with no consideration for the leading of the Holy Spirit. Some pastors even replay videos of their sermons, which allows for no deviation or leading of the Spirit.

It’s become a numbers game, with the ones drawing the largest crowds and offerings winning. At the same time, those going to church today have never had greater needs or the greater need to feel God’s touch and hear His voice. Feel-good sermons are a complete disconnect with the needs of people today and are causing further drops in attendance.

People are going to church desperate to know how to apply the truth and power of God’s Word to their own problems and those of the world that seem insurmountable. The emptiness of a feel-good sermon has worn thin. If that’s your church experience today, regardless of how much you love your pastor, run to a pastor who’s unabashedly proclaiming the truth of God’s Word. Your pastor may already be thinking of leaving you. Over 40% of pastors have lost their joy and are considering leaving their pastorates at this very moment.

The leader of one of our largest denominations warned his pastors if they speak out on public policy, they may experience persecution. He’s fearing man more than God. This is why most of our churches closed during COVID and are afraid to speak out today on political issues. Without your pastor,

whom can you trust for spiritual guidance on how to judge candidates and issues and where to put your support? That's a problem!

God expects you to support and elect spiritual leaders who will pass God-honoring laws so we can live in peace. "But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you ... and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (Jer. 29:7, ESV).

God birthed America. Most of the signers of our Declaration of Independence were Christians. We would not have won our independence were it not for the "black robe regiment" of pastors and their church members who fought to create this country, which has done more to reach the lost than all the other countries in the world combined. Now we have pastors living in fear leading to Christians living in fear. We're in spiritual warfare, and our side isn't even showing up—as the church remains silent. That's a problem!

A Simple, Radical Solution

All of us have heard sermons on salt and light. But salt and light share only one characteristic. They both change their environments. Are you changing your environment, or is it changing you? The easier question to answer is whether the church is changing its environment, or is our environment changing the church? This places far more responsibility on all of us who are Christ-followers. It's up to us—up to you—to fill the void.

There's nothing ambiguous about Jesus calling you into full-time ministry. To be precise, Mark 16:15 (MEV) quotes Jesus as saying, "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Notice He didn't say, "Go, all of you with an outgoing personality or those who have been trained or called into ministry." And he didn't say, "Go into the world and pray, read your Bible and be a good person." Jesus

specifically commissioned you to proclaim His name to everyone, everywhere. There are no exceptions!

Jesus told us that honoring two commandments, loving Him and loving your neighbor as yourself, will fulfill all Ten Commandments. Here's how that works: When you love those around you as yourself, you're as concerned for their salvation as you are for your own. When God loves you, He's "salvationing" you. When you love those around you, He's "salvationing" them through you.

This takes your walk with the Lord to an entirely different level, from how you dress to the words you speak, your habits and indulgences, how you treat people, the things you talk about and laugh about and the pain you feel for those in distress. You fulfill all Ten Commandments and stop being the problem when you love those around you as yourself. That's why it's your Great Commission.

You can't save the world, but you can save your world. And if all of us save our worlds, we'll save the world. Over 80% of the unchurched already have at least one Christian in their life that they trust. We could ignite America with revival in 30 days if we wanted to. Do you want to, or do you want to remain the problem?

You stop being the problem when you start living for God's purpose, to "seek and save the lost" (see Luke 19:10). That's when you step into God's promise in Romans 8:28 to make everything in your life, for the rest of your life, work for good. That's the end of worry and the beginning of having the time of your life for the rest of your life.

It's so easy to become a force for correcting the problems. All it takes is childlike faith and obedience to the most basic Scriptures. In Romans 8:28, God promises to make everything in your life—from now until you get to heaven—work for good when you live for His purpose, *to seek and save the*

lost—to move everyone, every day, closer to Jesus. That's it!

The Bible says nothing about training or memorizing verses to share your faith. In fact, it says the opposite! Mark 13:11 says not to prepare in advance, and Luke 12:12 says the Holy Spirit will give you the words to say. All you must do is be ready (1 Pet. 3:15) to love on people. Jesus said they'll know you're His disciple by your love, not your sales pitch. Think about it. The best soul-winners are new Christians who have zero training.

This is where the fun begins, and you enter an intimate relationship with the Lord. The first unexpected, God-orchestrated conversation where you allow God to speak through you and change a life in front of you will explode your faith and change your life forever. In fact, there is no other way to experience this level of intimacy with God. That's the real reason He made faith-sharing your No. 1 responsibility: to ignite your life.

When you share your faith, your faith explodes along with your prayer life and Bible study. Everything in your life takes on purpose and meaning, and God makes everything in your life work for good.

God tells you why He insists that you share your faith in Isaiah 43:10a (ESV): “‘You are my witnesses,’ declares the Lord, ‘and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he [God].’” Notice He doesn't say that you will know more; He says “that you may know.”

Sharing your faith is everything. I doubt you've ever heard this before, but it's from God's mouth to your ears: Sharing your faith opens the door for you to know God.

And guess what? You'll no longer be the problem!

Barry Meguiar *is the third-generation president of Meguiar's*

Inc. He is also the founder and president of Ignite America, a ministry focused on mobilizing Christians to ignite America with revival. His television show Car Crazy aired for many years on the Discovery Channel, and his Ignite Your Life television show airs on Christian television networks in the United States and online. Ignite With Barry Meguiar radio features are heard daily on over 900 Christian radio stations, and Meguiar hosts a podcast by the same name. He has served on the Assemblies of God World Missions Board and has been honored with the National Religious Broadcasters' Billy Graham Award for Excellence in Christian Communications and Moody Theological Seminary's 1886 Legacy Award.