

Don't Give Up on the Church in America

In a recent interview, the "Bible Answer Man," Hank Hanegraaff, says watching pastors who act more like entrepreneurs focused on branding is part of the reason why he decided to leave evangelicalism and join an Eastern Orthodox Church.

I can appreciate Hank's heart in this matter and others who feel the same way—entrepreneurship has been an ongoing issue in our nation for many years, but let's not throw out the baby with the bathwater. Many churches are focusing on humility and a deeper walk with God. Don't judge evangelical churches in America based on what you see on Christian television.

Leonard Ravenhill said something many years ago that impacted my life: "Will we look back with shame as we remember nights of prayer and genuine gifts of the Holy Ghost? When we were not clock watchers, and our meetings lasted for hours, saturated with holy power? Have we no tears for these memories, or shame that our children know nothing of such power?" Many churches want to experience God and see lives radically changed; they are not self-focused.

Another concern of mine is that many are seeking tradition and ritual instead of humility and brokenness. I definitely cannot speak for all, but the majority of those I have known who switched to Eastern Orthodox or Roman Catholicism lacked a vibrant spiritual life—they needed tradition and ritualism to offset this deficit

In Duncan Campbell's book, *The Price and Power of Revival*, he made the following statement:

Here I would suggest that one of the main secrets of success in the early Church lay in the fact that the early believers believed in unction from on high and not entertainment from

men ... How did the early Church get the people? By publicity projects, by bills, by posters, by parades, by pictures? No! The people were arrested and drawn together and brought into vital relationship with God, not by sounds from men, but by sounds from heaven ... Unction is the dire and desperate need of the ministry today.

We must preach God's Word with genuine power via humility if we are to truly help others. Without God's authority and power, words are lifeless. Where are those with uncompromising power and authority in the pulpits today? The one thing that all of the great revivals in church history had is the one thing that we often lack—the genuine power of the Holy Spirit. The very thing that we need is the very thing that we are afraid of.

Many want the recognition but not the brokenness, the honor but not the humility, the limelight but not the loneliness: "Life-giving preaching costs the preacher much—death to self, crucifixion to the world, the travail of his own soul. Crucified preaching only can give life. Crucified preaching can come only from a crucified man" as E.M. Bounds said. And it was Spurgeon who said, "If you can do anything else, do it. If you can stay out of the ministry, stay out of the ministry." He understood the cost.

Additionally, many pastors struggle with pride. They're going to do things better than the church they left. Blinded by pride and convinced that God has called us to "do things right," we might think that we're more knowledgeable and in tune with the Spirit. Be careful here—it can be a prideful attitude, not God, that is leading. Spirit-filled preaching always begins with humility. As Andrew Murray said, "Pride must die in you, or nothing of heaven can live in you."

The amount of pride in the church is astonishing. An *American Idol* mentality exists within our walls as millions crave

center stage attention. The church often reflects the character of Hollywood rather than the character of Christ. But again, let's not jump ship and throw the baby out with the bathwater—let's return to the power of the Spirit through brokenness, prayer and humility. Whether it's the church in America, China or the Middle East, we all need God's power. {eoa}

*For more from **Shane Idleman** see .*