

In This Crisis, Desperate People Are Searching for God

Have you noticed people are becoming more open to God's answers?

This past Sunday, I was speaking at a charismatic church in northern Michigan called New Life Christian Fellowship. At the conclusion of the service, while I was praying for the congregation, the Lord showed me someone in the room was struggling with a strong addiction. I shared this with the people and invited the unidentified person to reach out to Jesus for help.

Immediately, a young man made his way to the front of the room. He was already crying and he knelt near the stage without any prompting. My friend Cliff, a leader in the church, quickly got up and knelt beside the guy and began to pray with him.

Within a few minutes, the young man gave his life to Jesus, along with a friend who came with him. They had never been to the church before. In fact they had just recently moved to the area and they found the church by going online and typing in the word "church."

They were desperate to find help from God. They found salvation, along with a loving, spiritual family to support them.

I'm starting to see this kind of spiritual hunger everywhere I go. Last week when I was speaking at a church in Syracuse, New York, a guy named John attended a men's breakfast that the church sponsored on a Saturday morning. I didn't give any kind of altar call after I shared because I assumed everyone there was already saved.

I assumed John was a member of the church when he came up to talk to me after the message. But then after I began to share with him about the love of the heavenly Father, his eyes got moist and his voice cracked. When I offered to pray for him, he fell into my arms and began to sob.

In that moment, he surrendered his life to Jesus.

I found out later that two of John's brothers had prayed for 30 years that he would give his life to Christ. Later that same day, during a special renewal service, I mentioned John's decision from the podium and I welcomed him to the meeting. Immediately, his two brothers jumped up out of their seats and began to celebrate their brother's salvation – and everyone in the auditorium began to cheer. I couldn't help but imagine that angels were also partying because John had decided to repent and return to God.

Do you feel the same thing I'm sensing? There's a growing openness to the Lord right now. People are overwhelmed by fear, anxiety and depression. The pandemic has not only taken lives; it has also triggered all kinds of mental and emotional anguish. Racial tension, political polarization and a pervasive negativity in the media have pushed people to the brink. Murder rates have skyrocketed and suicide is pervasive.

But all of this darkness has created a perfect storm. The chaos, the financial uncertainty and the fear of an invisible virus has driven people to seek alternatives.

Wherever I go these days, pastors tell me the same thing when I ask what they are seeing in their churches and communities: 1. They say a certain percentage of their congregation has either dropped out of church completely or they are not ready to come back to in-person meetings; and 2. They say a new group of people have showed up, seemingly out of nowhere, because they are looking for spiritual reality.

I think we will begin to see a third trend over the course of

the next year: We are going to see more and more desperate people showing up in our church services and small group meetings who have never been in church before. Some may Google the word “church” to find you; others may simply ask you a probing question at a restaurant or at your child’s school. People are looking for spiritual reality.

Not everyone, however, is going to show up at church. Last week, I got into a conversation with a man in Michigan (I’ll call him Nate) who told me he’s almost ready to give his heart to the Lord. We chatted in a hotel lobby. When I invited him to church, he told me, “I could never go there. Those people know my past and they would ask me to leave.”

I assured Nate that everyone there would welcome him warmly and that God would forgive him. He wasn’t yet convinced. It may take several more conversations with genuine Christians before Nate realizes that God can remove the stain of his sin.

Please prepare your heart to share the love of Jesus with people like Nate who are desperate. I know we live in challenging times, but God uses crisis moments to push people to Him. Instead of complaining about the darkness, open your eyes and realize that the harvest is ripe all around you.
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