

Is the American Church the New Mission Field?

Someone asked lesbian celebrity Rosie O'Donnell if she thought she would go to heaven when she died. Her response, so typical of America, went something like this; "God must know how much I'm trying to be good."

Doesn't it make you sick and sad when this kind of question solicits such a hopeless response? The hard truth is that America does not yet know what a real Christian is. With all of the gospel resources and knowledge circulated through our nation's airwaves, with all the churches and ministries that graze within its shores, with all the talk of America being a Christian nation, the truth is that when it comes to her relationship with the true and living God, she does not yet know where she stands.

What does that say about the Church in America? Have we failed to properly communicate the gospel that we preach? Have we fallen short of living this message that we profess?

A few years ago in a national poll on Christianity in America these telling statistics were revealed:

- 96% of adults in America believe in God
- 83% of Americans identify themselves as Christians and believe Jesus to be the Son of God
- 13% claim to have no religion while the other 4% are adherents of all non-Christian religions combined – Jews, Muslims, Buddhists and a smattering of other lessers.
- 90% believe there is a heaven
- 80% believe they will stand before Almighty God and be held accountable for their sins
- 77% believe their chances of going to heaven are

excellent (this one kills me)

Studies also show that even though 79% of those who actually attend evangelical churches find their faith “very important”, only 36% of them actually believe that faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to eternal life. What?! That one is hard to believe! The others believe that many religions can lead to eternal life. Talk about an age of religious political correctness!

The drop in percentages among mainline churches is even more telling. Only 14% believe that Jesus Christ exclusively provides the only way to eternal life, while 83% think “many religions” lead there. Only 22% of this group even believes that the Bible is fully inspired while another 28% believe that it is just “a book written by men, not the word of God.” Compare this to evangelical churches where only 7% do not believe the Bible is a divinely inspired book. The great tragedy and deception is that many think they can be Christians while rejecting every major doctrine and practice of the true Christian faith.

The most disturbing trend, however, is in America’s 18-35 group. While some polls show roughly 9 in 10 Americans still maintain belief in a god or gods, the trend of religious young Americans is toward a conglomeration of varied religious beliefs including atheism. A 2010 USA survey revealed that 72 percent of the nation’s young people identify themselves as “more spiritual than religious.”

Furthermore, with an increasingly majority of younger Americans accepting evolution as fact, Christianity for many under 35 is becoming a watered-down hybrid version of eastern philosophy and biblical teachings. This trend among our young people towards being ‘spiritual but not religious’ points further to the declining belief and practice of Christian doctrine, and the embracing of a broader relationship with all other religions and beliefs.

This explains most of the above statistics, doesn't it?

It explains why church-goers carry Bibles under their arms but are living in adultery or hooked on pornography? It explains why so many who profess Jesus Christ are on drugs? It explains why so many possess Bible knowledge but have no peace? This all reminds me of a defining moment in the Bill Clinton presidency when he told a dozen pastors in a meeting that he was born again, and this right after he had passed bills to expand both abortion and gay rights. What is at the root cause of such blatant modern day hypocrisy in America?

A clue is found in the words of General William Booth, the founder of Salvation Army, which I have probably quoted more than any other: *"The chief danger of the 20th century will be religion without the Holy Ghost, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and heaven without hell."*

What foresight this man had! Even his own institution has become what he prophesied.

Religion is the culprit. Religion is Satan's crowning work. Religion is what is killing our nation more and more every day. It is so close to the truth and yet so far.

Everyone is religious. Even the young people who say they are "spiritual but not religious" have a religion of acceptance, tolerance, and inclusivity. This philosophy is clothed in a form of godliness and niceness while denying the power to change. But any faith that is detached from real heart transformation you can flush down the toilet.

What these statistics reveal to me is that the Church is becoming a great mission field. Even some of the non-denominational mega-churches that are supposedly thriving in this country are those who are less dogmatic and lean toward self-esteem and self-help, and frankly, another gospel. It is high time now that every professing Christian in America know

what it means to be a Christian. They need to be taught the Bible and learn what it truly means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. If not, the name "Christian" in the near future will become a byword and mean nothing more than someone who attends church, and the Christianity Lite gospel that is becoming increasingly popular will become a perversion of diversity of all religions.

Let us fight for true freedom by redefining Christianity in America. Let us preach the true gospel, and then truly practice what we preach. It can be that simple.

Bert M. Farias, founder of Holy Fire Ministries, is the author of *The Real Gospel* and co-host of the New England Holy Ghost Forum. He is a missionary evangelist carrying a spirit of revival to the church and the nations. Follow him at Bert Farias on Facebook or @Bertfarias1 on Twitter.