

Lee Grady: Why the Hearts of Desperate People Are Opening for God

A few months ago, I preached at a church in Michigan called New Life Christian Fellowship. At the conclusion of the service, while I was praying for the congregation, the Lord showed me that someone 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. He was already crying and he knelt near the stage without any prompting. My friend Cliff quickly got up and knelt beside the man 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 only recently moved to the area; they found the congregation by typing the word "church" into Google. These two 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 same spiritual hunger everywhere I go. In October when I was speaking at a church in Syracuse, New York, a man named John attended a men's breakfast the church sponsored on a Saturday morning. I didn't give an altar call after I shared because I assumed everyone there was already saved.

I also assumed John was a member of the church when he came up to talk to me after the message. But after I began to tell 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, sobbing. 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. Immediately, his two brothers jumped up out of their seats and celebrated their brother's salvation—and everyone in the auditorium cheered. I couldn't help but imagine that angels were also partying because John had decided to return to God.

Do you feel the same thing I'm sensing? There's a growing openness to the Lord right now. People have been overwhelmed by fear, anxiety and depression. The pandemic has not only taken lives, but it has also triggered 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 spreading.

The darkness in our culture has created a perfect storm. The chaos, financial uncertainty and fear of an invisible virus have driven people to seek alternatives.

Pastors tell me the same thing when I ask what they are seeing in their churches and communities: 1) A percentage of their congregation has either dropped out of church completely or is not ready to come back to in-person meetings; and 2) New people seeking spiritual reality have appeared out of nowhere.

I believe we will see a wave of this spiritual desperation in 2022. More and more people will show up in our services and small group meetings who have never been in church before. Some may Google the word "church." Others may simply ask you a probing question. People are looking for spiritual reality.

Not everyone, however, is going to show up at a church service. During my trip to Michigan, I talked with a man in a hotel lobby (I'll call him Nate) who told me he's almost ready to give his heart to Jesus. When I invited him to church, he

told me, “I could never go there. Those people know my past. They would ask me to leave.”

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

Please prepare your heart to share the love of Jesus with people like John and 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. A ripened harvest is all around you.

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