

The Real Reasons People Are Leaving Church—And Why You Shouldn't Follow Suit

Have you ever heard someone say, “Pastor, we are leaving the church and it’s our fault”?

I haven’t.

Can we find good reasons to stop attending church? Absolutely. Can we find personal reasons to divorce our wife or cuss out our boss? Sure. Should we divorce, cuss out the boss or leave church? Most likely not.

There are multiple reasons to stop attending church and multiple reasons to keep attending. The truth is, all of us, including Christians, do what they want. One primary reason the church is in decline is because we have become more selfish and preoccupied with ourselves.

Let’s do a disclaimer. Let’s agree that churches are not perfect, and all churches make mistakes. That’s because we are people. Pastors make mistakes, too. Leaders fail. Visions falter and many churches lack luster.

This does not mean we should leave our church or attend less, but the choice is ours to make.

Who attends less?

1. **Consumers attend less.** We have witnessed a shift in Christianity and churches. Christians are now consumers of the commodities of the church. “Consumer Christianity” is counter-cultural to genuine biblical Christianity.

Christians who are consumers attend less than those who

contribute.

There are reasons. Reasons for not attending include:

–Can't find the right church (23%).

–Poor health (9%).

–Sermons aren't engaging (18%).

About 20% of adults attending services say they don't feel any greater connection to God at church than at home.

A Pew Research study found that 37% of Americans who do not attend church practice their faith in other ways.

Gallup says:

U.S. church membership was 70% or higher from 1937 through 1976, falling modestly to an average of 68% in the 1970s through the 1990s. The past 20 years have seen an acceleration in the drop-off, with a 20-percentage-point decline since 1999 and more than half of that change occurring since the start of the current decade.

Pro Church Tools also uncovered a sobering statistic – attendance in 2050 could be as much as half of what it was in 1990.

Gallup also released:

Religiosity is strongly related to age, with older Americans far more likely than younger adults to be members of churches. However, church membership has dropped among all generational groups over the past two decades, with declines of roughly 10 percentage points among traditionalists, baby boomers and Generation X. Most Millennials were too young to be polled in 1998–2000. Now that they have reached adulthood, their church membership rates are low and appear to be a major factor in the drop in overall U.S. church membership.

Just 42% of Millennials are members of churches, on average.

Additional reasons for decline:

- Loss of God connection (13%).
- Pastor leaves (12%).
- Church politics (9%).
- Music changes (5%).
- Inner conflict (4%).

2. Millennials attend less.

Millennials are resisting the “Christianity” label. They do not prefer a certain faith over another. Right or wrong, it’s real.

Those between the ages of 18-29 have no particular religious affiliation. This doesn’t mean they don’t believe in God, but that they do not affiliate with a particular denomination.

Millennials resist the 21st century church because most churches have services and little or no community involvement. Young adults desire to see the gospel on display. Millennials prefer hands-on ministry.

Baby Boomers enjoyed funding God’s projects. Millennials prefer being hands-on in God’s work.

It is imperative that churches take aggressive steps in reaching and involving the Millennial generation.

A Gallup 2016-2018 survey revealed that size is a factor. Mini or mega? That is the question.

Mega churches are not a preference in America. While mega churches seem to have it all, only 8% of all church-goers attend a mega church. Small to medium churches make up 40% of

churches and the attendance ranges from 100 to 350 members.

Small churches are popular in America. About 46% of people attend churches with 100 or fewer members.

Why? They're simple. Facilities are easier to migrate. Checking in kids is easy.

Smaller churches focus more on community and less on amenities. It is much easier to develop friendships in a smaller church. It's true.

The Church Is Relevant

Despite the naysayers, churches remain strong with many faithful and loyal members. The most loyal denominations are Methodists, Baptists and Lutherans; 35% of regular attenders remain at the same church for an average of 17 years. Another 27% attend the same church for 25 years or more.

Another 57% of regular attenders say they're committed to staying in their existing church.

Despite these numbers, the church is not growing in percentage with the population increase. Our influence is not expanding. The church must remain diligent to change, serve and get better.

The church must embrace culture, love consumers, reach Millennials, stay relevant to society and remain committed to the purity of the gospel.

This is a proactive response to the current challenges facing the 21st century church.

There are some positives.

Pew Research reported that people attend church for four reasons:

–To become a better person (68%).

-To introduce faith to their kids (69%).

-To find personal comfort (66%).

-To grow closer to God (81%).

That's not going away. And you shouldn't either.

See you at church. {eoa}

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