

REASONS FOR NOT GOING TO CHURCH

Various contributors

We hear people say, "Come to our church. We have an excellent band of handsome young men on guitars and drums!"

Many modern churches advertise Sunday as Funday. We can raise our hands, dance and shout Praise the Lord and Alleluia!

There are those who go to church because the hymns/songs are modern and many people today like pop songs although the theology they express is often grossly incorrect and misplaced.

Others say that modern worship is informal and you can go in your jeans and tee shirts some of which have silly or rude comments on them.

Modern worship is lively with the concentration on self-expression and testimonies, hearing others talk about their experiences and life. This is contrary to New Testament teaching.

Paul said, I want to know nothing among you save Christ and Him crucified

(1 Corinthians 2.2.) and We preach not ourselves but Christ and Him crucified

(2 Corinthians 4.3). The Roman epistle says that Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10 17). It does not say that it comes by any other way.

The function and purpose of the church is to preach the Word of God (2 Timothy 4.2) and not to entertain or sit through versions of This is Your Life. It is not a place for dancing and bodily gyrations. The psalmist had it right when he said, Be still in the presence of the Lord (Psalm 46.18) and the prophet said that in quietness and confidence is your strength (Isaiah 30.15).

2 Timothy 4.3 speaks of the time where people will not endure sound doctrine but invent teachings of their own. At the beginning of the 20th century, the speaking in tongues was revived although Paul said it would cease when the Scriptures were complete and that was over 1900 years ago.

C H Spurgeon was right when he said, "The church is where the Shepherd teaches the sheep but the time will come when clowns will teach the goats". The Lord told His followers to feed the sheep (John 21 17) and, if we love Him, we will do this.

If you want to see handsome young men on guitars and drums go to a pop or rock concert. The same goes for dancing... go to a ballroom or a dance venue. If you want to know about Mrs Bloggs life go and see her in her home.

There is often in modern churches noise but God is not deaf. Compare the example of Elijah in 1 Kings 18.

Churches, and even modern worship, should always be reverent and this means to express profound awe, respect and love for the Lord which respect, reverence and love is shown in obedience to Him. Quietness and confidence is paramount.

An area of concern is testimonies. As we have seen, we preach not ourselves. But many who have become Christians talk about themselves and their lives before they were converted. Some seem to

relish recounting their evil ways of the past. But this is wrong. When someone is converted, having repented of their past sins, God has forgiven them and cast such sins into the depths of the sea to be gone forever and not to be remembered any more (Hebrews 8.12). This has always been the case with our loving God (Isaiah 43.25).

We were present at a meeting where ten new converts were asked by the pastor to say what they had done for the Lord since their respective conversions. They all bragged about their achievements to the spoken and sometimes shouted accompaniments of Amen, Praise the Lord, Alleluia and Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. When we got to the final new convert, she was asked What have you to say? she replied, I have become increasingly aware of how much God loves me. There was a deadly silence and yet what she said was the most impressive, reverent and God honouring.

There are many problems with the modern church. One is that some pastors think too much of themselves and regard themselves of essential importance and this is often fed by hero worship from his congregation and, usually, what he says goes even if it conflicts with Biblical teaching. We have celebrity status in some churches such as David Pawson, Arthur Wallis and Michael Harper There are cultural differences. There is favouritism and often the less wealthy or less intelligent are not treated well. There are invented offices in the church... none so ridiculous as the Leader of Worship. The Holy Spirit is that, surely. In some Elim, Pentecostal and charismatic churches if you have not spoken in tongues you are decidedly inferior and some say that, as a consequence, you are not saved. That is heresy.

We are aware of people who go to church because they are in love with the pastor. Some young men will go because of the girls who dance in the service and, as we have seen for ourselves, the girls are often in glamorous clothes. These are examples of sexual attraction and not valid reasons for attending a church.

The church has the responsibility of preaching the truth not entertaining or being of the world (1 John 2.15). But the modern church dismisses all of this.

There is the serious problem of ecumenicalism or Churches Together where, from time to time, churches of all denominations met together but have different doctrines. How can we walk together if we disagree? (Amos 3.3.). But Michael Harper and others have put into print that doctrine does not matter, only love does.

The dilemma of how to get young people and others into church is a real one. The use of pop and rock bands has been used, but statistics show that their average sojourn of such a group in a church is about eight months. New church members quickly get fed up with this and, alternatively, go to pop concerts. A famous church in London employed such a band although the aging population, which we will call stalwarts, did not like the music but graciously accepted the group. The band lasted a year and went into secular concerts for financial rewards. The modern experiment in this church did not work. Some churches have special evenings with a Christian rock band and there is a substantial entrance fee.

On a positive note, we are aware of many churches that do not have entertainment and the other things we have mentioned. But these churches are full and what they have is the faithful preaching of the Word of God. Most of these churches were the most successful in the past when they had men of God such as Guy King in Beckenham, Ronald Park in Bournemouth, Raymond Brown in Torquay and Graham Scroggie in London. You had to arrive at his church 45 minutes early to get a seat. In such places there was no popular music of the day, dancing, series of This is Your Life, interpolations of Praise the Lord and the rest. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God not hearing or seeing pop music, dancing and entertainment. Among the brethren there were excellent preachers such as Albert

Leckie, John Heading, Dr Tatford, Cyril Hocking to name but a few. But today people do not want sound doctrine.

New Testament doctrine does not change and modern worship is violating God's Word if they do so!

To see a pop or rock band, to sing modern songs, to dance, to talk about self, to have fun and be entertained, to belong to a social activities at the church are not valid reasons to go to or join a church.

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