

Churches need to draw closer to God to serve communities

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By [Randy W. Bright](#)

I have been saying and writing for some time now that the church is in a fight for its life, and most churches either don't know it or if they do, they don't understand the degree of the threat.

Last week I wrote that I believed that there was a way for Christians to keep their place in community and to also live with others in peace as the Scriptures command us to do.

To say that if we were able to construct our buildings where we wish in the design and fashion that we wish to do them in, that if we could achieve that status in our zoning codes, that all would be well but be foolish. The problem goes much deeper than that.

Though we should try to achieve that status, the church, or I should say Christians (I am speaking about Americans in particular), need to see that this problem is more a spiritual problem than it is a legal one.

Churches that seem to be doing well in America are essentially doing one thing well - they are meeting the culture of Americans at their level. Their goal is to lead people to Christ in venues that are exciting and enjoyable - great music and a great sermon, with encouragement to join a small group to help members stay connected.

While this is a good model for leading people to Christ, there is a diminishing number of churches with strong educational opportunities and I have come to the conclusion that this is because our societal culture, which is common among Christians and non-Christians alike, no longer has the patience or time to spend studying the Scriptures. To them, the Scriptures are boring and don't have particular relevance in their lives. They enjoy hearing a sermon with Scriptures included, but that is because the sermon is designed to help them live their lives in a more Godly way.

All of that is well and good, except that the result is that we are building churches full of people who have no real idea who God is, nor could they defend their faith if they really had to. It is serious work to read and study your Bible each day and to attend classes each week to learn from a gifted teacher. We are becoming much like the eunuch who was reading the book of Isaiah and was asked by Phillip if he understood what he was reading. The eunuch replied, "How can I when there is no one to instruct me?" (Acts 8:31 NLT).

Or as the Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 4:2-4 (NIV), "Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage - with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want they hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths."

I think that we are currently more in the former position than they latter one, that is I think that we are losing good teachers to age and because Christians are no longer interested in learning from the ones we still have. The latter situation will occur in future generations who will want to know more about God in the way that they conceive of him then, not in the way he really is now.

A.W. Tozer wrote in his small but giant book, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, "It is not a cheerful thought that millions of us who live in a land of Bibles, who belong to churches and labor to promote the Christian religion, may yet pass our whole life on this earth without once having thought or tried to think seriously about the being of God. Few of us have let our hearts gaze in wonder at the I AM, the self-existent Self back of which no creature can think. Such thoughts are too painful for us. We prefer to think where it will do more good - about how to build a better mousetrap, for instance, or how to make two blades of grass grow where one grew before. And for this we are now paying a too heavy price in the secularization of our religion and the decay of our inner lives."

Tozer wrote that in 1961. He saw it coming and tried to awaken Christians, but for the most part his warnings went unheeded.

The truth is that many churches have decided that they will let the government or neighbors who object to their presence decide how they will be allowed to exist, or if they will be allowed to exist at all. This is because we have allowed our concept of God to be so diminished that we actually agree with the secular thought that churches don't have a real place in society any more.

The answer to the problem of the church keeping its place in community is simple, and that is that they must come to a more realistic concept of who God is. It is then that they will have the tenacity to achieve what they believe God wants them to do.



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