

Rekindling Your Desire For The Lord: A Study In Spiritual Renewal

1 – IT’S NOT THE SAME ANYMORE

I. What Happened to the Church?

- It has become noticeable that a shift has taken place in North American churches.
- That shift is evident in the attendance, the giving, and the level of volunteering from believers.
- Surprisingly, this shift is the result of a gradual, long-term decline in churches.
- The Results of the Decline
 - Regular church attendance has shifted from more than two times a month to less than two.
 - There are far more distractions to draw people away from church on Sunday mornings.
 - People are substituting church with the abundance of preaching available on television, radio and the internet.
 - Personal spirituality has shifted to a spectator mentality based on convenience.
 - Church has become a service to attend and an obligation to fulfill.

II. The Diminished Impact of the Church

- The declining church is also marked by having a diminished impact in the community.
- Five Dominate Social/Cultural Influences
 - Political Polarization
 - The church has become a political pawn for either the right or the left.
 - The Sexual Revolution
 - The Biblical ethic of sex is seen as unrealistic and out of touch to most.
 - Globalization and Modern Communication
 - This has made Christianity appear as a Western religion and compliant in the historic sins of the past.
 - Raising Prosperity in the West
 - Wealth and prosperity have effectively insulated people from their need for rescue and hope.
 - These combined has influenced the Educated and affluent (gatekeepers) of the community
- The church is now existing a culture that has a negative bias toward God, the church and the pastor.

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- The Results in Bible-Believing Churches

- Believers are only showing up once or twice a month to fulfill their obligation to the church.
- Attendance in North American churches has dropped 30 to 40 percent.
- Only 25% of those attending church take part in a small group bible study or Sunday School.
- Those who attend are distract by life and are not really paying attention to God's word.
- The priority of most people is a focus on one's comfort, pleasure and ease.

III. The Drift to Apostasy

- An evidence of the shift is the growing number of people who are embracing apostasy.

- Fertile Ground for Apostasy

- Simplistic faith that has not matured to handle difficult questions.
- Unconfessed, buried sin gradually destroyed personal faith.
- The means of God's grace (Bible, prayer) were ignored.

Next Lesson: What's the Solution?

Questions

1. What is your assessment of what is happening in the church?
2. How has the social/cultural influences affected you?
3. How can you guard against drifting into apostasy?