

Is Christianity Its Own Worst Enemy?

© 2023 Wayne J Vasilenko / Selah Life Ministries

www.selahlife.net

The Way It Is

It is a fact that there is a “World Wide” drop in Church attendance, and along with it, interest in Christianity in general, and the Bible. This has been the trend long before the restrictions and fears brought about by the “Pestilence” the world is currently facing. Some might argue the reverse is true, as there *are* scattered churches that are growing despite this trend. However, the fact remains, people of all ages have been dropping out of Christian congregations, at alarming rates, especially within the past three decades! This is predominately the case with young college students as “Radical / Atheistic” professors, coupled with Peer Pressure, often intimidates new students to the point of renouncing their faith, that is, *if they wish to get a passing grade or avoid ridicule*. Watch the movie, “God’s Not Dead,” based on a true story that illustrates this well! Many of these young students, although they may have grown up in a Church or Religious environment, turn from their faith within the first year of college! So what is really going on here, what is really happening? While it is true, some are drawing towards God and the Bible, the ratio of those “Leaving the Faith,” surpasses *by far*, those drawn into faith, so it seems. Interestingly, the Bible itself made predictions that this would happen at a certain point in our existence, but what are other contributing factors to this decline? A complete list could fill volumes, but the intent of this study is to list just a few of what I would consider the “Obvious Causes” of people questioning the validity of the Church, Christianity, and the Bible. Many originate within the Church itself! One could sum up the problem in three words, “Man’s Sinful Nature,” but that would only serve to add to the confusion of many who are not familiar with the Bible, and the history of the Church. What I would like to focus on at this point, are some of those contributing factors within the *teachings* of the Church, of which there are many, so as to help reverse this phenomenon.

All eyes are on the Christians!

While the title statement of this section may seem at odds with the introduction (The Way It Is), it is nevertheless, a true statement. All Eyes Are On The Christians! While many on one hand shun Christianity, on the other hand, anyone who claims to be Christian seems to become the center of attention, or a focus of attack. Ask anyone who has recently become a Christian, and it is almost guaranteed that you will hear stories of how, “all of a sudden,” former friends or associates begin to point out everything little thing that the new Christian does wrong! Harassment at the workplace often follows with complaints concerning “Hate Speech,” which some say inundates the Bible. Family members begin to focus on the slightest hint of misbehavior, even though most of the accusers condone, and indulge in the same actions themselves; this is “Hypocrisy” by the way! The condemnation used by these hypocrites, just so happens to be one of Satan’s most potent weapons against the Church, and is especially effective against the “New Christian.” Ironically, the majority of both hypocrisy and condemnation has its roots deep within religion, and the church!

On a personal level, condemnation is relatively easy to avoid. The easiest way is simply to avoid doing what condemns you! However, I can personally attest to the fact, that it is usually easier said than done, especially for a new Christian. This goes back again to the “Sinful Nature” of man, mentioned previously. We all combat temptations daily, some of us do better than others in the battle, while some may fail completely. Many “former habits” may take years to overcome, especially if the person does not make a concerted effort to turn away from those bad habits; this “turning away” is what the Bible calls “Repentance.” While the Church is supposed to be the place, where a Christian, especially a “New Christian” can attain guidance, encouragement, and protection, many Churches, Denominations, and Pastors become the most aggressive accusers and purveyors of condemnation you can find. Rather than lifting up struggling Christians, they shun them, and heap

Is Christianity Its Own Worst Enemy?

© 2023 Wayne J Vasilenko / Selah Life Ministries

www.selahlife.net

condemnation on them, in some cases to the point of driving them away! Being that the Bible teaches that this condemnation is not from God, where do you suppose it originates.

I attended a Bible study a few years back where someone brought up the very passage to which I referred.

Romans 8:1 (NKJV)

¹ *There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

I got the immediate attention of everyone in the room, especially the Pastor who was sitting next to me, when I responded saying, “This is not true... there is plenty of condemnation!” The truth is, although God no longer condemns a person who has accepted Christ’s atonement, Satan never quits accusing us! How many times can you recall, when you were reminded of past sins or shortcomings resulting in guilt? This guilt then prevents you from doing something you know you should do; usually it is something you know *God* would want you to do. You feel “unworthy” of the task, and therefore, you do nothing. Years ago, I was counseling a person whom I had helped lead to the Lord; he was enduring many trials at the time including martial issues. Many, who come to the Lord, believe that upon accepting Jesus as their Savior, all their problems will go away. This is a false teaching! As I told my friend, “The reality is, in many cases one’s life situation may even seem to get worse for a time!”

I then went on to explain that Satan can no longer touch him as far as his salvation is concerned, but he (Satan) can, and will, make every effort to take away a Christian person’s joy and ultimately their witness to others. His most effective means of doing so is this same guilt and condemnation, the two things many so-called “religious people” are also more than eager to participate in heaping on others! Isn’t that interesting! After that, they wonder why people stop showing up at their churches on Sunday morning! It looks as if Satan was successful does it not... *Selah*. Many Pastors also face struggles and shortcomings of their own, brought about primarily by the loss of focus on the Word of God, “The Bible!” How, one might ask, can a Church or Pastor lose focus on the Bible? The fact is many have indeed strayed from the Word of God, but not all because of evil intent, or involvement. For example, I have spoken with some Pastors who have admitted that they spend less than a few hours “a week” in God’s Word! Many are overwhelmed as they take on more than they can handle, by either not delegating work to others in the church, or having no one to delegate to. Some Pastors, although they read the Bible, may avoid certain topics because of religious or personal bias. This, as an example, is most evident in the way different pastors or denominations address subjects such as, “The Baptism of the Holy Spirit,” or subjects such as “Bible Prophecy.” While there are many valid arguments and false teachings concerning these issues that warrant our attention, many avoid these issues due to a personal lack of knowledge pertaining to the subject, which only compounds over time. Most of the contention concerning these issues relates to the sources of the evidence used in the debate by the opposing sides. Is the source, “Religious Opinion,” or the Bible by itself? This is something that must be determined early on concerning debates of these topics.

The Bible Was Written for the Common Person!

Contrary to popular belief, one does not need a degree in Theology to understand the Bible! Consider the fact that God used ordinary people, such as Fishermen, Tax collectors and the like, as He interfaced with man. God continues to use ordinary people in that process even today. Not wanting to offend any of my readers, the fact is, it was the early Catholic Church, which forbid common people access to the Scriptures. At

Is Christianity Its Own Worst Enemy?

© 2023 Wayne J Vasilenko / Selah Life Ministries

www.selahlife.net

one point a person could be burned alive for merely possessing a Bible. That is a historic fact, read about the Spanish Inquisition for more on this. *There was, and continues to be much corruption, in not just the Catholic Church, but sadly in all denominations.* This is another indicator of what the Bible cites as a sign of the End Times. A while back, I wrote a series, entitled, "One Accord or Discord – Time to Choose," concerning many of the issues that divide and corrupt the Church. [Click here for the introduction to the Series](#) It is common knowledge that one of the easiest ways to destroy an organization, in this case the Church, is to cause division from within. We can see this happening many ways even in the "Secular World" today, as political parties refuse to cooperate with one another forcing stalemates that accomplish nothing, ending up creating Apathy. It seems as though our country is at war with itself once again, as different ideologies clash, and the willingness to debate the facts, obscured by *censorship*, and "Hardened Hearts" is at an unprecedented scale. We are constantly being told that we must "pull together, and that we must communicate our differences," while sadly; people seem less and less willing to do so. Their hearts are hardened with their own particular set of beliefs begat through highly filtered information, usually favoring one side over the other. Why is it that we can no longer express a differing opinion without "being ostracized" by our peers, or in some cases by our own families? Why is it so hard to consider that there may be differing information or points of view? Perhaps there is "new information" that may even supersede that which has been previously considered as fact! I once read that Albert Einstein, (one of the smartest people in history,) was an endless stream of questions. He was always asking questions of everyone, even those of obvious lesser intellectual stature. Asked why he did this, his reply was that there was always a possibility someone might know something that he does not yet know or understand. Perhaps this is an attitude we may all benefit from, both from a Worldly perspective, and a Spiritual perspective. Perhaps as far as the Bible is concerned, we would be better off taking it at "Face Value" rather than from religious perspective thereby eliminating any foothold of the Devil.

A Message to Pastors

In previous writings, I mentioned that I have, in the past, personally heard three different pastors state to their congregations, "If you disagree, or don't like what we are teaching, leave... there are plenty of churches down the street!" Of course, their exact words varied, but the message was the same. In essence, they were leaving no room for questions, or taking into consideration a lack of understanding. This violates two basic teachings in the Bible that negatively affect church growth and could ultimately put people on a path to Hell!

1 John 4:1 (NKJV)

¹ Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Isaiah 1:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.

While the context of these passages may not align perfectly with the context of the statements made by the pastors, they bring out two principles truths. The first principle is that it is not only a good idea to question the teachings in our churches because of the abundance of false teachings and false prophets; it is a *directive* in the Word of God! Concerning church teachings, we (the congregation) should constantly be comparing it with the scriptures, and if we see a discrepancy, we should bring it into the light of the scriptures. Any issue is to be

Is Christianity Its Own Worst Enemy?

© 2023 Wayne J Vasilenko / Selah Life Ministries

www.selahlife.net

brought before the person privately who is in error, and if they continue to violate the truth of the Scriptures, it should be made known to the rest of the church leadership. Only after this should it be brought before the general congregation. The second principle, "Reasoning," implies that it should be okay for anyone to ask questions and give personal viewpoints that may vary, in order to gain understanding. This is how we *learn*, about anything! People are always at various different levels of Spiritual Growth; upon receiving Christ, one does not instantly receive all knowledge and understanding... it is a process! It seems as though every time a person raises a question or even openly opposes a church teaching, rather than them being told, "Take a hike," perhaps Pastors, such as the ones mentioned above, should examine and discuss the questions and the issues... they themselves might learn something in the process! Open discussion and debate will draw more people in towards the Word of God, because the general norm is that most questions go unaddressed, mostly due to fear or pride. If questions continue to go unanswered, Spiritual Growth is stunted, and church attendance dwindles as a result. Rather than shooting themselves in the foot with endless arguments concerning religious doctrine, if the Church would simply take the Bible at face value, putting doctrinal issues aside as the main issue, the church would cease being its own worst enemy. It will then, once again begin to flourish as we draw closer together as the True Body of Christ, with His Word as the source. I pray we all draw closer together in the dark world we live in, letting the Light of the Word shine brightly drawing people in, all of us looking forward to the Lord's soon return.