

But suppose this son has a son who sees all the sins his father commits, and though he sees them, he does not do such things... He will not die for his father's sin; he will surely live. (Ezekiel 18: 14, 17)

Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them. (Psalm 126:6)

Incoming Tide

You may have seen some reports in the secular media recently about a general drop in church attendance over the last few years, which some news sources have been seemingly all too happy to attribute to a decline in religious faith.

If you work for one of those news sources, and you happen to be reading this, then let a former member of your profession give you a little unsolicited advice; dig a little deeper. You might be very surprised at what you find.

Believers are out there and while you might not find them in church, necessarily, you will find them in the world they live and work in doing what the Lord Jesus told them to do – healing the sick, casting out demons, preaching the Gospel and bringing others into the Kingdom of God. Just because this is not happening in brick-and-mortar churches as much as it *used* to, doesn't mean it's not happening.

First of all, we need to pin down which “church” we're talking about. Some congregations spend their time and resources trying to achieve political solutions for the problems of the nation and the world. In an effort to stem the decline in their memberships (and the income such memberships provide), they try to be as inclusive as possible; while there's nothing necessarily wrong with that, such congregations take it to the point of trying to “spin” the Word of God so that what it clearly and unequivocally calls sin actually means something else. Instead of holding up the Word as the standard to which all else must measure up, these churches will take their cues from society, New Age teaching and false religions, holding them up as equal to the Bible. Despite such efforts to keep and add members, these efforts do not succeed.

Some churches, however, are experiencing explosive, phenomenal growth; nine times out of ten, these are churches that take the attitude that the Word of God says what it means and means what it says. Such congregations honor the Holy Spirit, try to operate in His gifts and leave God free to do whatever He wishes. These are the groups who, more often than not, end up having to build larger sanctuaries for their growing congregations. These are the groups who have the altar crowded with people at altar calls turning from their sins and accepting Jesus as Savior, or seeking – and receiving – healing for their bodies.

By the way, if you go to one of the latter churches, check out the age of the ones at the altar accepting Jesus. They're getting younger.

It has been at least two generations now since the decade of the 1960s, and young people today have had a chance to see what the world has done for their elders. A rising number of them don't like it, see only confusion, empty lives and shallow philosophies simply repackaged for their generation. People are made to seek out what is real in their lives, and the young are turning to the God their parents and grandparents were told was

dead back when they were their age. Only they're finding out that He is *very* much alive and waiting to bless those who come to Him. These people see the gifts of the Spirit at work in churches that will let God do as He pleases, and they want more. And while there are still high-profile cases of people leaving the faith because they did not find it "fun" (such as a certain currently popular singer who shall remain nameless because I still believe that she will return to the Lord when she finds that the world might be "fun" but it doesn't satisfy – *train up a child...* remember?), greater numbers yet are coming to Him and finding fulfillment.

You might even say this surge (if you will) is the reverse flow of those previous generations who left the faith. People who rebel against the rebellion (as it were) and may investigate Jesus thinking merely to do something different from their parents, only to "taste and see that the Lord is good." (Psalm 34:8) The tide is rising in the Kingdom now with a vengeance, ignored thought it may be by even Christian media, and those young people now at the altar may just bring their parents and grandparents in with them.

Think of it – believers have become the new "counter-culture." We who have accepted Jesus as Savior (and who believe the Founding Fathers felt much the same way) are in the same position where all the hippies and radicals were in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The latter are in power now and the youth, not finding personal satisfaction in how their elders are handling things, are taking a second look at the Lord. The secular media reports on us are generally negative (like they were for the 60s counter-culture... at first), but that's only serving the Kingdom. This idea of youth wanting to establish their own identities – that once worked for those who oppose the Lord – now is about to become a two-edged sword working for the Kingdom.

The next few years, if Jesus delays His coming, are going to be very interesting to watch, and even more interesting to participate in. This should be very encouraging to those pastors and evangelists who have toiled for years thinking everything is against you. It isn't. Expand your perspective beyond the here and now; the culture may be against believers now, but that will ultimately work for the Kingdom of God. Those who follow the Lord wholeheartedly, keep doing what you're doing. There's a big harvest on the way, and you're going to be very busy.