

Revival & Reverence, Returning To God



By Rob Pue

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I'd like to begin today with a couple of verses of Scripture. From Isaiah 30, *"For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the Lord; who say to the seers, 'Do not see,' and to the prophets, 'Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions, leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.'"*

Let's read some more. This time from Amos, chapter 8, *"Behold, the days come," saith the Lord God, 'that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.'"*

I recently read a survey that found only 5% of Americans attend a church on a regular basis now. It's no secret that the modern American churches have been struggling to hold on to attendance numbers for decades. Through the 1960s, 87% of families went to church every week.

But according to this study, American churches have lost 82% of their attendees since 1970. Of course, they've tried many things to retain their congregations, but today, the vast majority of people are just not going to church anymore. Those that are, are often disappointed in their church or with their pastor...for numerous reasons.

Another study shows that 69% of Americans claim to be Christians, but only 4% of them have a biblical worldview. For instance, 72% of professing Christians say that people are basically “good.” And of those who call themselves “Christians,” 66% say that “having faith” is more important than *which* faith you have; 64% say that all religious faiths are equally valid; 58% believe that if you’re good enough, or do enough good deeds in your life, then you’ll go to heaven; and 57% believe in “karma.”

Where did they get these ideas? You might think that since they’re not going to church or reading the Scriptures for themselves anymore, they’re coming up with these false notions on their own or absorbing them from our deeply UNChristian culture, and that may be partially true. But churchgoers are also learning this stuff from the modern day “teachers” who only tell them what their itching ears want to hear.

For many people, the only times they go to church at all is for weddings and funerals...but today, most weddings and funerals are not being held in a church. Instead, they’re in parks, community centers and even bars, and are not being led by Godly, Bible-based teachers. Such missed opportunities for people to hear the words of the Lord. And today 30% of Americans identify as “Nones,” meaning they have no religious faith at all. They’re comprised of atheists, agnostics or say their “religion” is “nothing in particular.” They may believe in some kind of “higher power,” but they have no idea who God Almighty is, nor have they spent much time considering the things of God. Is it any wonder so many are struggling with anxiety, depression, drug abuse and madness?

I believe many of these who don’t know God would *like* to learn about Him and His Word and many are open to discussing these topics. But how will they learn if they’ve never heard, and how will they hear if no one is willing to speak?

Let’s face it: very few Christians today are willing to talk

about God, much less disciple others, witness to strangers on the street or even to their own family members. They have a fear of speaking about God and Jesus Christ. It's as if they're ashamed of Him.

But if they only had the courage to step out and begin a conversation, most would find people are, indeed, interested in learning and hearing more. Why are so many Christians so afraid to tell others about our Savior? I believe it's because they don't really know that much about their faith themselves, and if they do, they've never been trained for the work of the ministry, which *should* be the main purpose of church gatherings. Most Christians today have never witnessed to anyone, because they don't know how. Because they've never been taught.

You see, that's just not the goal of most of our churches these days. Today, most sermons are very short, and the messages are meant to comfort and soothe, rather than convict hearts and lead them to repentance. The Church *should* be a place where soundly saved people gather to worship the Lord, study the Scriptures together and be trained for the work of the ministry, as iron sharpens iron.

Instead, we now have institutions that cater to UNsaved and unrepentant people – reprobates – and pastors dare not speak anything that might cause offense or conviction. We have it backwards. Churchgoers should be discipled for the work of the ministry; then go out and witness and minister and make disciples; then bring those disciples into the House of God, where they, in turn, can then be trained up for the work of the ministry.

That's not happening. I understand that churches are filled with people at many levels of spiritual maturity. Not all are on the same level of understanding. But those who *are* spiritually mature, with years of sanctification and growth behind them, are frustrated when the “sermons” are geared only

for spiritual babes. It's like having a Ph.D. and sitting in a kindergarten class every Sunday. How long must they drink milk before the pastor allows them to try a bit of meat?

So here we are, catering to unsaved and unrepentant sinners who only want to feel better about themselves, socialize with friends and have fun. These are *"children unwilling to hear the instruction of the Lord; who say to the seers, 'Do not see,' and to the prophets, 'Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions..."* These are the regular church-goers I'm talking about, not the unsaved. They attend church for an emotional "pep rally," and only want their "best life now." Unless something changes, they'd better enjoy that "best life" now – because this world is the only "heaven" they'll ever know.

There is, indeed, a real famine of hearing the words of the Lord in our land. That's the real problem...and that's why our culture has so degenerated today; that's why a majority of those who call themselves "Christians" believe all religious faiths are equally valid – and being a "good person" will get you to heaven. The fact that so many modern-day preachers refuse to speak the whole counsel of God or follow what little Scripture they themselves know is why we have so many problems in our churches. It's why more and more churches are bowing to the changing times, ordaining homosexuals, conducting homosexual marriages, marching in Pride parades – and rather than being salt and light in the wicked culture around us, choose to simply turn up their guitar amps and sing louder as our children and grandchildren march blindly down the broad road to hell.

I know a little about what I'm speaking of, from personal experience. I was an elder on the board of a church many years ago, and brought up numerous issues within the congregation. We had people who believed abortion was perfectly ok, just a "woman's choice." We had some who openly ridiculed the biblical account of Creation. We had others who believed in

same-sex marriage and transgenderism. And some who promoted the apostate Hollywood movie *"The Shack"* as "the best Christian movie we've ever seen." As an elder, I thought it was important to let the pastor know about these issues so that he could address them from the pulpit, and also offer individual counsel for those who had drifted so far off course. He steadfastly refused. Being an elder, I also learned why he refused. Most of those that were so off-base in their doctrinal beliefs were also large donors to the church.

Then, there was the issue of our youth getting in trouble, and struggling with worldly enticements. Our youth group was shrinking. Kids were dropping out. They only came on Sundays because their parents forced them to. What to do...what to do? My suggestion at the board meeting was to connect the older church members with these young people to mentor them. The older men mentoring the young men; the older ladies mentoring the young women. That idea was quickly dismissed in favor of holding more "fun" times – more pizza parties, outings to the skate park and movie nights. Basically, more entertainment. Of course, that didn't work, because you can never out-entertain the world, nor should we try.

The lifetime of wisdom our older generations have is not valued in our churches today. Older people are generally dismissed as irrelevant. There may be a "Senior Saints" group, but that's usually nothing more than a monthly lunch or a sewing circle. Such a waste of knowledge and wisdom that could be put to work mentoring our young people who so desperately need it. Not only that, but it would strengthen families too, as our kids would learn to respect and honor their elders. Instead, we cater to the kids and try to entertain them with a tiny bit of "God stuff" thrown in on the side. It's no wonder the majority never return to church once they graduate high school.

Our nation is in desperate need of God, and His Son, Jesus

Christ. The vast majority of Americans today know nothing about Him, because no one has ever told them. And I'm not just talking about our kids. The majority of adults – including regular church-going adults – are biblically illiterate. There's a famine of the words of our Lord, and people don't even realize they're starving to death.

On April 4th and 5th, *Wisconsin Christian News* will be holding our annual Ministry Conference in Wausau, Wisconsin. We've held these events for more than 20 years. This past November, after my prayer time, as I was lying in bed, God said to me, "hold on a minute...one more thing..." I learned, long ago, not to argue with God...because when He tells you that you need to do something, you're *going* to do it, one way or the other... So I've learned to just obey.

He proceeded to tell me that this year's Conference was essential – vitally important – and needed more than any we've ever done before. Then He gave me all the details of how He wanted this year's event to be. Including the names of every speaker, and the topic we need to focus on. That topic is: *"Revival & Reverence, Returning to God."* Because that's what we all need – in our nation and our individual lives and families. Every speaker God told me to invite graciously agreed to come without hesitation. We'll have some of the most solid, Biblically-based teachers I know of, along with the old hymns of the faith that are so filled with sound doctrine, reverence and awe.

Our speakers will include Pastor Art Pawlowski from Canada, Dr. Ted Broer from Florida, Coach Dave Daubenmire and Dr. Mike Spaulding from Ohio, Pastor Matt Trehwella, Dawn Wolf and Scott Schara from Wisconsin and Pastor Butch Paugh from Call To Decision Ministries in West Virginia. Music ministry will be led by national recording artist and retired Pastor Layton Howerton, joining us from Montana.

Each year we have people from all over the USA – and even

other countries – come for our Conference, and it would be well worth your time and effort to learn from just one of these speakers. We'll have nine this year. If you come, I can promise you, you'll experience a renewal, a regeneration and freshening of your spirit, and you'll leave closer to our Lord than you can imagine, eager to live out your faith and serve our King like you might never have thought you could before. And bring along your friends and loved ones who may never have heard sound Biblical teaching before. As usual, we'll also be offering baptisms for those interested. And, we have an incredible family group discount available if you book by March 4th, because our children and grandchildren desperately need to experience this too.

Contact me for more information. But pre-registration is required, and seating is limited, so don't put this off. Get the information and reserve your seats today – and then prepare for a special family weekend that will truly be life-changing. Call me at Wisconsin Christian News, (715) 486-8066. Or email Rob@WisconsinChristianNews.com

We all need this. I know I do, and I hope to see you there.

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