

Seek the Old Paths

By Rob Pue



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Just about every week, I'm contacted by folks who are desperately searching for a church body in their area to be a part of, with a pastor who is unafraid and unashamed of preaching the whole counsel of God, regardless of who it may offend. Unfortunately, I can offer little hope to them. Churches like this seem to have gone the way of the horse and buggy. [See the DVD: [Enemies Within the Church](#)]

Some time ago, a friend shared with me his experience in visiting a new church, that he had hoped would be a good fit. His experience went something like this: Upon entering the church, he was greeted by a coffee shop, replete with soft, cushiony couches, secular magazines, cable television and internet access. Nearby was the "auditorium" where the band was playing Bon Jovi on the "stage." The auditorium was almost completely dark; only the stage was illuminated with theatrical lighting.

They passed the offering "bucket" not once, but twice, and then, just before the pastor dismissed the "crowd," he had the ushers pass out his personal "wish list" of things he would like people to buy for him. When the "service" was over, the "pastor" didn't greet people as they filed out, but instead, he sat in a corner and joked with a friend, completely ignoring his congregation.

Sadly, more churches than ever are now following this format

in the misguided attempt to be more “seeker friendly.” Another friend told me a similar story of a church they had visited while out of town. The style and format was very similar, and my friend’s response was the same – they left with an empty feeling, wondering what had just happened, and what the purpose of the whole thing was supposed to be.

Often times, well meaning readers of *Wisconsin Christian News* ask for copies of our newspaper to place in their church. Unfortunately, after 23 years of publishing, I must inform them that our newspaper is absolutely NOT welcome in 99% of churches. You see, our newspaper takes a firm stand opposing abortion, we favor traditional marriage and family, and we work to uphold conservative Christian values – not to mention a literal interpretation of the Scriptures, with a simple belief that the Bible is actually true. (What a concept!) These churches could not take the chance that someone in their midst might take offense at such things, so even if the pastor will accept a few copies of the paper from one of his members, he throws them all in the trash the minute they walk out the door. The church leadership in these places walk on eggshells, being ever so careful to make sure everyone remains comfortably numb, everything is accepted and no lifestyle is perceived as wrong.

Much was made of the statistics, released a few years ago, that showed equal numbers of Christian marriages ending in divorce as non-Christian marriages. But this was just the tip of the iceberg. Today, “Christians” look so much like the “world,” that the two are virtually identical, and divorces among “Christian” couples now *outnumber* those of non-Christian couples. Even worse, when last I checked, 76% of regular church going evangelicals now approve of so-called “same-sex marriage.” One lost soul put it this way: “Christians are the same as we are, except Christians have a bunch of rules to follow, they live in guilt because they don’t keep the rules, can’t do anything ‘fun,’ and think they’re better than us.

They're a bunch of hypocrites."

When you cater to the world, this is the result you end up with. Cowardly church leadership has tried so hard to be "seeker friendly" and look "cool" to the unsaved world, that they have now become as worldly as the world their forefathers once tried to reach with the Gospel. Some are simply misguided. Others are more guilty, because they've actively turned the faith into a money-making venture. "Seeker-friendly," to them, is not a method of winning souls to Christ. It's a business plan.

Repeatedly, Scripture tells us to sanctify ourselves, to be separate from the world, to not compromise, but rather to be set apart. In the Old Testament, we see that as the Israelites entered the Promised Land, the Lord told them NOT to compromise with the heathen inhabitants there. He did NOT say, "act like they act, be like them, and they will like you. Then you can teach them about Me." No, they were not to imitate them in any way. To do so would mean certain destruction.

In the New Testament, John tells us, *"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world."* (1 John 2:17). We're to be in the world, (as salt and light) but not OF the world. So why are more and more Christian leaders teaching that it's ok to look like the world if, by doing so, we can add more people to the church?

To find the answer, we need to ask a deeper question: who are we building the church for? It's obviously not for Christ and the Kingdom of God, because in compromising with the world, we negate the teaching of Scripture. Maybe we can get more people through the doors, but what is the purpose of that? Are we really trying to save souls? Or are we simply trying to increase our "market share?"

One pastor I spoke to boasted about the size of his church. "Yeah," he said, "we worship about 3,000 people on a weekend here." Oh, really? You "worship" about 3,000 people? And what is the result? How many of those 3,000 know Christ as their Savior? How many have fruitful, changed lives? Are they drawing closer to God? Or are they coming for the rock band, the comedian, the gourmet coffee? You call that worship of the Living God?

I've seen these churches, and the people there learn nothing of God. They come to church wearing T-shirts with vulgar sayings on them, because they truly don't know any better. They couldn't locate a Scripture reference if their lives depended on it (and, by the way, they do), and they cannot even explain the plan of salvation, much less tell you why Christ is the only way to heaven. There's no reverence for God, no respect, just a feel-good pep rally.

The Christian life is not one of cushy comfort and ease. We're specifically called to leave our personal comfort zones and impact the world. Somehow in America today, we've managed to get it completely backwards. Satan delights in his success as he sees one church after another trying to out-entertain the next one. It's a circus sideshow, described in Ephesians 4:18-19, *"They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more."*

Isn't it time we get past the entertainment culture, and embrace something more wholesome and spiritually nutritious? It's time we put away these foolish, childish things and embrace the substantial, the Holy. We can never "out-entertain" the secular entertainment world, nor should we ever try to.

Ephesians 5:15-17, "Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is."

Have some respect for God. Have some respect for His house. Worship Him properly, with reverence and awe. Study His Word to learn His ways and His will for you. The Christian life is not restrictive and certainly not boring. But it is a higher path and a narrow gate, and it calls for godliness, righteousness, self control and self-denial. Those are just a few of the basics – and it's time we get back to them.

Now, I realize it's nearly impossible today to find a church body that even remotely attempts to follow the ways of the early Church that Christ built. The Institutional Church is in the midst of the Great Falling Away. But there's nothing stopping you from starting your own Home Church. This is the biblical model of the early disciples. Maybe it's just your own family at first, but as you take the responsibility of building yourself up for the work of the ministry, you'll be emboldened by the Holy Spirit to invite others. What an amazing opportunity to make disciples – and then train THEM up for the work of the ministry as well.

I also have a deep and great respect for the Mennonite people. Perhaps you think you could never join such a serious and strict community. They look different and they act different and you're not used to that. But let me remind you of 1 Peter 2:9, *"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."*

Yes, the Mennonites ARE a peculiar people – in a world gone insane with the Institutional Church leading the way. Let's also read a portion of 2 Corinthians 6, *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship hath*

righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be My people. Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you."

Also from Jeremiah, 6:16, *"Thus said the LORD, Stand in the ways, and see, and seek the old paths, where is the good way and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your souls. But the people said, 'We will not walk therein.'"*

God's calling us to be different from the carnal world around us. He's calling us to be a "peculiar people." He's promised us rest for our souls if we follow the old paths. Yet just as in Jeremiah's day, the people still say, "We will not walk therein."

Friends, I've learned that the Mennonite people do not crave the lustful things of this world. Their clothing is plain and modest, rather than gaudy and shameful. Their children are raised in loving homes where God is revered, their father is the "priest" in the home and together with their mother, the children are trained up in the way they should go. They seek to walk in the "old paths" that our Creator designed for our benefit.

They also follow in the footsteps of the early disciples in that each learns a trade to provide for their families. They're not corrupted by the wicked public schools and colleges but still, most own their own businesses. Young men begin as apprentices and eventually begin a business of their own. There are Mennonite builders and construction workers and the craftsmanship of their work is unrivaled. Some are dentists or doctors. Some own grocery stores. Some are welders, mechanics or bakers. They know how to raise their own food and don't rely on government handouts. And do you

know why Mennonites were not so fearful of the ravages of COVID? Because they don't watch television! But they ARE informed and very aware of current events – and they do read *Wisconsin Christian News*!

We can learn a lot from them. Their church meetings are filled with reverence for God. No rock bands – not even a church organ. They sing acappella and if you've ever heard a Mennonite choir, you know it's a truly awe-inspiring taste of heaven. Many today are hurting in their souls and our modern churches and preachers are not helping, as they try to mix the carnal, worldly, lustful things of Satan with the Holy things of God. It's time to seek out the old paths, as peculiar people, set apart from the profane ways of this world. There we WILL find rest for our souls.

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