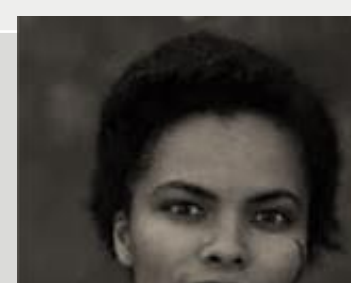
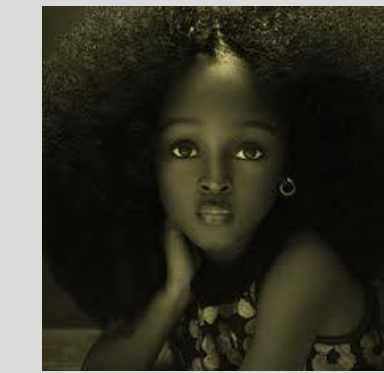
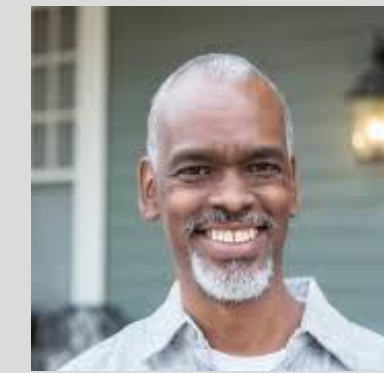




I AM A CHURCH MEMBER

Thom. S. Rainer

Clabon Bogan c.bogan2@gmail.com 609-230.5809



A FUNCTIONING CHURCH MEMBER

One of the most **shocking pieces of news to receive as a Pastor** is the news that someone has decided to leave the fellowship of the Church.

- This news has **emotional repercussions** whether in a small or a large growing church

And surprisingly, most who leave a church do not make that decision lightly, easily, or quickly without some heart-wrenching on their part.

It really does not matter whether the departing ones are **“good members”** or **“troublesome members,”** to the Pastor there is an emotional attachment being broken.

- And might we also assume these who are succeeding from the fellowship have **someone with whom they are intimately connected.**

Even more disconcerting and disappointing is when young people, whom we thought we were investing for our future, make the same decision no to stay.

- The collective pain from years of those departures can wear a pastor down

A FUNCTIONING CHURCH MEMBER

Having pastored a small church, the loss of one family is more devastating, because:

A. When you look at the math, **the percentage loss is much higher** than in a bigger church.

- The loss of that family usually means **massive changes in entire ministries**

B. Secondly, it is not just a drop in attendance, tithers, or volunteers; **it is the loss of people we know.**

- They were **integral elements in which we have invested** and **who have invested in us**

Those who leave churches do so for a **myriad of reasons:**

a) A desire for **deeper truth** and we are **not getting fed**

b) The **feeling of emptiness** and no excitement in worship

c) Dislike for some **behavioral action by the Pastor or leadership**

d) Failure to hold up a **moral standard in the Church** (saying one thing doing another)

e) **No genuine reaction** to the emotional plights faced by the member

A FUNCTIONING CHURCH MEMBER

- f) Disappointment with **OUR blindness** to the above conditions
- g) People do not seem to understand **personal perspectives**

Besides the aforementioned list, we must face the truth that nine out of ten churches in America are declining at a pace faster than communal demographic shifts.

We are also faced with a **fundamental change in what constitutes church** as we morph from the **Emerging Church** to the **Progressive Church**

The modern church has manifested itself under 4 basic models:

- 1) The "Attractive Church Model",** which was set forth by Rick Warren's book, "The Purpose-Driven Church." In this model, programs (such as daycare, sports programs, classes, and contemporary music and worship) are created which attract people from the community to the church.
- 2) The "Missional Church Model,"** **accentuates missional activities** to which people are drawn to participate. As they participate, they gradually become involved in the life of the church.

A FUNCTIONING CHURCH MEMBER

3) **The "Preach God to Friends and Neighbors Model,"** was set forth by Brian L. Boley's book, "How to Share the Gospel: A Proven Approach for Ordinary People". In this model, **members of the congregation begin to preach God to friends and neighbors.** As they preach God, they are eventually seen as "God-experts", and people **begin to inquire of them about spiritual issues.**

4) **The "Soul Winning Model"** (as in the Book of Acts) has always been trumpeted by Bible-believing Christians. This is a throwback to many tactics employed in the modern era. Although this era has its genesis with the 18th Century enlightenment, it took on new fervor with Evangelism Explosion by D. James Kennedy (circa 1962).

Millennials and Gen Z comprise the largest demographic sub-segment of the American population (50% – 72 million & 90 million respectively) and anyone in leadership who does not realize their necessity to the future of the church as we know it is kidding themselves

Surveys indicate that **only 15%** of Millennials (18-39) and Gen Z (born 1997 and forward) **aspire to orthodox Christian beliefs thus giving birth to the:**

A FUNCTIONING CHURCH MEMBER

- **Emerging Church** – **Post-modern believers of the late 20th Century** and early 21st Century that **crosses a number of theological boundaries**: participants are variously described **post-Protestant**, **post-evangelical**, **post-liberal**, **post-conservative**, **post-charismatic**
 - The Emerging Church initiated the **“selfie generation”** – inclusive of church lobbies with identity photo backdrops
- **Progressive Church** emanating out of the emerging church (circa 2006) whose main thrust is the **desire to articulate a way of being Christian that was an alternative** to the Christian faith traditionally portrayed.
 - Much of what they proposit is stated in negative terms: they **are not fundamentalists**:
 - a) They do not believe the Bible is the inerrant or infallible word of God
 - b) They do not agree that Creationism should replace the science
 - c) They do not believe there is a Divine mandate against alternative sexuality
 - d) They do not believe in the exclusivity of Christianity as the only way to God
 - e) They don't deny the right of women to choose what happens to their bodies.”

A FUNCTIONING CHURCH MEMBER

Unfortunately, the loss of the Millennial generation is not a white or black problem but is a church cultural problem.

Historically, analysis of why we lost this generation can be:

- Blamed on the **influence of popular secular culture**
- Blame on the **failed institutions of our nation** leading to godless politics
- Blame it on the **hypocritical nature of church members**, and uncaring insensitive pastors.

Thom Rainer makes the following assertion an assessment:

“But I am proposing that we who are church members need to look in the mirror. I am suggesting that congregations across America are weak because many of us church members have lost the biblical understanding of what it means to be a part of the body of Christ. We join our churches expecting others to serve us, to feed us, and to care for us. We don't like the hypocrites in the church, but we fail to see our own hypocrisies.”

“Many churches are weak because we have members who have turned the meaning of membership upside down. It is time to get it right. It is time to become a church member as God intended. It's time to give instead of being entitled.”

[Thom S. Rainer. I Am a Church Member (pp. 5-6). B&H Publishing Group]

A photograph of four people sitting on a stage for a panel discussion. From left to right: a man with short dark hair and a goatee, wearing a black jacket; a man with glasses and a beard, wearing a brown patterned jacket; a woman with glasses and long dark hair, wearing a black jacket; and a woman with long dark hair, wearing a black jacket. The first three people are holding microphones. They are all smiling and looking towards the right. The background is a dark, textured wall.

**WHY ARE
MILLENNIALS
LEAVING THE CHURCH?**

LOOKING IN THE MIRROR

This interview was conducted two years ago by Grant Skeldon founder of the *Initiative Network* and author of **The Passion Generation**

- In discussing millennials Skeldon affirms “it’s not a millennial problem, it’s a **discipleship problem**.”

The four Young Adults in the interview gave the following reasons for the Millennial withdrawal from organized religion:

- Speaker 1:** Uninspired and bored with the walk of faith she saw her parents walk. They loved God and were truly generous, but they lacked mission and obedience that cause inconvenience upon themselves. Thus the lack made it appear that Christianity does not cost something,
- Speaker 2:** We are not leaving the Church or leaving God, but there is a lack of vulnerability and transparency to those who Millennials are under authority of and those who are leading them. They don’t know how to go through things because they don’t see the struggle in the lives of leadership; and therefore they can’t find genuine connection.

LOOKING IN THE MIRROR

C. Speaker 3: After growing up in a legalistic church environ, there is a priority of holiness in the mouth, but not evidenced in the behavior. Nobody wants to be a part of that legalism, because what they know and what they think they see about God is a legalistic God that beats people down and throw them aside.

WHY IS THE MOST **CAUSE ORIENTED GENERATION** NOT CONNECTING WITH THE MOST **CAUSE ORIENTED ORGANIZATION** IN THE WORLD?

What is the one thing that could be done to remedy this problem?

- 1. ANSWER 1** Be transparent in all things
- 2. ANSWER 2** Find someone that is awkward and uncomfortable; get over it and have the hard conversation often and early; and speak life into them
- 3. ANSWER 3** Disciple your people. Young adults will not care about what you know until they know that you genuinely care about them
- 4. ANSWER 4** Find ways to create community. Millennials are cause driven but very community driven as well. Find ways for them to be to together and do life together just like they did in the book of Acts

A FUNCTIONING CHURCH MEMBER

The purpose of this study is to **rediscover the privilege and the joy of church membership**; without getting too entangled the meaning of church membership.

Through this study we would like for all who want to see **a revival of relationship service to God** committed to carefully following six simple steps of recovery.

- Each step will require **soul-searching and prayer** followed by commitment to God

As we spark a renewed attitude about our church, do not be surprised, upset, or defeated if you who once was **first is now moved to another space** for the benefit of Kingdom advancement

- **Prayerfully our church will change**, becoming a healthier environ for all ages to serve

Rainer said: “We may just discover that the reason our nation is in such bad shape is because our churches are so unhealthy. That lack of health is evident when nine out of **ten churches are no longer reaching their communities**. But that can change. With you. Beginning now. I am a church member.”

[Thom S. Rainer. I Am a Church Member (p. 6). B&H Publishing Group]

A FUNCTIONING CHURCH MEMBER

“I began to learn a lesson. Membership means perks. Membership means privileges. Membership means others will serve me. Just pay the going rate, and you can have others taking care of you while you enjoy a life of leisure. And, tragically, this understanding of membership is what many church members hold. “This is my church, so you have to play the music just the way I want it.”

“And, tragically, this understanding of membership is what many church members hold. “This is my church, so you have to play the music just the way I want it. “Look pastor, you need to remember who pays your salary.” “If you don’t do this program, I’ll withhold my check to the church.” “I’ve been a member of this church for over thirty years, so I have a right to get what I want.” “I don’t pay good money to this church to listen to sermons that long.”

[Thom S. Rainer. I Am a Church Member (p. 10). B&H Publishing Group]

A FUNCTIONING CHURCH MEMBER

“What does the Bible say about church membership? There are several places in the New Testament where we can see a clear picture of church membership. One of the more voluminous sections is I Cor. 12 to 14. In **I Cor. 12**, Paul explains the metaphor of the church being a **body with many members**. In **I Cor. 13**, he established **love as the central attitude and action** all members should have. And in **I Cor. 14**, he returns to the **messed-up church at Corinth** that has the concept of membership all wrong.”

[Thom S. Rainer. I Am a Church Member (p. 11-12). B&H Publishing Group]

The early churches were characterized by the ingrafting of Judaism with pagan cultures and therefore whomever was the founding leaders, there was great influence.

- There was also the Jewish influence of signs and the Greek quest for wisdom (I Cor. 1:22)

Paul raised up the Corinthian church ([Acts 18:1-17](#)) between 50 and 52 A.D., and continued to labor in the city, laying the foundation of the church.

- No church in Paul's domain exceeded Corinth in terms of its spiritual gifts (I Cor. 1:4)

A FUNCTIONING CHURCH MEMBER

With God's help and his labor, he got it off to a good start. But, in the presence of this abundance of spiritual gifts were also problems.

- Three to 3 1/2 years after the church began, Paul alludes to the difficulties there by writing to the church.
- This 2nd epistle further touches on the problems which were progressing (I Cor. 5:11)

Although the Church at Corinth was founded by Paul and it was afterwards instructed by Apollos, and amazingly factions started based on leadership(I Cor. 1:12—Peter, Christ)

It is also possible that resentment arose over the systematic nature of Paul's teaching in with its restrictions in contrast to the liberality enjoy in their culture.

In I Corinthians Paul spoke to three moral issues (a) Incest [5:1-13 (b) litigation between believers [6:1-11], and sexual immorality with prostitutes [6:12-20].

A FUNCTIONING CHURCH MEMBER

So, while at Ephesus, Paul received reports of problems that were prevalent in the Corinthian church which were causing “divisions” in the church

People from Chloe’s house reported divisive activities among the church

- **Eris (1:11)** – contention; quarreling; wrangling; debate; strife; variance
 - ❖ Paul is the only NT writer to use this word as it speaks to disputes endangering the church
- **Phusioo (4:19)** – blowing up in the sense to inflate; make proud or haughty
 - ❖ Paul uses this term to throw light on behavior oriented to the flesh and false teachings
- **Krino (6:1)** – to condemn with the intent of punishment; sue at law
 - ❖ One third of the 114 NT appearances of this word is found in Pauline epistles
- **Hairesis (11:19)** – choosing a party bringing about disunity; forming sects
 - ❖ The main thrust of this word are dissensions based on false teaching causing disunity
- **Akatastasia (14:33)** - instability; disorder; commotion; confusion (*God not the author of*)
 - ❖ The main thrust of this word is confusion, disturbance, unrest and disorder, tumult

All these words work together to show that there was a troubled situation in the Corinthian church

“Open Church – Open Bible”

Communication Information

Thank you for sharing today at the “Open Church-Open Bible Ministry at the Christ Baptist Church.

If this lesson has been a blessing to you, and desire you to support Christ Baptist , please go to <http://www.cbcburlingtonnj.org/>, click on the **GIVE tab at the top of the page and follow the prompts**

**Or Send Your Donations by Mail to
Christ Baptist Church, PO Box 10, Burlington NJ 08016**

A copy of this lesson can be obtained by going to the CBC Website at <http://www.cbcburlingtonnj.org/>, Click at the **ON-LINE BIBLE STUDY TAB
A copy of the Weekly Lesson PDF will be available for downloading**

www.cbcburlingtonnj.org e-mail churchoffice@cbcburlingtonnj.org 609.387.1234