

Tourists or pilgrims?

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Can we do church the way we always have and expect different results? Do we actually think being merely Sunday observers of church can actually impact this culture for Christ? Is there something far more radical that God has in mind for His people?

Has the minutia of the American church life so preoccupied our time that we are missing God's Kingdom purpose? Mike Minter thinks so. In a recent book, "A Western Jesus: the Wayward Americanization of Christ and the Church" (B&H Publishing, 2007), Minter writes:



"Conversation in the foyer after the service has more to do with the 12:30 p.m. kickoff than the sermon. People are leaving [church] just as they came in. What about the lost who should have fallen on their faces and said, '**God is really among you**' (1 Cor. 14:25)? Where was the powerful testifying that you read about in 1 Thes. 1:8-9 regarding the great faith of the believers? Why was the meeting over so quickly? Where was the participation of the body and their gifts? Where was the prayer meeting like what you read about in Acts 12? The seriousness of the gospel you had become familiar with in the New Testament is somehow lacking. There is more of a cavalier attitude and a general sense of a temporal focus. Life went on as usual. '**These aren't pilgrims,**' you say to yourself, '**they're tourists.**'"

Ouch! Minter uses his words like a physician poking around on your body and asking, "**Does that hurt?**" For someone passionate about the things of God, these kinds of probing questions cause us to recognize that individual believers and churches cannot possibly continue to prop up the status quo and expect different results.

If we are to experience a powerful movement of the Holy Spirit in our lifetime, something must change and that something is us. How can we possibly see God move in spiritual power through His people for the purpose of transforming a culture, until we say "**no!**" to the compelling urgencies we experience, humble ourselves, repent of our sins and seek His cleansing.

We must have spiritual awakening in America or we will perish. This nation is at war on several fronts. The war on terrorism is important for our personal freedoms, including which god we will serve. If we do nothing or withdraw too quickly, the fascists will declare victory over the West and we will live in a state of fear that will impact everything in our culture.

The other front is perhaps more insidious because it erodes the core of our identity. It is the war of worldviews. There are multiple worldviews (or religions) pulling at the fabric of this culture. There are the zealots for particular religions that base their belief structure on strict obedience and condemnation toward non-conformity. There are those extremists diligently at work in the legal system to sterilize the public square of any philosophy that is not their own religion of secularism. There are those radically clamoring for the right to propagate hedonistic behavior at the expense of decimating family relationships.

Bottom line, we are all sinners wanting our own way. The results are staggering. **Our nation is on the edge of moral collapse, evidenced by an average of 3,600 babies terminated every day at the hands of "legal" abortion providers.** There is no way to gather the statistics that indicate the actual number of little children preyed upon by men who drink from the sewage of Internet porn. We have fallen so headlong into the sinkhole of compromise that our nation is confused as to what righteousness looks like in the marketplace.

To compound the perilous times, there is a major shortage of churches that reach young and median adults. At least 10,000 churches are totally operated and supported by faithful senior adults. While these folks are a powerful force of witness, giving and prayer, those churches (apart from a major spiritual change) will cease to exist in 20 years. Tragically, many of our churches have silenced the voice of the prophet in our pulpits through intimidation, rules, regulations, by-laws, power struggles and terminations.

How can change occur in our lives and churches when our hearts are full of iniquity?

Most people in our churches cannot remember what it feels like to be washed clean by the cleansing power of Jesus. We teach them quick confessions, quick devotions and we have given birth to quickie faith that evaporates when the heat of trials engulf them.

The prophet **Joel** says in **chapter 2:17**: "**Let the priests, who minister before the Lord, weep between the temple porch and the altar.**"

Where are the priests, the godly leaders who weep over the overt wickedness of this land? How dry are eyes for the souls of men and women and for this culture? **Are we pilgrims on the journey of knowing God or are we mere Christian tourists who observe instead of participate in what God desires to do through His people?**

Perhaps it is time to privately go to the prayer closet and pray something like this:

"Oh God. Have mercy on us. Your Word tells us through the prophet Jeremiah that You have great plans for us -- plans to prosper and to protect, plans for a hope and a

future. We must seek You and find You. My Father, lost people are unable to see their most important need because the gods of this world have blinded their minds. Would You open their eyes to Your truth? Lord, we hunger for forgiveness and healing to come to our country. We do not ask this so we can arrogantly strut our pseudo-spirituality. We ask that You alone are glorified by the awesome work of Your Holy Spirit that revives your people and reforms a culture."