

## **Being Church 24/7, by Molong Nacua**

Jesus never intended for Christianity to become a religious sect. He did however want His followers to follow His footsteps in how He lived life, as designed by God, on this earth. Watching what His Father does and hearing what His Father says is what He does. That's how He's obedient to His Father's will. It's not a matter of rules or of even choosing between right and wrong but of just being obedient to His Father. In like manner, the same Father calls us. He wants us, as His children, to each become an obey-er, just like Jesus.

Being church is living Christianity 24 hours a day, seven days a week. And every child of God can do just that because the Holy Spirit is not just here to stay in a believer's life on Wednesday nights and Sunday mornings but every minute of the day, even if one is just sitting down or lying in bed. We are the temple of God, and wherever we go, we stay the same-the church of Jesus Christ.

Being church is neither going to church nor doing church activities. It is not a full-time or part-time Christian, and most of all; it is not a Sunday-going believer. It is not defining worship as attending worship services in church buildings. Also, it is not having a specialized ministry (a person who specializes in specific ministry in the church or someone who is a part of an elite group that does a specific task in the church or outside the church but is overseen by someone higher in authority like a pastor).

Wherever I go, I meet tens if not hundreds of Christians who don't care about going to church anymore. It's not that they have lost their faith, but rather that they have kept it until now. And they're afraid of losing it if they were to join a church! Most of these folks are not just pew sitters but have ministries in their local churches. Amazingly, I've also learned some have backslidden not because they were made to stumble by someone outside church, but by someone inside it!

"Eastern disciplines became popular in the 1970s; some Christians have searched their own tradition for an inner path to the divine, hoping to balance or even supplant the sometimes-dry diet of Sunday churchgoing." - Bart Ehrman

Millions of Christians around the world are aware of this kind of Christian Modernization. They are not ignorant anymore of the two-faced mask of hypocrisy and its effect on divisions in the body.

Let us hear from author, David Barrett, and see if the message is the same here and everywhere. He said, "World Christian Encyclopedia, estimates there are already 112 million 'out-of-church Christians' globally." He expects this number to double by 2025.

New Zealand pastor Alan Jamieson, author of the book *A Churchless Faith*, has been studying this phenomenon for years and says it is not the "normal churchgoers" who are leaving the church for reasons of faith:

- 94% of the Christians he has interviewed, who are currently without a church, were in positions of leadership or responsibility, such as deacons, elders and Sunday school teachers.
- 40% of them were once in full-time ministry.
- Many of them said they left the church not because they had lost their faith, but exactly because they did not want to lose it."

This may be weird, but it's real. (See also Barna Research Group and Andrew Strom's book, *Out of Church Christians*.)

Are these people looking for a different kind of Christianity? Are they tired of being religious? Could it be attending church -- Sunday after Sunday, week after week, month after month, and year after year, both now and forever, amen -- doesn't make you a good Christian? Maybe that's why Justin Kuek, a church planter of 20 years, comments that good Christians don't go to church! He even wanted to write a book about that. Check out the label my friend. See if you've called by His Name. Otherwise, you might end up as just another brand of Christianity on the sidewalk.

"There's a lot of interest in early Christian diversity because people who have left church, and some who are still in it, are looking for another way of being a Christian." - Marcus Borg

## **STRUCTURED CHRISTIANITY?**

If you really want to check on Jesus life and ministry in the gospels you will find out Jesus never did the same thing twice in the same way. In other words, He wasn't into techniques but was unpredictable. In our human strength (or perhaps more accurately weaknesses), we try to systematize everything Jesus did. For example, Peter who, after

seeing heavenly glory, wanted to build Tabernacles in the mountain where Jesus was transfigured. And not only one, but three!

There's also the time when Jesus spat on the ground and made clay and put it on a blind man's eyes and commanded him to wash it in the pool. May I ask those who have a Healing of the Blind Ministry, did Jesus use a clockwise or a counterclockwise motion? Or maybe I will specialize with a Spitting Ministry. Do you want me to spit on you?

Jesus' life was never structured; He simply obeyed His Father. Singing for 30 minutes may not be worship at all. Worship is obedience to what He called us to be. That is the highest form of worship. It is the expression of our redeemed lives, our way of life. We cannot just put our Lord or His ways into a system.

Churches today are like spiritual machines. Programs are their survival kits. People love to pour their money into the machine to keep it running. But in reality, church life is like a wind: you don't know where it goes. It is a journey, a daily journey. It cannot be sewn up in the intellect; it must be uncovered during the journey.

### **BE LED BY THE SPIRIT, WALK IN THE SPIRIT**

Have you wondered why we are to be led by and walk in the Spirit? Because a disciple is a follower, a follower of Jesus' footsteps, we are on a journey. No wonder the measurement of our maturity is to be like Christ and the end of it is when we see Him face to face (1 John 3:2). So it's not joining Discipleship Class 101 or working our way through a curriculum but it is a lifelong day-to-day commitment. A "take up your cross daily and follow Me" subject. The fruit of the Spirit are not there as proof of maturity but is part of the progress of your journey toward Christ. It is not the sign of your qualification as a mature person but a quality of the life you live before everybody. It is not the end of your journey; it is your endless journey until you meet met Him.

We are not only not religious, but we're not legalists either. We are not guided by rules, but we are guarded by our freedom in Christ. Paul rightly claimed, "Everything is permissible to me but not everything is beneficial." What a freedom we have in Christ!

### **YOU CAN BE NATURAL AND AT THE SAME TIME SPIRITUAL**

Jesus was the most spiritual person on earth and He was also the most natural person on earth. Our religious assumption is that we're trying

to separate our natural life from our spiritual life. When we have devotions, we think we are more holy and closer to God. We feel spiritual. But how about afterwards? When we "minister" we feel spiritual. But when we're done ministering what are we?

The only valid answer is: You are religious, not spiritual -- making Sunday a holy day just because you've gone to church, then considering Monday through Saturday unholy because you go to work. You are separating the sacred from the secular. You are not righteous, you are religious! And the danger of being religious is that it prevents you from obtaining the real thing.

The best word we have for this is "hypocrite." One man entered a church on Sunday morning and wondered why the people there ignored and avoided him. "Ah, I see," he realized. "They don't like smoking. Church people don't like smoking." So he threw away his cigarette butts. People started to welcome him, believing he was touched by God's presence in church. After church he went home, opened the cabinet and lit a piece of cigar. Next Sunday members thought he stopped smoking because of a touch from God's presence. No. It was their legalism and their religiosity. What did this man learn? He learned to play the game of hypocrisy. Where? In the church. And often pastors are the biggest hypocrites there.

## **I AM THE CHURCH, WHERE SHOULD I GO?**

God in heaven transferred His residence from a temple building to a temple body, which is Christ's church on earth. Even from the beginning, God's original intention was to stay in a Tent, which is mobile, not in a Tabernacle, which is stable. But even then God granted David's desire, but not for long. "God became flesh and dwelt [tabernacled in Greek] among us." He wants to have a movement of people, not a monument of bricks. He wants called out ones, a community, and a nation of priests. And only God can move people into such a movement of ekklesia.

Movement of ekklesia. Who can make a difference? God's only purpose for giving His people the Laws, priests, sacrifices, the Temple and circumcision was for them to be different from all peoples of the earth. But a short time later they intermarried with other nations. The pagans' gods became their gods. They became friends with the world and developed enmity toward God. Is there any difference? Instead of these nations following them, God's people became their followers.

The important thing is not that we do church differently. What counts is how we live life differently.

"The Lord simply said, 'I will change the understanding and expression of Christianity in one generation.'" - Mike Bickle