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THE BIG PICTURE JIM RUTZ



WORLDNETDAILY EXCLUSIVE COMMENTARY

'Don't-get-bored-to-death' Christianity

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By Jim Rutz
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In the old Spectator Christianity, you go to a large building once a week, sit down in a row, and keep your mouth shut except for the singing, which often these days is drowned out by high-powered sound systems cranked up past 90 decibels.

This kind of frozen religion is a vestige of the days of our forefathers, when the pastor/priest was the only person worth listening to and was often, in fact, the only one who could read.

Even today there is such a gulf between the clergy and laity that you dare not send in a lay substitute for your pastor to fill the pulpit when the good reverend is sick or on vacation. The result would typically be somewhere between embarrassing and pathetic.

(Column continues below)

In other words, what we have today is an outdated, two-tiered church composed of performers and spectators, producers and consumers. As a layman, you go to church, play the role, put some token money in the plate, shake hands with a few friends, go home, and turn on the game.

The pastor, on the other hand, is stringently required to spend hours polishing an uplifting sermon, especially in Protestant churches. (The most commonly heard reason for leaving a church is, "I wasn't being fed.") The pastor is expected to be the Holy Man wearing Holy Robes

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standing in the Holy Pulpit in God's Holy House on the Holy Day to preach the Holy Sermon (the term spoon-feeding springs to mind). By playing our very limited role in this unbiblical charade, we peons accumulate Brownie points and are somehow absolved from any failure to do our part.

This, my friend, is miles and miles from the exciting picture of the church that we see in the New Testament, which commands us in 54 places to do various good things for "one another": love one another, honor one another, bear one another's burdens. All an impossibility when we're sitting silently in rows. It commands us to keep the family of God highly interactive and we disobey this word from the Lord to our own peril.

My happy news for you today is that this interactive, high-responsibility church is growing rapidly around the world, even as the traditional, institutional, top-down, pyramid church is fading. Twenty years from now, according to top pollster George Barna, 65 to 70 percent of the Christians in the U.S. will be in The New Christianity: small house churches, office churches, and campus churches, where all of us will be learning to use our individual spiritual gifts: teaching, helping, praying, encouraging, singing, dancing, reaching out to help the lost, and changing the world. That picture is large indeed, and I haven't the space to go into it here, except to note that I describe it at length in "[Megashift](#)" and to a lesser extent in "[The Meaning of Life](#)."

What sparked this column was an article from John White, U.S. coordinator of Dawn Ministries, quoting statistics compiled by St. Louis pastor Darrin Patrick based in turn on research by Barna and Focus on the Family. The article contains much wisdom even for non-Christians, and I suggest you read it.

Unintentionally, it also sounds the death knell of the institutional church system. How? By simply outlining the plight of today's traditional pastors:

- 80 percent of U.S. pastors and 84 percent of their spouses feel unqualified and discouraged in their role as pastors.
- 80 percent of seminary and Bible school graduates who enter the ministry will leave in the first five years.
- 1,500 pastors leave the ministry each month due to moral failure, spiritual burnout, or contention in their churches.
- Almost 40% polled said they have had an extramarital affair since beginning their ministry.
- 70 percent said the only time they spend studying

the Word is when they're preparing their sermons.

- 70 percent of pastors constantly fight depression.
- 50 percent of pastors are so discouraged that they would leave the ministry if they could, but have no other way of making a living.
- 50 percent of pastors' marriages will end in divorce.

Add to this the tortured feelings of pastors' wives:

Eighty percent of pastors' spouses feel their spouse is overworked – and wish they would choose another profession. The majority add that the most destructive event that has occurred in their marriage was the day they entered the ministry.

Makes you wonder if this is really what God had in mind for His church, doesn't it?

My suggested remedy: Beat the rush, join a house church now!

Better yet, start one.

James Rutz is chairman of Megashift Ministries and founder-chairman of Open Church Ministries. He is the author of "MEGASHIFT: Igniting Spiritual Power," and "The Meaning of Life."



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