

“Church people are judgmental.” This was a big one for me. My experience with churches has shown this to be true in some cases, but I have yet to attend a church that wasn’t self proclaimed “The Friendliest church in town.” I went to one church that passed out nametags that said “My name is give” I only attended that church once. But in all fairness most churches are friendly, welcoming and accepting. I did speak to the pastor of a church that made the statement that they didn’t want sinners in their church, I told him have no fear, this sinner won’t be there.

“The preacher’s sermons are lousy,” they said after attending one service. I suggest to anyone who is church searching that they attend at least five services. All of us pastors have bad days, days when things just fall apart and for me that is usually when a visitor shows up for the first time. Give the man or woman a chance to redeem themselves, if after five services you still feel the same, head for another church.

“The pews are uncomfortable.” Get over it, it’s only about an hour. I heard someone didn’t like the soft chairs in our sanctuary, there’s no pleasing everyone.

“His/her sermons are too long.” I’m sure glad the members of my congregation don’t say this because there are times we just can’t end on the hour. I am usually pretty close but if your focus is on your watch you are probably missing the point and have missed out on something special.

The church is a gathering place for God’s people and those who seek Him and His desire is that every person on the face of the Earth receive the gift of eternal life. His people are called to love, not to judge and we have no right judge others and most of us have no desire to do so. God so loved the world that He sent His son to save His people, we are all His people.

Series: THE FAITH JOURNEY

Title: “The Call of Faith”

1. GOD CALLS US TO _____

¹⁸ *Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away.* – **Luke 8:18 (ESV)**

2. GOD CALLS US TO _____

¹ *Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.”* – **Genesis 12:1 (ESV)**

¹⁴ *As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”* – **1 Peter 1:14-16 (ESV)**

3. GOD CALLS US TO _____

² *“And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”* – **Genesis 12:2-3 (ESV)**

²⁵ *But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ²⁶ It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever would be first among you must be your slave,* – **Matthew 20:25-28 (ESV)**

4. GOD CALLS US TO _____

³ *“I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”* – **Genesis 12:3 (ESV)**

From The Pastor’s Study Time

Do you ever wake in the morning and feel like you just didn’t want to get out of bed. I do quite often, in fact there are times that if my faithful furry alarm clock didn’t chase me out of bed I would just lay there. But I get up and like many I get my first cup of coffee for the day, sit down and watch the news. The only thing I see that doesn’t depress me is the weather, well, even that does at times.

Is there any good news any more? There isn’t much that I have seen that is good news; the virus takes up at least half the news, we get a report of how many are newly infected, how many total have been infected, how many have died, they don’t talk about how many have survived; then comes the morning report on riots, how much damage was done, no arrests; then the statues that have been torn down and how many people have been injured and killed. Okay, I woke in a half bad mood now it has gone all the way.

Okay, so maybe I can find something good on the web. So I hit Yahoo, more of the same. How about Google, nope, looks just like the rest. Fine, I will go to Facebook, you have got to be kidding, I never knew he was so radical. I am starting to think the old saying is true, “No news is good news” the only way to avoid bad news is not to look at the news at all. Maybe what they meant was no news is good.

There is a place where good news can be found, in fact it is called Good News. In the past when the country was in trouble

we turned to God, we sought to find a place where we feel safe and included. Typically churches would bulge to full and more.

When the twin towers fell people turned to God and I wonder what they expected. Was God going to rebuild the towers, bring people back to life, were they suddenly safe from the pains of the world because they entered His house? There certainly is nothing wrong with looking to God in times of trial, in fact it is the best place to turn, but then what?

I ran away from the church when I was 13 because I found so many people in the church that were disingenuous. I discovered many came to church in all their finery (this was 1960), singing the hymns and prayers, then listening to sermons about how to live their lives. The churches were full but were the hearts as full.

Look at our churches now, over the last fifteen to thirty years the numbers have dwindled and began to close. The Presbytery of Eastern Virginia once had over sixty churches, now they list just over forty on their website, and many of the remaining churches are in trouble. Where are all those people who turned to God in times of fear, trials, and stress? I can’t even guess and I won’t make accusations.

Why do people stay away, or walk away from the church? Wow, there are many answers to that question and I’m not going to try to name them all, but let’s look at a few that I have heard and maybe at one time said.

“The church just wants my money.” I have only been to a few churches that focused on money but they are a small minority. Yes, a church needs funds to function; pastors get paid, office staff, music directors, janitorial staff, most of these people are paid, they are important to the church. I know of a few pastors who don’t draw a paycheck and I know some, like myself who are paid for 20 and work 50 hours a week. So it isn’t about money.