

I've met many Millennials who slam others' ministries and practices, but don't do anything themselves (myself included at times). One example is evangelism. Many of us agree that evangelistic tracts and itinerant preaching don't work so well anymore. While I think we can find better ways of preaching and embodying the gospel in our current context, at least people who use these methods are trying! Most Millennial Christians aren't actually doing evangelism. We've isolated ourselves in criticism.

[Improvement] always takes place within churches, by working with other Christians, even those we don't naturally like. And it requires a disposition of love that is self-critical. In our criticism of "the church," we've forgotten one of the basic tenets of the Sermon on the Mount: "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?"

Yes, the church is messed up. It disappoints us all from time to time. But are our disappointments more reflective of the church's faults or our unrealistic expectations and sinfulness?

Christ loves the church.

Love—it is patient and kind. It's not arrogant or rude. It's not irritable or resentful. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Let's love the church.

News:

The Southside church of Christ in Tucson is hosting a "Ladies Day" Saturday, September 21 from 8:00 A.M. To 1:30 P.M. The theme is "Woman of God:." Additional classes will be available for ladies ages 9-17 years old. Email flane@hotmail.com or call 520-247-6638.

The Tempe church of Christ is hosting a "Ladies' Tea" Saturday, October 5 from 10:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. Get more information by calling 480-968-7847.

Please continue to pray for Tatyana's daughter Olga who is undergoing treatments for cancer.

Prayer List:

Healing: *Jerry Robinson's mother Norma. Mike and Sandy Cavasos, Ben Atchley, Faye Atchley, Nicolas and Annie Self, Jonda Gardner, Dave Morse, Richard Tuey.*

Travels: *The Cunninghams.*

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Safford Church of Christ

3888 S Hwy 191, Safford, AZ 85546

11 August 2013

Sermon Topics

A.M.: The Power of the Word

John 1:1-4

P.M.: Hezekiah's Song of Thanks

Isaiah 38:9 ff

Wednesday: Rehoboahm's Rash Inaugural Address

1 Kings 12

Pulpit Evangelist

Ken Knowlton: 428-5974

Elders

Ben Atchley: 428-2246

Greg Briggs: 428-8756

John Cunningham: 428-0895

Services

Sunday Bible Class	10:00 A.M.
Sunday Morning Worship	11:00 A.M.
Sunday Evening Worship	6:30 P.M.
Wednesday Evening Class	6:30 P.M.
Thursday Ladies Bible Class	10:00 A.M.

The Good Shepherd

Miles Custis, Bible Study Magazine

Psalm 23 may be the best known passage in the Bible. The psalm depicts God as a shepherd who shows His concern for us. How does the "shepherd" lead the psalmist in Psalm 23:2-3? Read John 10:11-18. What are the characteristics of the "Good Shepherd" there?

The "valley of the shadow of death" contrasts with the "green pastures" and "still waters." Are you more likely to recognize God's hand in your life when traveling through "green pastures" or the "valley of the shadow of death?" What can you do to recognize God's guiding presence in all aspects of your life?

The psalmist says God's rod and staff comfort him. A shepherd would use a rod or staff to protect and guide his sheep. Can you think of a time when you felt God's discipline guiding you? How is His discipline a sign of His love

(see also Psalm 94:12; Hebrews 12:6; Revelation 3:19)? The psalm reveals the purpose for God's protection of His people: "for His name's sake" (Psalm 23:3). How does God's protection serve this purpose? What can you do to ensure the name of God is upheld?

The psalmist shifts from the imagery of a shepherd leading his sheep to the image of a host serving his guest (Psalm 23:5). In the ancient Near East, hosts were responsible for their guests' safety. Here the psalmist describes his enjoyment of a peaceful feast, while being surrounded by his enemies. How is the image of a host similar to the image of the shepherd? How have you seen God guiding, protecting or nourishing you – even in times of difficulty?

The Church is a Harlot, But I Love Her

Kevin P. Emmert. LeadershipJournal.net
brutally edited - ns

Husbands, imagine this: A friend comes to your house for dinner. Everything is going well until halfway through the meal, your friend does something unbelievable. He starts listing things that your wife could have done better.

"The chicken is too tough," he says. "You should have marinated it longer. And the broccoli is overcooked, mushy and bland." But it only gets worse. He starts to criticize her character, even ridicule her. "She's not the woman you thought she was, is she?"

I'm guessing his visit would be cut short. And you'd probably send him away with a few choice words. Even if he was right about certain things, you simply wouldn't tolerate someone openly and caustically criticizing your wife. You love her, and because you do, you look past her quirks and shortcomings.

But we tolerate this mean-spirited criticism all the time when it's directed at the church. If we're not careful, it's easy for us to look at the church and her leaders, and say, "The church should have done ____." Or, "I wish they hadn't ____." Or, "She's not what we hoped for."

We hear these sorts of critiques constantly. We see them on social media, in blogs, and in articles. I work in Christian publishing, so I see the constant stream of opinion pieces voicing frustrations with the church. The sad truth is, negativity sells.

Take for example the recent discussion on "why Millennials are leaving the church." This topic has been in heavy rotation on social media the past couple weeks, and writers like Rachel Held Evans have generated heated

discussion. In her recent CNN article, Evans said, "We're not leaving the church because we don't find the cool factor there; we're leaving the church *because we don't find Jesus there*" (my emphasis).

Rachel is not the first person to explore this issue, nor is she the first to make bold statements like "we don't find Jesus there." She's voicing frustrations shared by many 20- and 30-somethings.

To be sure, I hold some things in common with critics like Evans. Along with my Millennial brothers and sisters, I long for substance. I want to live in a faith community that is connected to the historic church, animated by God's Spirit, steeped in Scripture and theology, and committed to embodying the gospel.

But I don't think Evans and other Millennials are leaving the church because they don't find Jesus. My suspicion is they're wagging their fingers at the church because they don't find the Jesus they want. I think Evans' claim that Jesus is absent from "the church" is absurd. Not only is it theologically false, it's a slap in the face to Christ's bride.

I'm not delusional. I've had close friends abandon their faith, and it breaks my heart. But I don't think the church is entirely to blame for the exodus of these individuals.

We all are unsatisfied with the church in some way or another. That's fine and even normal to a certain degree. The church is an imperfect organism, and it will always need reforming [I would say, Restoration is never over. - ns]. This means that a healthy dose of criticism is often needed. Churches will always need to reorient themselves to the gospel.

Many of us are pros at waxing poetic about what's wrong with the church. And my generation is especially good at vocalizing frustrations. In addition to articles like Evans', you don't have to search long to find pieces about why Millennials won't give money to the church, why the church needs to start living the truth instead of simply talking about it. When we speak ill of Christians we don't like, we think it's justifiable: "They deserve it. They brought it on themselves."

I realize I'm being critical of critics, and there is thus some irony. But we need to constantly keep ourselves in check. Why do we publish our frustrations on the Internet?

Let's not forget that the church does a lot right. It is a body animated by the Holy Spirit, connected to the risen Christ. And Christ loves her, far more than we ever could, even if she's ugly and dysfunctional at times. We may have a love-hate relationship with the church, but Christ's love for her is unyielding. And we're called to love her in the same way. We should celebrate her accomplishments far more enthusiastically than we lament her faults.