

9 Reasons Even Committed Christians Are Attending Church Less Often

(Adapted from a post by Carey Nieuwhof)

Church *attendance* is never the goal. But attendance is a sign of something deeper with which we all must wrestle.

The first key to addressing what's happening is to *understand* what's happening.

1. Greater affluence

Money gives people options. Technology options. Travel options. Options for their kids. Affluence may be one of the factors moving them further away from a committed engagement with the mission of the local church.

2. Higher focus on kids' activities

A growing number of kids are playing sports. And a [growing number of kids](#) are playing on teams that require travel. Many of those sports happen on weekends. And affluent parents are choosing sports over church. It's as simple as that.

3. More travel

Despite environmental concerns, [travel is on the rise](#), and most people are taking far more than the old standard of one vacation a year.

More and more families of various ages travel for leisure, even if it's just out of town to go camping or to a friend's place for the weekend or a weekend at the lake.

When people are out of town, they tend to not be in church.

4. Blended and single-parent families

Fortunately, more and more blended families and single-parent families are finding a home in church.

So how does this translate into attendance patterns?

Church leaders need to remember that when custody is shared in a family situation, ‘perfect’ attendance for a kid or teen might be 26 Sundays a year.

Similarly, while the affluent might not be in church because of *access* to reliable transportation, single parents (who, not always, but often, struggle more financially) might not be in church because they *lack access* to reliable transportation.

So here’s the strange twist. People who *have* a car are often not in church *because* they have a car. People who *want* to be in church are often *not* in church because they *don’t* have a car or because it’s not their ‘weekend’ for church. Sadly, people who want to get to church simply can’t.

5. Online Options

With the rise of online church, social media, and ubiquitous tech, there have never been more opportunities for people to access church without being there.

There are pros and cons to online church and there’s no doubt that churches with a strong online presence have seen it impact physical attendance.

But whether or not your church has online options doesn’t make the issue go away. Anyone who attends your church has free access to any online ministry of any church.

Online church is here to stay, whether you participate or not.

6. The cultural disappearance of guilt

Many of us were raised to feel guilty about not being in church on a Sunday. The number of people who feel guilty about not being in church on Sunday shrinks daily.

I regularly meet people all the time who haven't been in months but LOVE our church.

7. Self-directed spirituality

People are looking less to churches and leaders to help them grow spiritually, and more to other options.

We live in an era in which no parent makes a visit to a doctor's office without having first googled the symptoms of a child's illness and a recommended course of treatment. Just ask any family physician. It drives them nuts. (Google, doctors will tell you, is not a complete replacement for medical school.)

Similarly, when was the last time you bought a car without completely researching it online?

In an age where we have access to everything, more and more people are self-directing their spirituality...for better or for worse.

Similarly, another characteristic of the post-modern mind is a declining trust in and reliance on institutions. The church in many people's minds is seen as an institution.

8. Failure to see a direct benefit

People always make time for the things they value most. If they're not making time for church, that tells you something.

Even among people who say they love the church and who say they love *your* church, if declining attendance is an issue, chances are it's because they don't see a direct

benefit. They don't see the value in being there week after week.

That could be because there isn't much value (gut check). Or it could be because there is a value that they simply don't see.

Either way, failure to see a direct benefit always results in declining engagement.

9. Valuing attendance over engagement

When someone merely *attends* church, the likelihood of showing up regularly or even engaging their faith decreases over time. Those who *engage* — those who serve, give, invite, and who are in a community group—are the most frequent attendees. We may want to value engagement over attendance.

Ironically, if you value attendance over engagement, you will see declining attendance.