

STRAWS IN THE WIND

J. Noel Merideth

Straws moving in the air indicate the direction of the blowing of the wind. There are religious trends in the country that are “straws in the wind.” Some point to progress in the right direction; some indicate a dangerous trend.

There is a trend today of an overall decline in attendance in the churches in the United States. There has been a gradual decline from 1958 to the present. In 1958, those who attended some kind of church amounted to 49 percent in a typical week. This has gradually declined to 40 percent in 1979, and even less today. Actually, we can understand why many of the “liberal” churches have been declining. “Liberalism” does not work. Man’s basic needs are not fulfilled by a social gospel, but by a close, personal, and obedient walk with God and His Word. The trend of decline in these churches is an opportunity for Bible churches to present the power of the gospel.

There is the trend to think that one can be a good Christian and not attend church. In a survey, eight out of ten unchurched and seven out of ten who are connected with some church, felt that a person can be a good Christian even if he or she does not attend church at all. While many institutional churches are formal, cold, and only interested in noise, nickels, and numbers; yet the Lord’s church is alive and interested in works of faith, labors of love and patience of hope. Those who are faithful Christians will not forsake the assembly (Heb. 10:25.)

There is a trend today toward turning “preachers” into “counselors.” Counseling has its proper place, but people need to be told to conform their lives to the word of God. Advising people is serious business and we will be held accountable for what we say. The approach should still be: What does the Bible say about this? The gospel is the only thing that really offers “peace.”

There is a trend today to get away from citing the Bible as proof. It is not unusual to hear sermons that do not appeal to Biblical proof. Some are more interested in relating to people than in relating the word of God to people. Bible proof is foolish to some. But a “thus saith the Lord” is more important than three points and a poem from a counseling manual.

Let us turn to the Lord and walk in His ways; and then when life’s race has been run, its battle fought, and its victories won, the God Almighty will bid us to enter the celestial city. We may then sweep through the gates into the grandeur of our Father’s home, across which no shadow will ever fall.~

Deceased