

Dear members and friends of St. John Lutheran,

We live in what is referred to as a **post-church or post-Christian era**. By that, researchers are speaking about **the effect that church has on society**. Society is increasingly resistant to Christianity. As little as thirty years ago, church membership was an important part of living in America. People were at least partially known by their religious affiliation – what church they attended. Living together out of wedlock was a reality, but there was a social stigma attached to the practice – so people “weighed the cost” of doing what they knew would draw criticism from others. **Parents didn’t ask their children if they wanted to go to worship or Sunday School** – they got them out of bed, and made sure they were ready to go – just like they did on school days. Let’s face it – being a Christian in the twentieth Century required **discipline**. Self-discipline concerning worship attendance and family discipline in making sure your children were being connected to God.

Today, the attitude of people has changed drastically. Seventy-five percent of newlyweds live together prior to marriage. Divorce is at an all time high in the nation, with almost 60% of all marriages ending in divorce. Parents, often husbands, walk away from worship as if it’s “no big deal.” Their children are learning that God means little or nothing to Dad, or Mom, and they grow up putting in their time at worship and youth group meetings, until they can become “adult” (like Mom or Dad), and ditch worship and God for good. I know that many parents have convinced themselves that the struggle to get their children to church is not worth the hassle. They’re more concerned about being their children’s buddy or friend, than doing what is right: disciplining their children, for their own good. **But their lack of discipline (both their own self-discipline in failing to attend church regularly) and their lack of family discipline are going to be disastrous to their children’s spiritual health.**

How do I know this? Research has shown that only **4% of people born between 1977 and 1994** are currently attending church (even once a year).⁽¹⁾ **That’s one out of 25 young people!** Whole generations of children are being lost to Satan, and why? Because the **parents are undisciplined about their own spiritual lives and their children’s as well.**

I find that the prevailing attitude of these undisciplined parents is almost always the same: 1), their children will somehow “find God” later in life, or 2), their children are somehow covered by Baptism and Confirmation, and therefore it doesn’t matter if they attend worship or not. Satan is playing a ‘mind game’ with these parents, and society is very happy to go along with them and their attitude about religion.

Please read the attached article by researcher Dr. Beverly Yahnke, for a better understanding of the poisonous culture that children are growing up in today. If you think that children are going to “find God” in the future – that is, find Jesus Christ as their personal savior – you’re playing “Russian roulette” with your children’s eternal life. The world is hugely against the church, and the influence

of their unchurched friends is going to have a deep and lasting effect on them, if they don't learn about these forces of darkness, and how they are working to destroy their faith in Christ.

What can we as a church body do to help those of you struggling with the issue of self-discipline and family discipline? I hope you find that St. John is a safe-haven, with people that are struggling with the same reality that you are facing. The Sunday school and Youth Group staff knows what you're facing! They understand the struggle. They want to help. Please don't give up, and let us know if there's something we can do to help. And in your struggle with discipline, know this: *"Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."* (Hebrews 12:9-11). May God bless your efforts. May you see the wonderful gift of eternal life extended to your children, and to your children's children.

Pastor Travis

(1) Research by the Barna Group, as published in the article by R. Gray, "The Un-, De-, and Under-Churched", Michigan District website, July 6, 2011.