

THE IMPACT OF MARRIAGE ON CHURCH COMMITMENT

NUMBER 114

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Executive Summary

The impact of marriage on church commitment and vice versa was assessed using data from a sample of 441 married persons who were members of the religious group known as the Church of Christ. The study revealed that a “conflicted marriage” was more likely to significantly contribute to a falling away from the church than any other variable. The study also revealed that the most vulnerable times in a married couple’s life to remain faithful to each other and to their church membership was between 5 and 10 years.

Introduction

The marital system is a real life laboratory that will not only test each spouse’s commitment to each other but also their collective commitment to their religion or church. In a 1995 landmark study by Booth, Johnson, Branaman, and Sica, they reached a seminal piece of outcome that said: “Despite the weight of attention given to religion’s influence on marriage, changes in marital relations may affect religious involvement.”

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ARE YOU HARD OF HEARING?

“O my people, listen to my instructions. Open your ears to what I am saying,” (Psalm 78:1 NLT)

Colorful brochures clutter our mailbox weekly - advertising hearing aids. The word is out, we are old and must have hearing impairment. Not far from the truth, but we procrastinate. On a more serious note, how is your spiritual hearing? Have you heard about all the ways God sustains and protects his precious ones? Are you listening daily to his wisdom and seeking his guidance?

God loves you! “For this how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16 NLT) God is love. Everything he does and says shows the intensity of his love. “How precious is your unfailing love, O God! All humanity finds shelter in the shadow of your wings...” (Psalm 36:7 NLT)

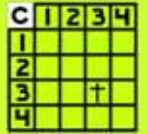
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HOW COME THE WAITRESS GETS 15% AND GOD ONLY GETS 10%?



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Important Findings from this Study

Marital Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction does affect Church Commitment

The study clearly revealed that couples who perceived that they were helped in their marriage by church, worship, and members were more highly committed, and less likely to fall away or change churches, than others. The data showed that there were couples who “fell away from their church during their marriage” and that *conflict within the marriage* was the major reason. A depleted level of marital satisfaction contributed largely to the conflict within the marriage and its rippling effects resulted in the loss of commitment to the church. Slightly over half of the sample (54%) was not satisfied with the church’s focus on marriage even though about 36% of them attended church three times or more.

Understanding a Family’s Life Stage is Important

The study illuminated an interesting finding that the 56-60-year old (25%) married couples felt unsupported by the church in their marriage. A similar sentiment was expressed by the 31-35-year old (27%) married couples. This is highly informative because these groups fall within the crucial life stages of: (1) the empty nest phase, and (2) families with young children (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989). These two stages are fraught with the foci on “facing each other again” after the children have been launched (to college and marriage), and their young children’s needs and early childhood development. This is, especially, the time for these couples to be helped and supported by the church as they

face these crucial life developmental phases.

Keep Watch over Couples within 5-10 Year Membership & Marriage Range

The findings reveal that married couples, who are in the 5-10-year marital and membership range, are especially vulnerable to falling away from the church because of a “conflicted marriage.” These are obviously members who are in the early phase of their marital and congregational lives who need support and help to face the imminent challenging phases of their marriage and congregational lives. This should serve as an alert to church leadership that it would be prudent to assess all their members in this double 5-10-year phases (marriage and congregational membership lives) with respect to: (1) their marital health, and (2) satisfaction with how supported they feel in their marriage by the church and its membership. The data also indicated that this group had the tendency to want to move to a different congregation because of doctrinal issues (45%) and a change to a smaller church (25%).

Be in Tune with “Where your Marital Couples met”

Even though all of our respondents were members of the church of Christ, they did not all meet at the same place. About 36% met at some place other than church, Christian events, Christian universities, public universities, online, or in their neighborhood. The 128 married persons who met at church or a Christian event had high to very high indicators of their involvement with church and church activities.

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They reported being very close in relationship because of shared values, spiritual beliefs, and spiritual practices. They were also far less likely to consider “leaving the faith” at any point during their marriage.

Married persons who met at a Christian University (n=53) almost mirrored those who met at a church or Christian event but there are some differences on certain variables. One particular difference this group exhibited was that their marriage was helped by having attended a Christian University (77%). A further difference was that “having attended a Christian University helped them to remain true to their faith” (67%).

*“Closing the Back Door”
Concluding Summary for Leaders*

See helpful recommendations (in the attached paper) to church leaders for helping couples within the congregation to remain committed to their marriage and the church.

Alan Martin, Ph.D., amartin@mcoc.org

This article is the summary of a paper on the same topic which is posted to the oc-cgthinktank.org website. The paper is one of 18 papers presently posted to the website generally on the subjects of evangelism and church organization.

More papers are to come, and your contributions are welcome.

ARE YOU HARD OF HEARING?

Continued from page 1

God protects his children and gives them wisdom and understanding. “He guards the paths of the just and protects those who are faithful to him. Then you will understand what

is right, just and fair, and you will find the right way to

go.” (Proverbs 2:8, 9 NLT)

Do you need guidance and direction? Listen to his words and you will find what you need.

You know that tingly
little feeling you get
when you like someone?
That's common sense
leaving your body.

God leads his people. “He leads the humble in doing right, teaching them his way. The Lord leads with unfailing love and faithfulness all who keep his covenant and obey his demands.” (Psalm 25:9, 10 NLT) The Lord is our shepherd and leads us through every valley. He bring us back to a place of peace and strength. He listens to our cares and answers every prayer. Tune up your hearing and listen to him.

“I will listen carefully to what God the Lord is saying, for he speaks peace to his faithful

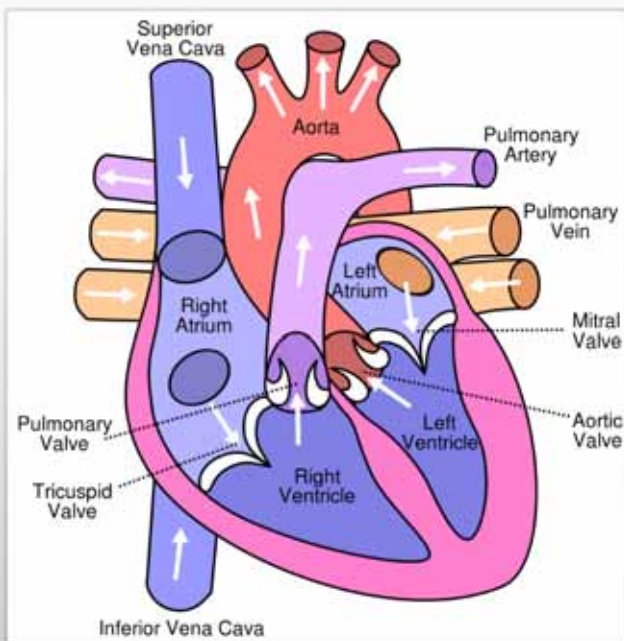
Elizabeth Brown

IMPOSSIBLE FOR EVOLUTION #70: HEART

We all have a heart, and pretty much take it for granted until we have a heart attack.

All living things complex enough to have multi-layer cells must have a circulation method to take nutrients to cells and remove wastes.

1. Some very slow moving things such as plants can accomplish circulation by osmosis. That is a complex process to be discussed at another time.
2. Sponges depend upon a continuous circulation of sea water through porous areas.
3. Nematodes have an open circulation system where fluids simply flow through them in a single pass.



Most of us with closed circulation systems must have a heart. A heart is component of a circulatory system which moves blood around the body to delivery oxygen and food to cells, and to remove wastes from the cells. Without the delivery of food and oxygen and the removal of wastes, the cells simply die.

Your heart moves blood by relaxing to allow itself to be filled up through a first check valve

by blood pressure on an inlet side. It then squeezes itself to force the blood out of another check valve into arteries. Your heart has 2 sides. The right side takes blood from the veins and sends it to the lungs. The left side takes the oxygenated blood from the lungs and sends it back out to the body.

IF YOUR HEART QUIT AT 1 MILLION CYCLES, YOU WOULD DIE WHEN YOU WERE 9.6 DAYS OLD!

When a mechanical or electrical device is manufactured, a million cycle test is considered to be a long life endurance test. Many cycle tests are far shorter than that. At a heart rate of 72 beats per minute for a life span of 80 years, a heart beats slightly more than 3 billion times, or 3000 times more times than a long human design cycle test. If your heart stopped at one million cycles, you would die when you were 9.6 days old. That's not much time to evolve.

A heart doesn't need to do anything until you have a multicell being with interior cells needing this circulation. Suddenly you must have this means or it dies. It does not have a million years to evolve a heart, it must have it right now.

Oddly enough, a heart itself is a multicell organ which needs the characteristics of a heart to keep itself alive. A heart cannot live for a million years while it evolves itself. It is a double bind problem. A heart cannot exist until it has the capability of doing what a heart does. Surely it took and intelligent designer to make a heart.

Benton F. Baugh, Ph.D., P.E.

YOU A BE LUKEWARM IF

- If you justify your status by saying you are no worse than other lukewarm congregations.
- The average age of your elders is 3 years more than it was 3 years ago.
- Your attendance is not growing faster than your service area population.
- Your elders think the members won't work.
- You do not have an active new building or planting committee
- Your racial mix doesn't match your service area.
- A majority of your members have gray hair.
- You do not have a regular event which requires that members bring a prospect.
- You have no parking lot greeters.
- You have older and younger members, but have a gap in the middle
- You do not learn new songs regularly.
- You have too many new songs.
- Your service participants do not meet before the service to coordinate.
- Members perceive you have a head elder.
- Members do not know who their shepherd is.
- Members have not had a quality 10 minute discussion with their shepherd in the past year.
- Most members don't feel like they are being heard.
- Business decisions are made in closed

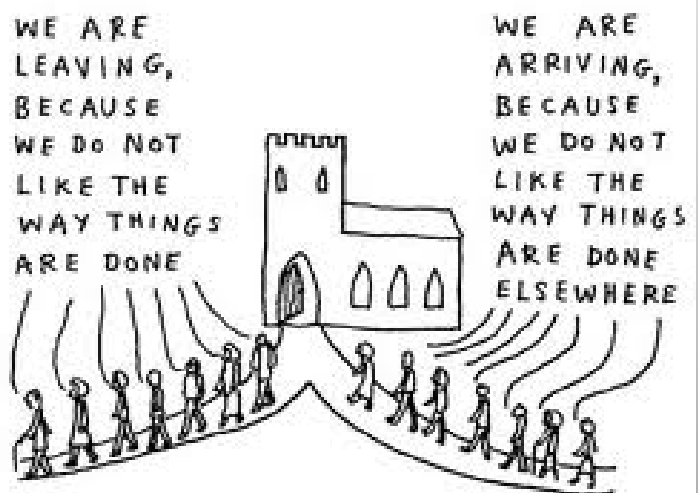
meetings by the elders instead of open business meeting

Rev. 2:16 suggests that a congregation which is lukewarm will not do well on judgment day. It doesn't define what lukewarm means other than that it is between hot and cold. At the very least, what lukewarm means to different congregations can be different. Whatever it is, it should be taken seriously. When it says it is preferred to be hot or cold rather than lukewarm, it is not a recommendation for being cold.

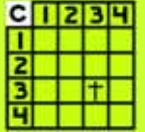
The characteristics listed above tend to be not what you would expect of a congregation which is hot. Likely, the more of them which describe your congregation, the more likely you are to be lukewarm.

This is not intended to simply be a list of symptoms to match. Most of these represent the result of being on fire evangelistically. Don't match symptoms, be evangelistic.

If you have suggestions for adding to or removing from this list, let us know.



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OCCG THINK TANK CHURCH LEADERS WORKSHOPS

Members of the OCCG Think Tank would be pleased to come to your area and present our Church Leaders Workshop with some of the information we have been studying and developing.

Real and practical suggestions will be made on how to better engage your members in accomplishing our part of the Great Commission in our time.

Workshops are formatted as:

Area Wide Workshops meeting at the location of a host congregation,
or Individual congregational workshops.

If you would like to host a workshop for your area or would like one scheduled for your congregation, go to the occgthinktank.org website, contact us tab, and send your information.

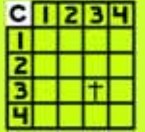
The **OCCG Think Tank** is studying how to promote methods which will return the churches of Christ to a growth mode while maintaining a firm scriptural basis. We solicit everyone's ideas on how to do this, but even more than this we need your assistance in making this a reality.

It is clear that having some ideas is different than translating the ideas to a beneficial form and communicating these ideas to the our congregations.

Whereas we would encourage all to dedicate your service time to your local congregation, if you have extra service time and energies, we need your help. There are many ways to help including:

Working on Webpage design
Microsoft Access programming
Phone app for ready access to Bible teachings
Develop Bible teachings into a standardized format
Develop standardized information regarding denominations

If helping in these areas is interesting to you, contact bbaugh@thearray.org



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Develop Bible teachings into a standardized format

(Review existing and do new topical studies to support the Great Commission)

Develop standardized information regarding denominations

(Fill out standardized questionnaires, if we are going to try to convert people, we need to understand where they are)

Working on Webpage design

(Web page exists, always needs upgrading, improving, and posting the results of the above work, see occgthinktank.org)

Microsoft Access programming for an office database system

(Delcon Information System exists, needs to be made more user friendly, expanded, and more versatile)

Phone app for ready access to Bible teachings

(Need to bring church work into the 21st century)

If helping in these areas is interesting to you, contact bbaugh@thearray.org

THE CATALYST INITIATIVE

GOAL: Help the kingdom grow by encouraging those without a neighborhood congregation to start one.

PREMISE: The difficulty of doing personal evangelism is proportionate to the distance you are from your congregation.

If you live far enough from your established congregation that it makes it difficult to do personal evangelism and would like to consider starting a new local autonomous scriptural congregation, let us know.

We have experienced volunteers available to assist you in starting your new congregation or to discuss the possibility.

FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE: www.thecatalystinitiative.org

Led By:

Philip Bailey, 713-304-0011, pbailey@thecatalystinitiative.org
Benton F. Baugh, 713-419-8683, bbaugh@thecatalystinitiative.org



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THE CHRISTIAN ARRAY

AN E-MAGAZINE DEDICATED TO SUSTAINED SCRIPTURAL CHURCH GROWTH IN OUR GENERATION

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AREA WIDE ACTIVITIES

- Each Wed.** Northeast Houston Preacher's Meeting, Darien Loop CofC, 7014 Darien St., Houston, 11:00—1:00, Contact Cecil Herndon, aj10@ridemetro.com for more details
- 2nd Tues.** Northwest Houston Preacher's Luncheon, 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Rancho King Buffet, 5900 N. Frwy., Houston, confirm with Dale Foster at dalefost@gmail.com for info.
- 8/2018** Greater Houston Area Campaign for Christ

The Christian Array E-Magazine

This e-magazine is sent to members of the church on a monthly basis as an attempt to promote scriptural teachings, area wide activities and church growth. If you do not want to receive this e-magazine, send an e-mail to bbaugh@thearray.org and it will be stopped.

All past copies of the newsletter can be found on the website "thearray.org".

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E-MAIL ADDRESSES

A goal of this newsletter is to develop a mailing list of as many members of the church as possible and to communicate church related information to as many members as possible. In that light, we would appreciate it if you would:

1. forward the church member e-mail addresses which you have,
2. send the directory of the congregation you attend or any other directories which you might have, and
3. give us an idea of how to collect church member e-mail addresses.

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