



GOD'S CHURCH

PILLAR AND GROUND OF TRUTH

Ecclesiology: Part 1



DOCTRINAL IGNORANCE AND DENIAL



26% of “evangelicals” deny the Inerrancy of Scripture (up from 17% in 2016)

38% of “evangelicals” deny the objective truth of Christianity (up from 32% in 2016)

65% of “evangelicals” deny the reality of the sin nature (original sin)

Source: thestateoftheology.com



DECLINING ATTENDANCE

- Five surveys conducted since the start of the pandemic (beginning with a survey in July 2020) show that a remarkably steady share of Americans – about 40% – say they have participated in religious services in the prior month *one way or the other* (either in person or virtually, i.e., by streaming online or watching on TV).
- Asked directly whether they now attend religious services more or less often than they did before the pandemic, more Americans indicate that their attendance habits have declined than risen. But it's a complicated picture: As of November 2022, 20% say they are attending *in person* less often (while 7% say they are going in person more often). On the other hand, 15% say they are participating in services *virtually* more often (while 5% say they are watching services online or on TV less often).
- The share of U.S. adults who say they generally attend religious services once a month or more has dropped slightly, from 33% in 2019 to 30% in 2022.
- A longitudinal analysis of the survey data – tracking the same individuals' answers on four annual surveys from 2019 to 2022 – finds that the vast majority (87%) report no change in their rates of worship attendance over that period. But among those who *do* indicate a change, more report attending services less often (8%) than report attending more often (4%).

“Stable share of Americans have been participating in some way – either virtually or in person – during the pandemic, but in-person attendance is slightly lower than it was before COVID-19.”

Source: Pew Research

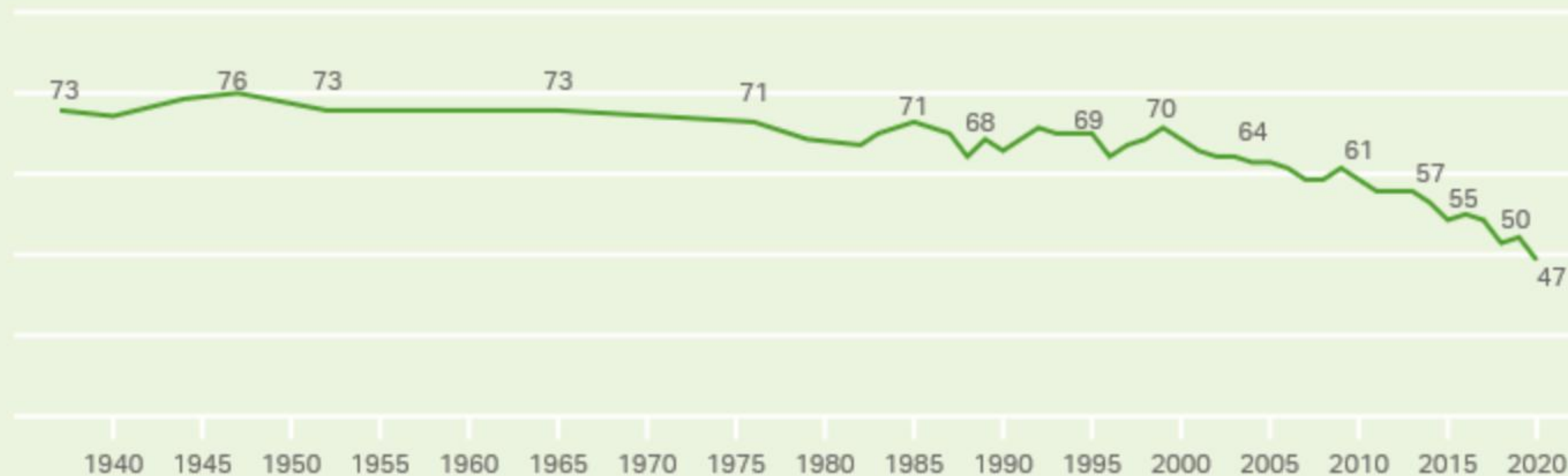


THE DECLINING CHURCH

Church Membership Among U.S. Adults Now Below 50%

Do you happen to be a member of a church, synagogue or mosque?

— % Yes, member



Based on annual aggregated data, usually based on two surveys

GALLUP

“U.S. church membership was 73% when Gallup first measured it in 1937 and remained near 70% for the next six decades, before beginning a steady decline around the turn of the 21st century.”

Source: [Gallup](#)



FALSE VIEWS OF CHURCH

Social Justice View

Falsely assumes that the church should be an advocacy group for the marginalized of society. LGBTQIA+, Feminism, and race relations are at the forefront.

Penance View

Falsely assumes that the church is where you go to do works to atone for your sins. Attendance, giving, service, and prayers are works that make up for wrongdoing.

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism View

Falsely assume that the church is a place for me to learn to be good and feel better about my life.

Entertainment/Consumer View

The church is where my family and I go to have our needs met. Which ever churches meet our needs the best are where we attend.



Biblical Ecclesiology

The Study of the Church

Pillar of Truth (Proclaim Gospel)
Temple of the Holy Spirit (God with us)
Priesthood of All Believers (Use of Gifts)
Body of Christ (Headship of Christ)
Authority (Word of God)
Leadership (Elders and Deacons)
Ordinances (Baptism and Communion)
Discipline (Protecting)
Discipleship (Doctrine and Living)



1 TIMOTHY 3:14-16

14 I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, 15 if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. 16 Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:

*He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated by the Spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory.*



**There are
right ways
and wrong
ways to
function as
a church.**

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Context: Guidelines for Church in 1 Tim. 1-3

- RESIST FALSE TEACHING
- HOLD FAST TO THE FAITH
- PRAY FOR PEOPLE TO BE SAVED
- MEN, LIFT UP HOLY HANDS WITHOUT ANGER OR DISPUTING
- LADIES, DRESS MODESTLY
- WOMEN ARE NOT TO TEACH OR OVERSEE MEN
- QUALIFICATIONS FOR ELDERS AND DEACONS



**The Church
(people, not
mere building or
magisterium) is
the house of
God.**

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Household of God=Church of the Living God

- ἐκκλησία (ekklesia) = "a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, an assembly"
- The Koine Greek word for "Church" primarily refers to assembling.
- The Church of the Living God assembles!





Christians Are Commmanded To Gather With The Church.

HEBREWS 10:19-25

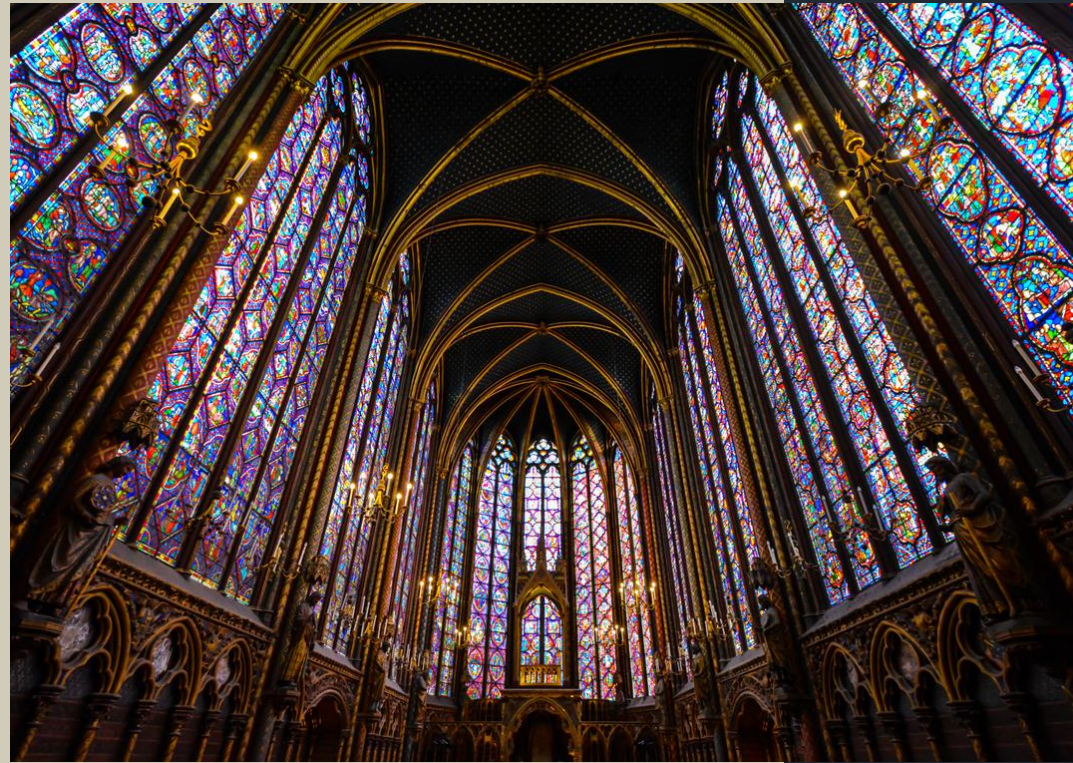
19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.



The Church's job is to hold up the Truth (Gospel).

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Pillar and Buttress of the Truth

- στῦλος (stulos)="pillar/column" (This word is seen in the NT only here and in Rev. 3:12 and 10:1)
- ἑδραίωμα (hedraioma)="support" (This word is only used here in the NT)
- The Church is like a column lifting up the Truth (primarily the Gospel) for the world to see.

Note: Roman Catholic apologists sometimes take this verse out of context and say it means "foundation." They try to argue that the Bible is based upon the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church, giving them authority over the Bible rather than vice versa. However, the Greek words used in 1 Timothy 3:15 refer to holding/stiffening. When Paul wishes to refer to "foundation" He uses a different word, θεμέλιον (themelion) in 1 Cor. 3:11 to refer to Jesus Christ as the foundation of the Church. If Paul meant to say that the church is a foundation for the truth rather than a pillar, He would have used themelion.



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Great indeed is the mystery of godliness

- The phrasing here is strange to us.
- It is not saying that godliness is mysterious.
- Rather, it is saying that our godliness/piety/devotion is based on a great mystery.
- However, “mystery” in Scripture refers to something that was once unknown and has now been made known. Consistently, it refers to the gospel of Salvation in Christ through His life, death, and resurrection.

Here’s what the phrase is saying: The Christian life of devotion to God (“godliness”) is based on what has now been revealed but was once unknown to us (mystery) which is God’s plan to redeem us through the perfect life, atoning death, and bodily resurrection of Christ.



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*He was manifested in the flesh, **Incarnation***

*vindicated by the Spirit, **Resurrection***

*seen by angels, **Appearances***

*proclaimed among the nations, **Gospel***

*believed on in the world, **Followers***

*taken up in glory. **Ascension***



CENTRALITY OF THE GOSPEL

"For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." -1 Corinthians 2:2



"...you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

1 Cor. 11:26



"baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,"

Matthew 28:19b



"not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another,"

Hebrews 10:25a



"Faith Comes by Hearing God's Word taught."

Romans 10:17



Recommended Resources

