

A Family or Homeless? by Carl McMurray

2006 Barna survey highlight some spiritual attitudes that might be of interest to Christians who are seeking to set themselves apart from the world. In this survey 72% of Americans claim they have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is important in their life today. Along with this grand commitment however, we might also note that...

Only 17% of adults said that a person's faith is meant to be developed by involvement in a local church.

Barna's explanation is that this documents shows how soft people's commitment to God really is. The New Testament is extremely clear on the principle that God's children are to build a strong relationship with others — mixing one another, serving one another, sharing with one another, building up one another, disciplining one another, etc., etc. The actions of this relationship paradigm are broken down for us over and over again in the writing of the apostles.

Another way this is approached is by the use of figures. Peter says Christians are living stones being built together into a holy temple. Paul likens us to a body and states that Christians are all members of the same body, even going so far as to name various parts like eyes, ears, and hands. Jesus called the church a kingdom and Paul referred to citizenship in that kingdom, making no sense at all unless one considers the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

A third way this principle is presented is by the establishment of local congregations referred to as flocks in 1 Peter 5. The local flocks are organized under local groups of shepherds who are responsible for the individual sheep in their care. This responsibility necessitates the identifying of sheep as in the flock, out of the flock, or having left the flock. Every shepherd understands this.

Claiming a commitment to Christ without accepting a commitment to his body is like wanting a king without his kingdom, a bridegroom without the bride he loves, a head but no body that is activated. The world may talk a show of commitment, but it is up to the children of God to live it and that is done in a big way by our "one another" relationship to each other. It is unity with other Christians that demonstrates that Jesus is real, that he changes lives, and that gives us the help in maturing and growth that we all need, John 17:21.