

# **“Why Do Young People Leave the Church?”**

By Dale D. Robins

In 2017 LifeWay Research published the results of a survey addressing why young people (ages 23-30) leave the church. Of course, they defined “the church” as any Protestant denomination, but the factors they identified could also apply to us. Their research showed that 66% of Americans (ages 23-30) stopped attending church services on a regular basis. Here are the top five reasons that were identified:

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| 1. “I moved to college and stopped attending.”                        | 34% |
| 2. “Church members seemed judgmental or hypocritical.”                | 32% |
| 3. “I didn’t feel connected to people in my church.”                  | 29% |
| 4. “I disagreed with the church’s stance on political/social issues.” | 25% |
| 5. “My work responsibilities prevented me from attending.”            | 24% |

These results give us reason to pause and see what can be done to improve the situation. Usually BOTH the church and the individual could grow and make the situation better.

#1. Relocations happen to people of all ages, and the new surroundings can be overwhelming. However, that does not negate the command to assemble (Heb. 10:25). If the Lord and His church are a high enough priority, it should be natural to find a suitable place to worship.

#2. Judgmental people and hypocrites surround us every day, but we cope with them at work, at school, and (sadly) sometimes at church. Critics are always bountiful, but our focus should be on pleasing the Lord (Gal. 1:10). God will judge the erring (Rom. 12:19). We must seek His kingdom first (Matt. 6:33). What would Jesus want me to do? Quit? I don’t think so!

#3. Solomon said, “*A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly*” (Prov. 18:24). If I am feeling disconnected from others at church, then maybe I need to be the one to initiate friendships and build relationships. Responsibility does not just rest “on them.”

#4. Politics need not be found in the pulpit, and our obligation is to seek Bible authority for all we do (Col. 3:17). The Bible is the standard. Right and wrong is determined by God. The winds of toleration prevalent in our society do not change God’s decrees on right and wrong. It is not “the church’s position;” but rather, “What does the Bible say?” that matters.

#5. Balancing work and church is an obligation for all. Emergencies are one thing (Matt. 12:11) but choosing a job that habitually and frequently causes one to miss services is spiritually dangerous.

The study went on to say that many of the young return to the church as they grow older. Our duty is to “*fear God and keep His commandments*” all our days (Eccl. 12:13). We may not get the gift of growing old.