

### **Belief in God Declining (Survey Results, 2018)**

- Silent (1928-1945): 70% agreed (consistent since 1998)
- Boomers (1946-64): 59% agreed (consistent)
- Gen X (1965-1980): 62% agreed (very slowly increasing)
- Millennials (1981-1996) (20s-30s): dropped 58% - 44%
- Gen Z (1997-2010s) (teens-20s): plummeted 49% - 33% in 4 years of measuring

### **1. The Church is the Family of God**

- John 1:9-13 - 9 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.
- In OT: rarely stated explicitly (only 15 times), but implied throughout
- In NT: Jesus called God “Father” 165 times (100 in John alone)... Jesus told His disciples to address God as “Our Father” in the Lord’s Prayer... the early church continued referring to God as “Father”... Paul calls God “Father” 40+ times in epistles
- One of the most common terms for the people of God is “brothers / brethren / brothers and sisters”
  - Jesus referred to His disciples as His “brothers” and “sisters”
    - Matthew 12:50 - For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”
  - The NT refers to the church as “the brothers” almost 200 times
    - “brothers / brethren / brothers and sisters” = adelphos = could mean a literal physical brother or sister, a relative, a fellow countryman... or a fellow Believer... lit. “from the same womb”
- 2 Corinthians 6:17-18 - 17 Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, 18 and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.
- Being the Family of God means we’re committed to God, He’s committed to us, and we’re committed to each other

### **2. The Church is the Bride of Christ**

- The OT Imagery - God was Israel’s faithful husband... and Israel was less than faithful
  - Ezekiel 16:8-14 - 8 “When I passed by you again and saw you, behold, you were at the age for love, and I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness; I made my vow to you and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Lord God, and you became mine. 9 Then I bathed you with water and washed off your blood from you and anointed you with oil. 10 I clothed you also with embroidered cloth and shod you with fine leather. I wrapped you in fine linen and covered you with silk. 11 And I adorned you with ornaments and put bracelets on your wrists and a chain on your neck. 12 And I put a ring on your nose and earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown on your head. 13 Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen and silk and embroidered cloth. You ate fine flour and honey and oil. You grew exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty. 14 And your renown went forth among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through the splendor that I had bestowed on you, declares the Lord God.
  - Ezekiel 16:30-32 - 30 How sick is your heart, declares the Lord God, because you did all these things, the deeds of a brazen prostitute, 31 building your vaulted chamber at the head of every street, and making your lofty place in every square... Yet you were not like a

prostitute, because you scorned payment. 32 Adulterous wife, who receives strangers instead of her husband!

- 2 Corinthians 11:2 – For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.
- Being His Bride means we are faithful to Him and He is faithful to us

### **3. The Church is God's Flock**

- John 10:14-16 - 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.
- Being His sheep means we're entirely dependent on Him. We need Him.

### **4. The Church is the Temple of God**

- 2 Corinthians 6:16 - What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."
- We as the church are invested with the holy, terrifying, awesome presence of God Himself
- Psalm 11:4 - The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD's throne is in heaven; his eyes see, his eyelids test the children of man.

### **5. The Church is a Kingdom of Priests**

- Revelation 5:9-10 - 9 And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, 10 and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."
- Just as priests go between God and people, in a very real sense, the people of God exist to go between men and God, to plead for His mercy and for mankind's repentance... to intercede for the world
  - "intercede" = to interpose or plead on behalf of another person... to attempt to reconcile differences between two people or groups (mediation)
    - From Latin = lit. "to go between"
- 2 Corinthians 5:18 - All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation

### **6. The Church is the Salt of the Earth**

- Matthew 5:13
- Quote: From the back of Salt: a World History by Mark Kurlansky –"Until about 100 years ago, when modern geology revealed how prevalent it is, salt was one of the most sought-after commodities, for without it humans and animals could not live. Salt has often been considered so valuable that it served as currency, and it is still exchanged as such in places today. Demand for salt established the earliest trade routes, across unknown oceans and the remotest of deserts: the city of Jericho was founded... as a salt trading center. Because of its worth, salt has provoked and financed wars; it was, as well, a strategic element in the American Revolution and the Civil War, among other conflicts. Salt taxes secured empires across Europe and Asia and have also inspired revolution... Salt revenues have funded some of the greatest public works in history, including the Erie Canal and the Great Wall of China. Salt's ability to preserve and to sustain life has made it a metaphorical symbol in all religions."
- Part of our job is to keep the world from rotting in sin and immorality, preparing the world for eternity

- Isaiah 5:24 - Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble, and as dry grass sinks down in the flame, so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom go up like dust; for they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts, and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

### **7. The Church is the Light of the World**

- Matthew 5
- The world is walking around in darkness, bumping into each other, getting hurt and causing problems, but we are called to be a light, shining into the darkness and pointing to God.

### **8. The Church Is the Body of Christ**

- Ephesians 1:22-23 - 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.
- “body” = soma = In NT, used to talk about a physical body of an animal or human... even of plants!
  - 2 Main Idea among all definitions and uses I could find (in Bible and Greek lit):
    - 1) a body is composed of many smaller elements
    - 2) the body of something is how it’s recognized and identified...
- Together, we as the church are the representation of God to the world... We show the world who God is.