

YOU SHOULD GO TO CHURCH

The time you spend at church should draw you closer to God. So when church is boring and frustrating for you, or when you drag yourself there out of sense of duty rather than desire, it may be tempting to give up on church and pursue God on your own. Doing so will cause you to miss a wealth of spiritual practices God has designed to help you grow, however. Rather than giving up on church, find new meaning in its spiritual practices to connect with God in fresh ways. Then you can do more than just attend church - you can be a vital part of the church wherever you go.

Here's how you can give church another chance:

View church not as an end, but as a means to an end. God intends for the church to be much more than just a place you visit on weekends to check in with Him. Church is meant to be like an embassy that helps empower you to grow closer to Christ and serve as one of His ambassadors in the world. So church should impact you far beyond each weekly worship service; it should be a training ground for you to mature in your faith and a launching pad for you to jump into every other part of your life, following where God leads you and putting your faith into practice.

Give the quiet prelude another chance. The quiet time before each worship service begins at your church is an opportunity to connect to God in the silence that can help you focus well on His voice. But you can take the listening skills you develop during the quiet prelude and carry them over into the rest of your life, paying close attention to the divine appointments that God brings your way in a variety of situations. Make time regularly to tune out distractions and tune into God's voice speaking to you.

Give singing the doxology another chance. Many generations of people have been singing the doxology in church to praise God. But you can do much more to praise God than simply repeating the words of this classic sung prayer. Let the doxology motivate you to live in a way that glorifies God, as a way of thanking Him for His greatness and reflecting His character to the world. ●

When Are WE Going to Get Over It?

by Andrew M. Manis, Associate Professor - Macon State College

"When are we White Americans going to get over our ridiculous obsession with skin color?"

Recent reports that "Election Spurs Hundreds' of Race Threats, Crimes" should frighten and infuriate every one of us. Having grown up in "Bombingham," Alabama in the 1960s, I remember overhearing an avalanche of comments about what many white classmates and their parents wanted to do to John and Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King. Eventually, as you may recall, in all three cases, someone decided to do more than "talk the talk."

Since our recent presidential election, to our eternal shame we are once again hearing the same reprehensible talk I remember from my boyhood.

We white people have controlled political life in the disunited colonies and United States for some 400 years on this continent. Conservative whites have been in power 28 of the last 40 years. Even during the eight Clinton years, conservatives in Congress blocked most of his agenda and pulled him to the right. Yet never in that period did I read any headlines suggesting that anyone was calling for the assassinations of presidents Nixon, Ford, Reagan, or either of the Bushes. Criticize them, yes. Call for their impeachment, perhaps. But there were no bounties on their heads. And even when someone did try to kill Ronald Reagan, the perpetrator was non-political mental case who wanted merely to impress Jody Foster.

But elect a liberal who happens to be Black and we're back in the sixties again. At this point in our history, we should be proud that we've proven even conservatives are always saying -- that in America anything is possible, EVEN electing a black man as president. But instead we now hear that school children from Maine to California are talking about wanting to "assassinate Obama." Fighting the urge to throw up, I can only ask, "How long?" How long before we white people realize we can't make our nation, much less the whole world, look like us? How long until we white people can - once and for all - get over this hell-conceived preoccupation with skin color? How long until we white people get over the demonic conviction that white skin makes us superior? How long before we white people get over our bitter resentments about being demoted to the status of equality with non-whites?

How long before we get over our expectations that we should be at the head of the line merely because of our white skin? How long until we white people end our silence and call out our peers when they share the latest racist jokes in the privacy of our white-only conversations?

I believe in free speech, but how long until we white people start making racist loudmouths as socially uncomfortable as we do flag burners? How long until we white people will stop insisting that blacks exercise personal responsibility, build strong families, educate themselves enough to edit the Harvard Law Review, and work hard enough to become President of the United States, only to threaten to assassinate them when they do?

How long before we start "living out the true meaning" of our creeds, both civil and religious, that all men and women are created equal and that "red and yellow, black and white" all are precious in God's sight? Until this past November 4, I didn't believe this country would ever elect an African American to the presidency. I still don't believe I'll live long enough to see us white people get over our racism problem.

But here's my three-point plan:

First, everyday that Barack Obama lives in the White House that Black Slaves Built, I'm going to pray that God (and the Secret Service) will protect him and his family from us white people.

Second, I'm going to report to the FBI any white person I overhear saying, in seriousness or in jest, anything of a threatening nature about President Obama.

Third, I'm going to pray to live long enough to see America surprise the world once again, when white people can "inspirit and in truth" sing of our damnable color prejudice.

"We HAVE overcome."

It takes a Village to protect our President!!! ●

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