

## **Open Letter to the Pastor of Community Emergent Church**

By John Henderson, February 15, 2012, "Christians United Against Apostasy"  
[NOTE: This is not an actual letter but represents the reality as it exists in many modern church environments]

Dear Pastor:

I am deeply perplexed about the direction you are taking our church in your promotion of the many principles of the emergent church movement. Maybe I just don't understand or am not all that willing to go through change. Perhaps you can enlighten me.

My family and I have been members here for many years we raised our children in this church. It has been the most important thing in our family's life for a very long time. We started coming here after being visited by Pastor Jim. He was canvassing the neighborhood and came to our door. It was a simple introduction. He handed us a small tract with information about the church on one side and a short gospel message on the other. Pastor Jim invited us to the services and then did something we were not expecting from a typical church visitor. He asked if he could tell us more about Jesus Christ. Of course, we agreed. Before Pastor Jim left, he had given us the story of salvation we deeply had wanted to hear but didn't realize ourselves how much we needed and wanted the Savior. That, more than anything else, brought us to this church.

We have had several wonderful pastors since then and seen great revivals over the years. Our church grew because of it. Somehow, before you came, I sensed a drift among us. We became more program-focused than evangelism-committed. We went through "church growth" programs and had many motivational speakers come our way. In fact, we stopped scheduling revivals with regular evangelists like we used to do and replaced all of that with conferences of some sort or the other. It was all very exciting but something important always seemed be missing. I think our life was draining from us—the life that comes through prayer and obedience to the simple gospel.

By the time you arrived and began to initiate the emergent practices among us, we were ripe for the picking. There were some among us who were more alert and courageous than I who raised questions. I watched as you and your staff dealt with them rather indifferently and insensitively until they felt forced to go elsewhere. Those were people who had been a significant part in the grown of our church but suddenly they were out of place. Those of us who remained gathered a little closer together to fill in the vacancies and kept going with what remained.

When someone on your staff suggested what we needed was to start fellowshipping with those of other "faiths", I couldn't help but wonder if it was all that wise, especially when I learned it had nothing to do with winning them to Christ but just hoping to get them to start coming to our church to help fill the empty places. They

were being told they could keep their false ideas about Jesus and be just fine in our non-judgmental fellowship. I think someone brought up the word postmodern and I had to look it up to see what it meant.

It wasn't long until you were telling us we needed to walk something called a labyrinth. It seems it was some sort of adaptation from a Hindu practice whereby we were instructed to walk a prescribed maze of sorts, and pause at pre-determined points and utter some sort of prayer or contemplate on something spiritual. I went along with it, but felt increasingly uncomfortable because there seemed to be every sort of presence except that of Jesus.

Then you told us we needed to engage in something you called centering prayer. You told us we should look deeply within until we found ourselves and discovered God. Well, I looked deeply within but all I found was a wicked, rebellious heart. I found myself alright but God wasn't there.

You took a group of us off to a nearby monastery where a group of monks and nuns hosted us and walked us through a method of contemplative prayer. They were very cordial and nice people and seemed very committed and they were very appealingly aesthetic. I returned home with a sense of an unusual experience but still felt I had not really met Jesus there. Maybe I expected too much or had the wrong experience.

Your messages have been filled with a lot of talk about something you frequently call spiritual formation. Your definitions and descriptions of spiritual formation sound very evangelical but the spiritual (Christ-like) substance is simply not there. You speak often of the presence of the Holy Spirit—as if we would not notice ourselves that He was present—but, frankly, I just have not noticed. I know I have not backslidden and have often been aware of the Spirit's presence in past services at our church. What you say is His presence resembles nothing like I once knew of His presence among us.

You told us that we needed to enter into some sort of deep silence; something you said was a method of praying whereby we became so silent that we could hear God speaking to us. About all I ever heard was the ringing in my ears, but God never spoke to me that I could tell. Maybe I was being too focused on being silent that I never heard Him. I do remember, however, the other times I would go to Him in earnest prayer and sometimes could not even express myself but I knew He was listening and answering my prayers. I was never in some sort of silent trance or anything like that and was always keenly aware of communion with Him. I always went away from that very strengthened in my soul. It worked very well for me but that silence thing was a complete failure except it seemed to me at times there were spirits I could not recognize trying to say things to me that did not resemble what I knew about the God of the Bible.

I have noticed lately that you have been teaching us things we once rejected in this church. Pastor Jim led my spouse and me to the Lord in our living room that day he visited and he used the Bible an awful lot. He answered all of our questions and objections by opening up his Bible and showing us the answers right there in its pages. But you are now saying to us that not all of the Bible is inspired—only those parts that pertain to salvation. Was Pastor Jim wrong to tell us it was every bit as inspired as any other part? Also, what parts pertain to salvation and what parts do not?

You mentioned in one of your recent sermons that Adam and Eve were not actually real, that the creation story was actually a fable. Why is it in the Bible if that is true? Why does Luke trace the genealogy of Jesus all the way back to Adam if it is a mere fable of some sort? You added that the idea of creation evolution is more scientifically accurate. How do you know that? Is not “science” itself replete with errors and more subjective interpretation than irrefutable “facts”?

Pastor, there are many more questions I would like to ask, and perhaps we could discuss them openly at some point. I have one very important question, however, that I must ask. Are you really a born-again Christian? If you say you are, why would you discredit so many things the Bible teaches—things that your very salvation must hinge on in order to be validated? Why would you embrace postmodern and new age concepts that offer no proof of anything they promote while the Word of God stands as its own proof? Why would you embrace any of that over what the Bible teaches? If you are really so convinced of all of that stuff, why are you here? Isn't there somewhere you could be where you would be better received and we could just be left here to go our simple ways by believing the Bible and holding to those old-fashioned “traditions” that have identified us all these years?

I am sure there are many others just as I who long for those old days, as it were, when you heard prayer in the house of God instead of partying; where there were revival meetings once more instead of special topic study groups; where sinners were convicted for their sins, repented, and were converted at our altars instead of being coddled in their sins because they felt misunderstood and mistreated. I am sure there are many such as I who long to once more walk into any of our churches and know we will hear the gospel sung, preached, and prayed.

Oh, well, none of this may ever change for the better. It might get even worse until Jesus comes again in judgment. I just thought I would ask in case you or anyone else cared.