

The following are excerpts from Steve Hale's book,  
**"STORM WARNINGS!"**

My friend, Steve, has graciously given permission to share these thoughts and statistics from Chapter 11.

The corresponding bibliography is also attached.

More information on Steve's 46 year preaching ministry can be found at **[www.SteveHaleMinistries.com](http://www.SteveHaleMinistries.com)**

I strongly urge my fellow ministers to acquire a copy of Steve's book.

May God help all of us to respond in each of our ministries!

**-Michael Facciani**

- Every year, 2.7 million church members fall into inactivity and from 1990 to 2000 the combined membership of all Protestant denominations in the U.S. declined by 5 million members while that population itself increased by 24 million.<sup>3</sup>
- In 1900 there was a ratio of 27 churches per 10,000 people whereas today there 11 churches per 10,000 people in America. There's a projected need of 38,000 new churches to keep up the population growth.<sup>4</sup>
- Other than China and India, the United States has the highest unchurched population in the world.<sup>5</sup>
- Half of all churches in the U.S. did not add any new members in the last two years.<sup>6</sup>
- Only 18 percent of Americans "frequently" attend church and that figure is expected to drop to 15 percent by 2025 and only 12 percent by 2050.<sup>7</sup>
- A staggering 34 percent of millennials (1981-1989) do not affiliate with any religion, according to the Pew Research Center's Religious Landscape Survey.<sup>8</sup>
- Of those unaffiliated, 31 percent describe themselves as atheists or agnostics.<sup>9</sup>

- According to a study done by LifeWay Research, membership in Southern Baptist churches will fall nearly 50 percent by the year 2050.<sup>10</sup>
- Barna Group reports that 60 percent of all Christians between the ages of 15 and 29 are no longer involved in any church.<sup>11</sup>
- Barna Group found that less than 1 percent of all Americans between the ages of 18 and 23 hold a biblical worldview.<sup>12</sup> Defining a biblical worldview, the participants in the survey must agree with the following six statements:

Believing that absolute moral truth exists.

Believing that the Bible is completely accurate in all of the principles it teaches.

Believing that Satan is considered to be a real being or force, not merely symbolic.

Believing that a person cannot earn their way into Heaven by trying to be good or by doing good works.

Believing that Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth.

Believing that God is the all-knowing, all-powerful creator of the world who still rules the universe today.

- Again, less than 1 percent agreed with all of those statements.
- 52 percent of all American Christians believe that some non-Christian faiths can lead to eternal life.<sup>13</sup>
- In the past decade, more people in the U.S. have become churchless than live in Australia or Canada.<sup>14</sup>
- 23 of 25 major evangelical denominations, including the Southern Baptist Convention, are experiencing decline.<sup>15</sup>
- 34,000 missionaries from other nations were sent to the United States in 2010.<sup>16</sup>



## WHAT ABOUT SOUTHERN BAPTISTS?

The following is by no means an attempt to throw Southern Baptists “under the bus.” This is the denomination of which I am affiliated and have been all of my life. I was saved, baptized, and called to preach in a Southern Baptist church. So why separate them from the rest of the church culture in America? The reason is because historically Southern Baptists have carried the evangelical mantle and been the pace-setter among other denominations for baptisms. After all, we are the largest Protestant denomination in the world, so the perception may be that while the Church as a whole in America is in decline, the same would not hold true for the largest mission-minded denomination on the planet. Sadly, that is not the case.

- Of the approximately 38,000 churches reporting, 17,400 of them recorded no baptisms in the 12-to-17-year-old category and 23,500 churches reported baptizing one or less.<sup>19</sup>
- In 2012, 60 percent of the more than 46,000 churches in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) reported no youth (12-17 year olds) baptisms and 80 percent reported one or less baptisms among young adults (ages 18 to 29).<sup>20</sup>
- 75 percent of Southern Baptist children raised in our churches have not been won to Christ by age 19.<sup>21</sup>
- For the past two decades, at least 70 percent of Southern Baptist churches are plateaued or in decline.<sup>22</sup>

- In 2014, the SBC experienced the lowest number of baptisms since 1947, reflecting a decline in 8 of the last 10 years.<sup>23</sup> This is in spite of the fact that we have 10 million more members, 1,700 more churches, and the population of America has more than doubled during that time. Conclusion: We're doing less with more.
- Southern Baptist churches lost 200,000 members in 2014, the largest one-year decline since 1881....in spite of the total number of SBC congregations increasing for 15 consecutive years.<sup>24</sup>

To say that Christianity in America is receding would be an understatement. Just as the cultural landscape in the nation has transformed into something hardly recognizable, so it is with the church landscape. You may be old enough to recall the Moral Majority back in the '70's, but today's America is neither moral nor in the majority. Rather, we have shifted into a post-Christian age in which evangelical believers comprise only 7 to 9 percent of the population. This translates into 22 to 28 million, but we're losing 2.6 million of those each decade.<sup>25</sup> Incidentally, these stats were not randomly accessed nor were they "rough" estimates but they were confirmed in four separate independent studies by some of the most reputable firms: (1) Dr. Christian Smith, Professor of Sociology at Notre Dame (2) David T. Olson, American Church Research Project (3) Barna Group (4) Christine Wicker, Award-winning religion reporter.

As an example of how quickly this shift has occurred, consider that in 1996 sixty-eight percent of Americans opposed gay marriage, but today the majority not only favors it, but the courts have legalized it.<sup>26</sup> If we continue our present trajectory and if anyone wants to know what America will look like in the next three decades, we need look no further than our neighbors in Europe where only 2.5 percent of the population is attending Bible-based



churches.<sup>27</sup> A spiritual plague has killed the next generation of European believers and the same is happening here. We do not have the luxury of ignoring these trends because we are now one generation away from the church, as we've known it, completely evaporating into museums of a previous generation and a faint memory of what it once was. Again, where Europe is today spiritually, America will be tomorrow unless fundamental changes are made and problems confronted and addressed.

### **YOUNG ADULTS ARE LEAVING!**

An unbelievable 260,000 evangelical young adults walk away from Christianity every year.<sup>35</sup> Reputable studies from Josh McDowell, George Barna, LifeWay Research and other secular researchers all agree on this one thing. That is, 70 to 80 percent of evangelicals in their twenties are leaving the faith.<sup>36</sup> Staying out late on Saturday nights and sleeping in on Sunday mornings is the norm for this age group. We often assume that those who leave will eventually return, but again, research indicates otherwise. For every three young evangelicals who leave, two do not return.<sup>37</sup> Simply stated, millions are silently walking out the back door and secretly deciding, "I'll never go to church again." According to the Barna Group, "American teens are displaying the lowest levels of participation in prayer, reading religious resources....and being involved in witness to peers since Barna began surveying teenagers."<sup>38</sup> We are losing about seven out of every ten evangelical teens.<sup>39</sup> Moving into the 18-to-29 year-olds, there are twice as many atheists as evangelicals.<sup>40</sup> So, at this critical time in American history when the nation most needs the Church, the Church finds itself facing perhaps its greatest crisis since the birth of our nation.



## **SENIOR ADULTS ARE DISAPPEARING**

This may, on the surface, appear not to be case. After all, stand in the back of most of our churches and you'll observe a sea of gray, or blue, depending on your perspective. While that may be true, there are fewer of them today than last Sunday because 1,000 of them are dying every day.<sup>28</sup> Over the next twelve years, this faithful, older generation will no longer be with us. Ramifications for the church are huge because 50 percent of all donations come from this Builders generation.<sup>29</sup> This means that total giving for many of our churches will decrease by as much as 50 percent. Even if the economy recovers and the stock market is booming, it will have no impact on this reality. Some projections actually predict that giving may drop by as much as 70 percent within the next twenty-five to thirty years.<sup>30</sup> This is a silent crisis that few are talking about but it will be here sooner than later. The consequences will be devastating as pastors will be forced to resign or transition to bi-vocational work. Seminary professors and other church staff will be laid off. Church properties will be foreclosed. Ministries will be eliminated.

Prior to the Great Recession of 2008, going back to 2000, tithing decreased by 62 percent<sup>31</sup> and in 2004 the church reached its lowest level of giving since 1961, even lower (in percentage) than the worst years of the Great Depression.<sup>32</sup>

One may be prone to think that such decline in giving can be replaced by reaching more of the younger generation. That would be nice, but those over the age of 75 give four times as much as 25-to-44-year-olds.<sup>33</sup> Research found that while 17 percent of Christians say they tithe, only 3 percent actually do.<sup>34</sup> Of course, as people age, physical limitations prevent them from volunteering or serving in the ministries for which they are most passionate. So, while this is occurring at the older end of the chronological continuum, something equally as alarming is occurring on the youthful end.

- 1 Ibid, p. 265
- 2 Statistics and Reasons for Church Decline by Richard J. Krejcir; <http://www.churchleadership.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=42346&columnid=45>
- 3 Ibid
- 4 Ibid
- 5 Ibid
- 6 Ibid
- 7 Ibid
- 8 *The Washington Post*, "Christianity faces sharp decline as Americans are becoming even less affiliated with religion" by Sarah Pulliam Bailey, May 12, 2015; <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/05/12/chrisitanity-faces-sharp>
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- 10 "How Will The Shocking Decline of Christianity in America Affect The Future of This Nation?" by Michael, January 18, 2012; <http://endoftheamericandream.com/archives/how-will-the-shocking-decline-of-christianity>
- 11 Ibid
- 12 Ibid
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- 16 Christian Index, "A Sobering Reality," by Joe Westbury, November 9, 2015; <http://christianindex.org/20151112-1-sobering-reality>
- 17 Ibid
- 18 Alarming Facts, Trends and Statistics; XXI, No. 2, February 2008; [http://www.baptistbanner.org/Subarchive 2/2008%20Alarming%20Facts%20Trends%20and](http://www.baptistbanner.org/Subarchive%202008%20Alarming%20Facts%20Trends%20and)
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- 20 Southern Baptists' Millennial Problem, June 2, 2014; <https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/trevinwax/2014/06/02/southern-baptist-millennial>
- 21 Alarming Facts, Trends and Statistics, XXI, No. 2, February 2008; [http://www.baptistbanner.org/Subarchive 2/2008%20Alarming%20Facts%20Trends%20and](http://www.baptistbanner.org/Subarchive%202008%20Alarming%20Facts%20Trends%20and)
- 22 Ibid
- 23 Christian Index, "A Sobering Reality," by Joe Westbury, November 9, 2015; <http://christianindex.org/20151112-1-sobering-reality>
- 24 Ibid
- 25 John S. Dickerson, *The Great Evangelical Recession*, 2013, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, p. 26
- 26 Ibid, p. 51
- 27 2005 Evangelical Alliance, <http://www.eauk.org/resources/info/statistics/2005-englishchurchcensus.com>
- 28 Ibid, p. 82
- 29 Ibid, p. 82



- 30 Ibid, p. 84-85
- 31 George Barna, "Tithing Down 62% in the Past Year," Barna Research Group, May 19, 2003, <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/121-tithing-down-62-in-the-past-year?q=giving>
- 32 John L. Ronsvalle and Sylvia Ronsvalle, *The State of Church Giving through 2004: Will We will?* Champaign, IL: Empty Tomb, Inc., 2006; <http://library.generousgiving.org/page.asp?sec=50&page=609#RonsvalleJS3>
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- 34 Kluth, "Twenty Mega-Trends Impacting Christian Fund Raising." <http://kluth.org/fundraising/20MegaTrends.htm>
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**THANK YOU again Steve Hale!**

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