

Mere Churchianity

Wednesday, 12 January 2011

I was drawn to the book "Mere Churchianity," by Michael Spencer (The Internet Monk), largely in response to the question: "Have you left the church in search of Jesus?" For someone like me, a relatively new believer who has been struggling to ascertain the relevance of institutional worship, it's a compelling question.

Early on Spencer states that the purpose of his book is not to church-bash, then he proceeds with an itemization of the deficiencies and hypocrisies found in today's Evangelical churches - mega, small, even home churches have their share of issues.

At first, I was surprised that, for all his complaints against Evangelical churches, Spencer remained a Baptist minister and teacher at a Christian school, presumably until his death in April 2010. On further reflection, though, I see it not as a contradiction to the point of the book, but rather an illustration of it.

My impression is that his intended audience comprises people disenchanted with corporate worship, who equate faith with their church affiliation, and who are likely to abandon Christ if they leave the church. He contrasts his coined term "Jesus Shaped Spirituality" with prevalent Church Shaped Spirituality, and urges readers to get to know the Jesus of the Four Gospels, rather than the Sunday morning Order of Worship.

The final chapters are dedicated to helping the reader discern and plug into the real Jesus community - those people in your church, your neighborhood, your town, who are living Christ's example. God works through His people, not man's institutions, but if you find and surround yourself with His people you will experience Christ no matter the shape, size or style of the building.

Though my personal church-crisis is not one of faith, or of questioning the relevancy of Jesus, I found many kindred sentiments expressed in "Mere Churchianity" and recommend it for those who are struggling to grow a "Jesus Shaped Spirituality."

Disclaimer: I received a copy of "Mere Churchianity" from Waterbrook Multnomah Publishing Group for free in exchange for this review.