

# CHRISTIAN MONEY \$ENSE

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## The Church is Irrelevant

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Before you attempt to contact me on the title above, read on.

My father passed away about five years ago. He and my uncle owned some wooded property that they inherited from their mother (my grandmother). Through my father's estate and by gift from my uncle, my brothers and I now own this property.

Recently, my brothers and I were discussing what to do with this property. Our choices were: we could do nothing, or we could sell it and use the money personally. I suggested another idea. What if we formed a family charitable trust that was used to further the charitable wishes of my grandparents? This would bring the family together at least annually to decide on disbursement and could be a powerful way to reinforce the importance of giving.

My grandparents were Christians and were very involved in their Baptist church. They were also life-long educators and involved in farming and 4-H. Our giving priorities could mirror theirs to foster their legacy.

Now, here's the rest of the story.

I have three brothers. Two are Christians. My younger brother is not. He and I did not grow up going to church. To the best of my knowledge, my father was not a believer. The Lord radically saved me when I was fifteen. My younger brother has not had that experience.

When my brothers and I discussed the idea of a family trust, my younger brother had a very interesting response. He agreed with the idea of giving to education and 4-H but did not like the idea of giving to churches because in his words, "By giving to 4-H I think we would be directly helping kids rather than a church cookout".

Did you get the implication? Education and 4-H really change people's lives. Therefore, we should give them money. Churches don't change people's lives. They don't reach out. They just serve themselves so we should not support them. In his opinion, the church is irrelevant.

I was very grieved with his response. But unfortunately, there is an element of truth in his words. What percentage of your church's budget is spent on outreach? What percentage of time is spent on serving the community? Granted, my brother does not understand the spiritual impact of the gospel. But his perception is based upon what he sees (or does not see) churches doing.

Jesus was ridiculed for spending so much time around sinners (Matt 9:10-11). In fact, his time and results with them caused many to listen to his spiritual message of sin and repentance (Mk 2:8-12).

The world is watching to see how Christians spend their money. The world is watching to see if Christians will make a difference in people's lives. How will your church choose to spend its money and time this year - on itself or others? You can take on a community project or help children with Christian education. Impact people where they are and they will listen to you.

The world is watching? Will your church be relevant?

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