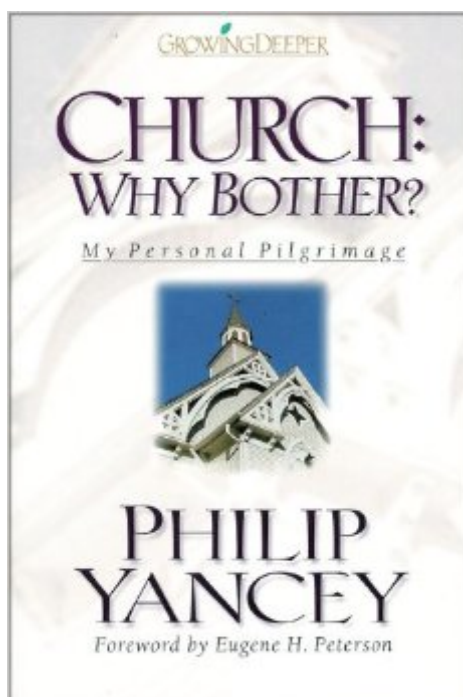


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Church: Why Bother?: My Personal Pilgrimage (Growing Deeper)



Synopsis

Why are there so many more professing Christians than churchgoing Christians? Is it because something is wrong with the church? Perhaps that's part of the picture. But Philip Yancey insists there is another part. In this candid, thought-provoking account, he reveals the reasons behind his own journey back from skepticism to wholehearted participation in the church, and weighs the church's human failings against its compelling excellencies as the body of Christ.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Everyone who has attended church with regularity can understand boredom and indifference among the congregants. Services are often not conducive to worship. Avoiding an abstract, depersonalized discussion of the matter, Philip Yancey relates his own reflections and experiences during his Christian pilgrimage. Rather than going to church services wondering how they will minister to US, we should go to church services to worship GOD. Our attention should be directed outward ("How did God view my worship?") rather than inward ("I got nothing out of that church service.")

Sometimes, perhaps most times, we have to conduct our worship of God DESPITE being in church. But that is what we should do. I liked this personalized and down-to-earth approach of one layman talking to another. (One is reminded of C.S. Lewis's REFLECTIONS ON THE PSALMS where Lewis says he is not presuming to instruct, he is merely comparing notes, like two school boys talking shop and helping each other over difficulties their schoolmaster has long forgotten about.) I enjoyed Eugene Peterson's Foreword too. This easily readable book (only 100 pages long) is good for personal reading as well as group discussion.

For those on the inside who wonder what the church is doing, and those on the outside who criticize the church for not doing better, this book is highly recommended. In his musings, Yancey is insightfully aware of the foibles and and foibles of the church in all of it's humanness, yet he also declares that the church is the means God has chosen to be in the world today. As he wrote in "What's So Amazing About Grace," "I left the church because I found so little grace there. I came back because I found grace nowhere else." I'm buying a copy for each member of the session.

This had to be Yancey's quickest "read." In his three chapters he gives all those who are cynical about the church a view of the church that is refreshing. He reminds the reader of what the church CAN be and what difference it can make. The second chapter had to be the most innovative (as Yancey always is) with his contemporary images of the church, describing the church the way the apostle Paul might if he were writing in the late 20th century. After reading the chapter I am no longer ashamed to admit that I too have a "crutch" faith. In his 3rd chapter, Yancey meanders and doesn't conclude with a bang. The climax is found right in the middle of this short book. If you have a friend who lives by the motto: "Jesus, Yes...Church, No." please get them this book.

This book is part of a series called "Growing Deeper". Although I don't know who sponsored the series, I mention it because this book starts out sounding a bit like it was written to order -- to someone else's original agenda than the author's. However, although the book reads quite dryly at first, it is well worth persevering with it as Yancey hits his own stride a bit later in the book. Knowing that Yancey is probably writing for an evangelical audience, he is right on in reminding the church that it should be there for the benefit of outsiders, not for the benefit of church members. He also reminds his readers that the church should be meeting people's genuine needs wherever they are at and not simply trying to "convert sinners" or "win souls for Christ." Yancey goes on to outline a number of functions that the church can play in society, given different social and spiritual needs in

different environments. Whilst hardly a revelation theologically, this book serves as a reminder, from one insider to another, of things that we as Christians can do better in our coming together as church.

A quick read but a comforting one to anyone who has grown disenchanted with the church. Yancey, in his typical fashion, acknowledges the readers feelings while also challenging the reader to explore deeper issues. This book is no different in challenging the reader to move from being a consumer of church to being an active participant. Helpful, reflective, and refreshing.

Yancey writes in his usual straightforward, honest style, drawing upon his own childhood and journey as a "church goer." It's an easy read. You can read it in an hour. He reminds us that despite its failures and blunders, the church is still the main avenue God uses to nourish ourselves and each other. Just as no one has discovered another way to learn to walk except to do it and pick oneself up after falling, so the church body keeps on going. God seems to put up with us, and we should put up with each other. I guess it boils down to what someone told me as a teenager. "When you find the perfect church, don't join it. You'll spoil it."

I have read several of Philip Yancey's books. He writes in a way that is very compelling for me and frequently makes some very tangible connections with the reader that make you walk away viewing your spiritual life or Bible text in a totally different way. Here however I was disappointed that large sections of this short book are almost repeated verbatim out of other books he has written. I also thought that the proposed answers to the question, "Church: Why Bother?" were not that clearly stated or summarized. This book is no where near the caliber of "The Jesus I Never Knew".

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