

An Unregenerate Sheep in the Fold: What to do if You Think a Group Member Isn't Saved

Care & Correction

You're sitting in your living room after small group, reflecting on the conversation of the evening. While you're reviewing the night, you remember something a group member said that catches you off guard:

"I don't know why we put so much emphasis on the Bible... it's just a book."

As you pray over this, you recall other similar comments, and become increasingly concerned that this person may not actually be a Christian.

And, you're right. They may not be.

According to recent Barna studies, only 19% of American born-again Christians hold to a biblical worldview. 79% believe that the Bible is accurate in all that it teaches. Slightly less than two-thirds of this same group (62%) believes that Jesus was absolutely sinless, as the Bible teaches. Less than half (47%) believe that salvation is by grace through faith, and not by works.

Given these statistics, I'd cautiously say it's a certainty that there are men and women in small groups who may not be saved, but think they are.

This is a highly contentious statement to make, so I must clarify: We may not use these facts as license to self-righteously determine who is and is not a Christian. We must also be careful not to confuse someone who is immature in his faith with someone who is unregenerate. We must be wise in discerning the difference based on Scripture.

The Immature Believer

An immature believer is one who is simply confused about what the Bible teaches and what it says. He may be a brand-new Christian in need of guidance, or a long-time Christian who simply has not sat under authoritative biblical teaching. He may even be one of those people who constantly fight over secondary issues.

While an immature believer may not understand Scripture well, or have some serious errors in his understanding of God, he is ultimately marked by a teachable spirit. He is open to correction from people who love him. He takes heed to godly counsel. He has a desire to learn and grow into the likeness of Christ.

The Corinthian church is a perfect example of immature believers. They lacked discernment concerning doctrinal issues. They excused gross unrepentant sin. They abused spiritual gifts in worship. Despite all this, they received correction from the Apostle Paul. They were teachable.

The Unregenerate Churchgoer

Here's where things get complicated. The unregenerate churchgoer is very good at hiding in a crowd. Many of these churchgoers have been going to church for a long time; many more serve in the church, as greeters, in children's ministry, or even leading a small group.

Like an immature believer, these churchgoers are marked by a lack of biblical knowledge or an errant understanding of God. Others are characterized by a

dogmatic legalism that elevates morality to the highest form of authority. Some believe that grace frees us to sin unashamedly; after all, God has forgiven us (see Romans 6:15). Some believe that all things are lawful, despite not being beneficial (see 1 Cor. 6:12-13). All will turn away from sound doctrine, and find teachers who will tell them what they want to hear (see 2 Tim. 4:3-4).

They do not heed godly counsel. They do not submit to authority. They don't have a desire to grow into the likeness of Christ. They are not teachable.

These are the clear marks of an unregenerate churchgoer.

You might be thinking, "Does it even matter if I think someone's a Christian or not? What do I do with the person who is already in my group?"

The answer, again, is both simple and complicated.

Does it matter if we think someone may or may not be a Christian and how do we respond?

Our friends' salvation and ongoing relationship with Jesus should be of great concern to us. If we love our friends, we need to do what we can to assist them, whether they are mature believers, immature or secretly unregenerate. The following are a few of the things I've found helpful, as I hope you will:

- 1. Keep Christ central in all our content.** Our studies must always be pointing to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Teach the gospel when it's popular and when it's not (which is all the time). Only the gospel has the power to transform the hearts of the mature, immature and unregenerate alike.
- 2. Be patient.** Paul exhorted Timothy to teach with complete patience. Not everyone learns at the same rate. Everyone stumbles; everyone gives in to temptation, and should be treated with gentleness.
- 3. Confront sin.** We must be willing to call each other to repentance. We must cultivate an atmosphere where it's safe to confess our sins, to be open about our struggles and give and receive appropriate correction. If I am in sin, I expect one of the men in my group to confront me. If we love each other, we can do nothing less.
- 4. Hold your ground.** Not everyone will endure sound teaching, but hold fast to it, especially when it's hard.
- 5. Be willing to say goodbye.** Sometimes the healthiest thing you can do is to ask someone to leave your group if they are disruptive, unrepentant and unteachable.

Are there unregenerate sheep in the fold? Probably. But this shouldn't come as a surprise to us. So what do we do? We keep Christ the focus of all our studies, we show patience and mercy, we confront sin in love, we hold our ground on key doctrinal issues, and we must be willing to say goodbye to those who will not do the same.

It's intimidating, to be sure; but this is the call of leadership.

Life group prayer and praise

- Please continue to pray for **Sharon Young** as she is having a hard time with the loss of **her mother, Evva**.
- Praise God that **my son Jeff** in Afghanistan has gotten the Medal of Valor for holding off enemies so that the soldiers could get help. Thank you Jesus that he didn't get hurt. ~ **Barb Lillard**
- Thanks be to Jesus. Please pray for **my wife and friend, Lori**. May the Lord grant her healing. ~ **Ty Witucki**
- Thank you for your prayers when so many others are hurting. We pray for their needs also. Please continue praying for a place for us to live in Everett. ~ **Ed and Lynn Biggs**
- Please pray for all my friends and family. And I ask God to forgive me for my attitude last Sunday when we visited my mom. ~ **Naomi**
- **Mark Deiner** praises God for all of his speech and balance that God has restored.
- Please pray for **Mary Condon's grandmother** who has cancer for the fourth time that the doctors can't treat anymore.
- **Nicole** praises God that she found Him and that He is helping her put the past where it belongs, in the past.
- Please pray that our Positive Behavior Support Team will be able to help our new boy (**Steven**, 6) who was so badly neglected that he can't speak, eat without choking or relate to others. ~ **Kate**
- Please continue to pray for my **family** and my **mom**. ~ **Shawn**
- Please pray for **Chris, Kathy and Alyssa, their baby Addison** was born 3 months premature and just passed away. ~ **Joanne**
- **Gail Downing** needs to be rescued from alcohol addiction, please pray for her.
- Please pray for my best friend **Stacey** that she does not have breast cancer. ~ **Priscilla Hahne**
- **Janet Tracy's mother Evelyn**, has stage 4 brain cancer, please pray for her and the family.

HAITI EMERGENCY RESPONSE

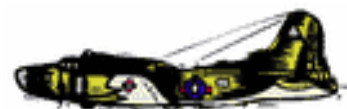
A 7 magnitude earthquake hit Haiti on Tuesday, January 12, 2010 at 5:00 p.m. with devastating results. The death toll in affected areas has not yet been determined. Our missionary families serving in Haiti were in the United States at the time, but Steve and Nancy James are returning to Haiti immediately. Because of your giving to the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering earlier this year, \$25,000 in funds will be made immediately available to the Haitian Baptist Convention for distribution. But the need is great and more funds are needed. You can help. Emergency donations can be made now by writing a check to FBC, marked "OGHS – Haiti Earthquake Relief." —Pray for Haiti and its people. —Pray for the proper response of the world to this tragedy. —Pray for believers in Haiti to shine forth the love of Christ in this time of desperate need. Haiti, a nation of 9 million people, is the poorest country in the Western hemisphere. It is about the size of Maryland and is on the western half of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, which it shares with the Dominican Republic. Financial gifts can be directed towards Haiti simply by writing your check to FBC and indicating in memo line "Haiti".

Pastor Allan will be on sabbatical and out of the office from January 11th to February 7th. During this time Allan will be completing the writing/dissertation piece of his doctoral degree in Missional Leadership. He began this degree in January 2006, and is looking forward completing the program. Please be in prayer for Allan during this time as he completes this final piece.

ATTENTION ALL FBC CHURCH MEMBERS: your FBC Foundation Board has made a minor change to the By-Laws that govern the Foundation. The document is now available for your preview and comments. Pick up a copy in the church office on the front desk. The revised By-Laws will be available up until the date of the annual Church meeting (Feb. 7th, 9:00 am). At that meeting you, the church membership, will have the opportunity to ask questions and to vote to accept the minor revision to the Foundation By-Laws. Please be informed. Take some time to pick up a copy in the church office. Darrell Olson, Chairman, FBC Foundation

Pray for our Military

- Jonathan Michaels Estrella— son of Sharon Boswell.
- Jason Bjazevich—Megan Owenby's husband—Army Special Forces— Stationed in N. Carolina.
- Joel Ellis—son of John & Midge —Serving in Iraq.
- Scott Harpell—son of Brian & Lynne— Stationed at Fort Carson, CO.
- Aaron Weston—nephew of Ken and Kathy—Stationed in San Diego.
- Eric Schmidt — son of Gene and Pat Schmidt — Camp Fallujah, Iraq.
- Benjamin Lagonia—dear friend of the Naylor family—stationed in Manitoba.
- David Coyle—son of Karen Mark— residing in Seattle, member of the National Guard.
- Adam Flynn—a young Marine safely home and out of military.
- Brett Love—grandson of Wilma—Army National Guard-Serving at home.
- Robin Swartz - Serving in the military - currently home in Everett.
- Christian Chmielewski—nephew of JoAnn Couturie' - in the Marines.
- ENS Andrew E. Timpner (fiancé to Christin Suthard) on deployment with USS Momsen.
- Devin Abbitt—nephew of Paul Abbitt - Marine, stateside.
- Duane Neyens—brother to Kathy Chapman—Nat. Grd. Afghanistan.
- Philip Ankney-LCPL Afghanistan Cousin of MaryAnn Peterson.
- Jeffrey Lillard—son of Barbara Lillard — Srg. In Army, Stationed in Afghanistan.
- Aaron Chmielewski—joined the Marines. Nephew of JoAnn Couturie



Life Group Happenings

All in the Family

by florence miller

CONGRATULATIONS! You've probably heard by now (or observed) about **Karen Mark and Pete Kaess'** wedding plans? It seems our church's SAM group serves an ever widening service to our community. Add 'dating service' to the list for it was at SAM's Thursday morning coffee hour for the community that Karen and Pete met. Karen is already proudly wearing a ring and the date is 'kind of' set for May. Karen is beaming and Pete is blushing proud. They are wished the best.

Leo Younglowe has been in the hospital (and now out) with a kidney stone infection. It was discovered that he has only one kidney making this a complicated attack. The doctors are waiting for the infection to calm down and the kidney to get stronger before they go in to remove the stone. This will hopefully occur in a couple of weeks. Prayer is need for Leo.

Sharon Young has our prayers of sympathy and love as she experiences the loss of her mother, **Evva**. An infection of MERSA, following surgery, plus other health issues, which caused extreme pain, made her home-going a blessing for Evva but a time of sadness for Sharon and her father. Sharon says "thank you" for all of your prayers and support.

Our prayers and sympathy go out to **Chris Nelson and his family** at the passing of his mother, **Stephanie** who went to be with Jesus on Friday, January 15th. Please keep the rest of the family in your prayers.

Coming up Sunday, January 31st (8:30 a.m. - 12:30 pm) we are having a **Mission Fair at FBC**. This will be a great opportunity for you and your group to prayerfully check out a number of local service opportunities to potentially connect with. OR if your life group is currently involved in a ministry service and would like to display that information with others, there will be 1/2 table space available for you. IF so, please contact **Donna Wirt**.

Latest news from **Pat and Lou Alvarez** on Camp John 3:16, Merida. "We will be leaving January 30th, arriving in Merida on Sunday evening, January 31st. **Lou and Gama** will begin meeting on Monday, Feb. 1st to map out a plan of what they need to do first. They have a lot of work ahead of them." Meanwhile Pat says/wishes "I will be basking in the sun (ha!) No, I'll continue to help **Pastor Jake Krestinski** with his team plans for their trip to Merida in March; looking forward to some heavy duty Spanish lessons and continuing some deep Bible studies I've got going."

Current prayer request: 1) Praise for a \$9,000 donation. 2) God's direction for the right vehicle to purchase and the funding. 3) Safety and health for all as well as wisdom.

Thank you. We appreciate each of you so much!" Pat Alvarez

There were two deaths in the ABC Northwest family this week: **Rev. James Taylor**, member of First Baptist Church, Billing Montana and for many years the Registrar of Rocky Mountain College in Billings, MT and **Cora Mae Sutterlin**, wife of **Rev. Richard Sutterlin** of Belgrade, Montana. After his retirement he served for a number of years in interim positions.

To join the **Senior Adult Ministry** group the beginning age is 50; the meeting and luncheon is on the first Friday of the month at 11:30 a.m.; the cost just \$7.00 for the meal and a membership fee of only \$10.00 per year. Next month will be a musical program with **Dick Connors**, and in February the SAM group is getting ready to take another trip, this time to the **Benaroya Hall** to hear **Marvin Hamlisch** on the 20th. Sign up at the SAM desk. We need everyone that wants to go to sign up ASAP since we have to make the final payment to them soon. So please call **Shirley** or see her at the SAM desk on Sunday.

Lifegroup Contributing Opportunities

Update

Adult attendance: 274

Children: 9 am: 20+10 10:30 am 53+15

Youth Small Group: 13 + 3 Middle School 12 + 3

Happy Birthday



January 20th	John Ellis
January 21st	David Brock, Kyle Burgess, Luckey Elkins, Marcia Hall
January 22nd	Tony Tysseling
January 24th	Camille Yocum
January 26th	Dave McCallum, Faith Wallingford

USHER CAPTAIN 2009:

January—Pete Sontra
Luckey Elkins
February—Ron & Kay Olson
Craig Reisen

COFFEE HOUR 2009

January 24th
David Brock
Men's Life Group
January 31st
Alex Tarin
20-30 Something
February 7th
Lyle Gordon
SAM
February 14th
David Karber
Open Door
February 21st
Bryan Blair
Life Group


Lela Meadows Scholarship

ATTENTION ALL HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS, COLLEGE STUDENTS, POST GRADUATE STUDENTS: Application for the 2010 Lela Meadows Scholarship are available, beginning January 4th in the church office. To be eligible to apply you need to be a current and active member in our church. Application deadline is Wednesday, **March 31st, 2010 at 4:00 pm**

AVALANCHE RETREAT

4th thru 8th Grade Avalanche Retreat is coming soon! Register now with either Pastor Nathan or Pastor Alex—cost is just \$70.00. They will be going to Cascade Meadows Camp in Leavenworth on January 29th, returning on the 31st. You won't want to miss this exciting time, playing in the snow, inner tubing and having fun and fellowship with your pals. Experience God in the snow.

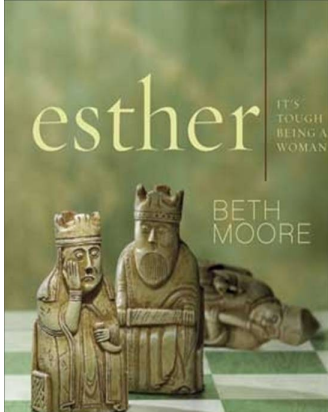
Annual Congregational Meeting -- Feb. 7th 9:00 am



"Quiet Strength"
~Wednesday Nights~
Starting Feb 3rd
6:30 pm
Cascade Room

Men's Bible Study -- \$10.00 for book

TONY DUNGY



Starting Feb. 3rd,
6:30 pm
Wednesday Evenings

~Calling all Women~