

Missing link of Christianity

by

Americans have become spiritually strong but religiously weak. As a diverse nation, we have been exposed to a number of the world's great religions but we have surfaced with no defined faith or religion.

Spirituality connects a person to God; religion structures that spirituality. In a sense, spirituality is the picture and religion its frame.

Extending the metaphor further, think of a picture with no frame.

The picture, at first rich and glossy, has nothing to protect and preserve it. It wears with age and eventually becomes so distorted that the original image cannot be discerned. Spirituality remains strong today, but without the framework of religiosity to provide structure, it will not survive.

Christianity, from its earliest roots in America, has been the framework of spirituality, and so it will be my reference point from this point on with regard to religion.

The point of any Christian church (though some churches have lost sight of this fact) is to bring a person closer to God. From the beginning, Christians used church as a place to celebrate their belief and, in turn, grow spiritually stronger.

Does a Christian need church and religion to be spiritual? The answer is clearly yes.

To surround oneself with the Christian love and support that a church can provide is to strengthen the soul against temptation.

The problem many people have with this concept is that one does not always find love and support in Christian churches. As a Christian, I sadly have to agree. If there is to be a revival of the spirituality of Christians in this nation, then there must first be a revival of the church.

There has to be a spiritual link between the church and God. In Christianity, this spiritual link is Christ. What has happened in many Christian churches is that this link has been broken, leaving the church and God unconnected.

these people hold grudges against the church because they feel they have been deceived or not loved. It is a sad reality that this has been the "Christian" experience of many Americans.

If ever we are to hold the richness of religiosity and spirituality in our hands together, we have to revive the church.

Martin Luther King, Jr. said of this very issue: "If we are to go forward, we must go back and rediscover these precious values."

A church was once a place where Christians could go to sing out in love, peace and joy. A place where anyone who said, "I believe in Jesus Christ," was welcomed not with a weak handshake, but an embrace. A church was once a place where Christians went.

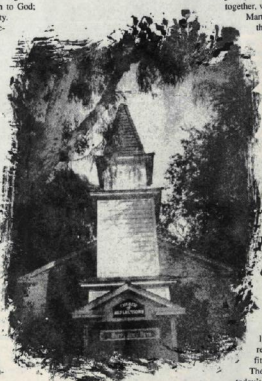
If church were this once more, spiritual people would attend to feel the presence of God living in their hearts, and enjoy the support of the church's framework.

Modern stereotypes of churches have portrayed those who are religious in a negative fashion - with good reason. It is true that a number of Christian churches are dying spiritually, but it's important to remember that not all churches fit this negative stereotype.

There are churches, even in today's world, with but one mission: the spiritual growth of an individual.

The only way to Christian revival is through the love of other Christians. If your heart is longing for such spiritual growth, then I challenge you to try church once again.

Look in the newspaper or yellow pages for a listing of churches in your area. Newcomers are always welcome.



When the spiritual link is broken, then church becomes a safe place for kids, a nice place to socialize, but no longer a place to know God. In some cases, spirituality can actually weaken.

I have known people who used to be Christians but are no longer because their church was not a place that taught the principals of gaining salvation. Typically,