



Broken

Why I go to church

In recent years, many young adults in my generation have developed a distaste for the church. Some of the many reasons are valid, some not. My friends active in the LGBTQ community feel shut out, discriminated against. Other friends feel the church has become outdated, irrelevant. Others claim the church is driven too much by current fads and superficial messages. They throw around words like “hypocritical,” “useless,” “judgmental,” or “greedy.” The attitude of my fellow millennials is evident in YouTube videos such as “Why I Hate Religion, But Love Jesus,” which has had more than 25 million hits. The mantra for so many is, we don’t need church, we just need God. Or, we don’t need God, we just need spirituality.

Although a congregation can have the traits listed above, I would like to tell my fellow millennials that this is not the church I know and not the church I will help build.

The church I know understands the brokenness with which millennials are so intimately familiar. Recent statistics for college graduates under 35 show an unemployment rate of 7 percent but a “mal-employment” rate—those who have jobs for which they are overeducated—of 36 percent. We earn degrees (and take on terrifying student loan debt) and then find our only options are jobs that don’t require a degree and don’t pay a living wage. I took out loans of more than \$80,000 this year and am still working on my thesis. I don’t live paycheck to paycheck; I live paycheck to four days before paycheck. I save very little. My career in any field seems uncertain.

For others in my generation, college itself is a pipe dream, and some will spend their young adult years on the streets, in prison, or on a battlefield.

The US Census Bureau reports that the percentage of men age 25 to 34 living with their parents rose to 19 percent in 2011. For women, the figure rose to 10 percent. We are the most educated generation in US history, but many of us find ourselves living at home, sitting on the poverty line, not knowing what went wrong.

I live in a broken, unstable world, and I am broken within it. I crack, split, bleed, break when I have to take out another school loan, use my last \$5 to put gas in my tank, buy ramen noodles instead of fresh meat, or get another job rejection. The world cracks, splits, bleeds, breaks when another family finds itself in poverty, when another mortgage is foreclosed, when another child goes hungry, when another parent works three part-time jobs, when the 1 percent gets a raise. We are broken people in a broken world.

That is why I go to church.

My church is full of broken people. We learn to be broken together—vulnerable in our human condition but gathered despite this to work for the kingdom of God on earth. We learn to accept those who enter our doors as God accepts us: broken, imperfect, lovable beyond measure. I know that when I cannot fill my fridge at the end of the month, a freezer full of food opens to me without judgment or criticism. I know that when a congregation member goes through the heartbreak of divorce, fellow brothers and sisters in Christ will stand amid

their shattered life, saying: “We are here. God is here. Break, and with God’s help, we will put you back together.” I know that when people bring judgment into our midst, my congregation will respond: “We are God’s people, and this is God’s church. We will not turn you away. We will not abandon you in this broken world. Come, for all are welcome.”

This is the church I know; this is the church we need. Seek it out. The broken people of God’s church wait with open arms. And if you cannot find this church, build it.

Project the Notes and the Words

1. Oh, for a thou-sand tongues to sing
my great Re-deem-er's praise.

1. That Eas-ter day with joy was bright.
The sun shone out | with fair-er light,

- Project songs with notes from *YOUR* songbook or other music sources used by your church/organization
- Choose one of the 15 formats provided with each song
- Enjoy the harmonies & teach/learn new songs more quickly
- Songs are in PPT format — compatible with most music software programs
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- Create your own Digital Hymnal
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