

Church and Culture Survey

Summary of Information

Below are the results of interviews with 46 random people at Clackamas Town Center, Lloyd Center and Pioneer Square. The ages of those interviewed ranged from 15 to 72 and includes several different experiences and walks of life. These people were interviewed about their perspective on the relationship between the Church and the culture.

Total People = 46

Religious Affiliation:

Christians= 18 (confused Christian-2)

Atheist= 6

None= 17

Wiccan=1

Muslim= 1

Agnostic= 2

Jewish= 1

Practice the same religion they grew up in:

No= 20 Yes= 21, Complicated=5

What is the overall cultural perspective on the church:

Positive= 10 Negative= 21 Don't Care/Neutral = 15

How Connected is the church to the needs of surrounding communities:

Not at all= 22 a little= 16 very connected=3 don't know= 5

Is the church a source of good in the community:

No= 4 yes= 26 Neutral= 16

Biggest Turn Off's with church:

fake/judgmental/Hypocritical Christians=14

Busy schedules= 7

Boring= 5
only room for one type of person/small box for Christians=4
lack of diversity= 3
control people's lives=3
lack of acceptance=2
Blind Belief= 2
lack of space of singles/young adults=1
Promotes a Negative Self-Image/Promotes Self-Hatred= 1
shame-based= 1
lack of accountability to outside world=1
all sins are equal philosophy=1
lies=1
Politics=1
Only care about heaven= 1
infighting=1
isolation=1
money=1
confusing/not simple=1

Biggest Attraction to Church:

Friends and family= 15
people like being told what to do and tell people what to do =4
Jesus= 3
social/fun=3
Nice people=3
Bible Teaching=2
support in faith=2
love=2
belong=1
spirituality=1
something more=1
Safe community=1
someone to worship/look up too=2
Get to feel superior=1
crutch=1

Advice/ What does the church need to work on:

More space for young adults/singles=1
segregation=1
make space for non traditional Christians=2
Embrace the mystery/don't always try and answer=1
shame-based=1

training/education=1
mind your own business=2
promote critical thinking=2
simplify/unconfused=2
tone down hell=1
flexible with schedules=2
less boring=4
outreach=2

Which words make sense when you hear Christians say them/ Which words are you familiar with: (the numbers indicate how many of the people interviewed knew the words)

New Testament (34)
Old Testament (29)
Sin (27)
Word of God (10)
The Fall/The Garden (3)
Gospel (7)
Good News (6)
Born Again (5)
The Lost/ Lost Person (4)
Evangelize (4)
Salvation (9)
Sanctification (3)
Discipleship (4)

Notes of Interest:

1. Another Question was included about denominations and positive or negative feelings associated with those. It was very interesting to see that very few people even knew what the denomination were. They recognized words like Christian, Catholic, Islam, and Buddhism, but when asked about words like Presbyterian, Baptist, Episcopalian, Lutheran, and Pentacostal, unless they happened to be raised in one of those denominations, 95% of the people interviewed either were neutral about the denominations or had never heard of them. **No one identified a particular denomination as a draw for them.**
2. There seemed to be very little natural correlation between the church and Jesus for people. Only 3 people identified it as a draw or attraction, and less than 10 people even mentioned Jesus in the conversation about the church and culture.
3. Only 2 people interviewed who were Christian converted to Christianity in their teens. There were more people who converted out of Christianity later in life then converted into Christianity later in life.

4. There was very little hostility expressed toward the church or Christians in these interviews.

Comments from those interviewed:

On the biggest turn off from church: “Trying to regulate people’s lives- like it’s fine that you have beliefs just stop trying to make them law.”

On the biggest attraction from Church: “nothing- or maybe the power to tell people what to do- I think people get off on feeling superior.”

31, white, male, straight, no religion

On connectedness to community needs: “I think connectedness has decreased- communities used to be simple, less diverse so the church didn’t have to try as hard to connect with people. Now communities are big, and have so many different types of people and I don’t think the church knows how to deal with that. Obviously, we helped put Trump in the office and then wonder why we are disengaged from so many communities.”

Turn off’s from church : “Short-sightedness- we care about heaven and hell but not about the whole person, not the way Jesus did”

Attraction to church: “Jesus, when we show people Jesus we are at our very best work.”

Work on/advice for the church: “simplifying things- we meet people where they are at, we recognize people are complicated and we don’t rely on programs or tracts to meet them.”

65, Male, White, Straight, Anglican

How connected to people’s needs is this church: “Not at all- Christians vote for war and think it’s God’s work. I was told I was doing God’s work by spreading democracy. I think that’s bullshit now.”

Biggest Turn-off: “Mixing of church and politics- it’s easy to buy the church and if you can convince them to put the stamp of approval on it, you can convince anyone to do anything, you can’t say no if it’s God and country telling you to do something.”

62, Male, White, No Religious Affiliation

Do you practice the religion you were raised; “I was raised Christian but after I got to high school and could drive myself, I stopped going. It didn’t add anything to my life that was impactful in any meaningful way.”

Biggest Turn off: “When the church ignores things that matter- why does it matter that you go to church if you don’t care about racism, sexism, brutality, and all of that. As long as the church ignores that- no one cares what you’re selling.”

41, Female, White, Straight, Nothing

“I was raised a Christian, but I suffered through intense depression as a teen. I was put in a rehabilitation program for gay people, after that the whole thing just left a bad taste in my mouth.”

Turn off: “No room for people who disagree or live a different life. I loved my church and I probably would’ve stayed in that community. I loved the people there, but it was too hard being constantly scrutinized.”

Advice: “Work on loving people who don’t fit into your Christian box.”

Male, 30, black, gay, None

Religion you were raised in: “I’m technically still a Christian, but have been doubting a lot lately. I joined the drama team here at school, and there are so many people who aren’t like the people at my church; like gay people, liberal, atheists, and I always thought they were a certain way for a reason, but they are nice people, who treat people well. I was always told “people will see something different in you” when you have Jesus, but they don’t; everyone is just as happy, and kind as me. So yea, I don’t know what that means.”

17, female, straight, Christian

Religion you were raised in: “I was raised in a dominantly atheist household- we never went to church or believed anything. After my sister died I went through a bad depression, and this girl in my dorm at college invited me to this gathering. It was this really weird but wonderful thing; they sat in a circle around me, they blessed me, they sang for me, they took 15 minutes just to empower me. I never thought belief was so powerful and that kind of got me starting wandering toward spirituality and this connection with something bigger.”

Connectedness to community: “I think the church meets a really strong need in the community- in our culture we are so focused on “me”, we are mediated on everything from food to Netflix, and we forget that it’s killing us, we forget we are able to be more, and I think anything spiritual does that.”

Turn off: “I think spirituality is beautiful. It makes us better. It gives us healthy relationships with others, the world, nature and ourselves. I think the turn off for Christians is they can combat a naturally empowering truth by just talking about how much people suck. I have known some Christians with a very crippling fear of anything less perfection and just seemed to hate themselves and feel intense guilt for everything. It never seems healthy.”

Attraction: “That connection with something greater, a force in the world that loves you, that’s precious and a place where you can come together, like those women did for me, it’s beautiful.”

23, Female, White, Pansexual, Wiccan

Religion you were raised:

“My whole family is atheist except for me and my sister- we became Christians in high school when my sisters friend invited us to youth group.”

How connected to the needs of the community: “Not at all. I went to a special school for artists, and there were very few Christians. But there were so many types of people; different races, talents, sexual orientations, genders, it was sad because that was the most diverse community I had seen, I had never seen a church like that. And I wandered if the church had a space for them.”

Turn Off: “Like I said, it’s not a diverse space, I never saw a woman pastor, or a black pastor, or a wide diversity of talents, pretty much just singing and teaching were the only talents very prominently displayed or built into. It’s like this whole wacko support for Donald Trump. Like, you aren’t ever going to get diversity if you endorse someone who hates those communities.”

Biggest attraction: “Jesus, for sure. He gives you an entirely different way of living in the world.”

22, Asian, Bi, Christian

How connected to the needs of community: “It depends on the church. Most churches struggle to some degree with this- churches that flourish with families and married ministries, usually don’t have a thriving young adult ministry unless they are lucky enough to be located in college towns. It’s hard to meet the needs of multiple communities.”

Biggest Turn off for Church: “Connecting new people. I stopped going to church after college because most churches were really lonely places for me. I went in and new I would sit alone because there is not a clear place for single, career people.”

27, Female, White, Straight, Christian