



## B31. I don't mean religion nor church

Mostly I am in the environment of atheists or rather „somethingists“ in the sense that „something“ is probably above us. I talk with them quite a lot and I repeatedly observe that as soon as one of the Christians mentions church, a „congregation“ or a Christian event among these people, these „somethingists“ perceive it as agitation: „You want to get me, huh?!“ And very similarly respond even people who came from a religious background! To them, our invitation is a „pull-in“.

If an invitation to a gathering or to an interesting event somewhere sometimes works, that's great! In some villages or smaller towns, it's considered a local culture, even the mayor shows up there! Sure, why not to use every opportunity to share the Good News?!

However, the current culture in our country as the whole is quite negative towards religious institutions and their actions. In the context of the movement, however, this may not be a problem! It is enough to replace what people perceive as „agitation“ with interest, listening and natural personal sharing. According to our very abundant experience, then we can quite soon move to informal smaller groups of friends, for example to a Discovery study group or to God's family that meets in a cafe or at someone's home. „George, get two or three friends together and we can try it with the Bible. I am sure it will be very interesting and useful for you. I'll be interested in your opinion!“ These are easy sentences that work again and again with my non-believing friends, in the sense that many come and join us!

I asked one pastor for an estimate of how many members in their church would be able to personally explain the Good News and bring a person who is spiritually open to the Lord Jesus. The answer surprised me: „I don't know and I don't care!“ When I looked confused, the pastor explained: „It is enough if they bring them to our gathering, they will learn everything they need.“ I know that in their church, they keep activities where families of believers invite non-believing families. That's great! I also understand the idea that when a non-believers feel the quality of a community, i.e. the friendly form of deeper relationships, this is usually a key to their return. But I was struck by the idea that the main form of winning people for Jesus should be only invitation to a church or to some meeting. To the extent that believers do not even need their own skill of explaining the Gospel and leading people to Jesus. That's how the pastor's explanation sounded!

And isn't this quite common idea one of the big reasons why the evangelical church in our country looks the way it does?! That is, that there are so few Christians?! And the ordinary



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believers are quite distressed in the midst of non-believers, even though there are so many people around who are searching spiritually and are very open?! Many believers have no idea that there are any open-minded people out there at all!

It is perhaps clear from the context of the entire Bridges to People website that we greatly value the biblical form of church and cooperate with a number of contemporary evangelical believers. However, **I do not subscribe to what my unbelieving George thinks about the church!** For him, the church is: Middle Ages, abuse, restitutions, brainwashing and so on. This idea of his about the church is the reason why I repeat to him an important statement: „I don't mean religion nor church.“

**“Have you ever tried reading the Bible?** I don't mean religion nor church, just the Bible.“ And this is followed by a personal invitation to a very interesting informal Discovery with a few friends. Or, **“Have you ever tried to talk with Jesus?** I don't mean religion nor church, just talking with Jesus.“ And an explanation of the Bridge over the Gap follows with an example of prayer, how George himself can invite Jesus into his life.

In the context of the spiritual movement, I want to emphasize that resistance of non-believers against religion or institution does not need to be a problem at all! If we learn to serve people effectively where they are, and to create small informal communities around the Word of God with them, they will be very happy to connect with us. And some commit themselves to the Lord Jesus and begin to follow Him!

*Lord Jesus, I thank You for the hundreds of experiences that even completely unbelieving people come to God's Word, they listen, and some even invite You into their lives, after a while!*