

Too Many Christians Are Still Climbing

This photo captures the attitude of too many people in the church.



Just labeling something "wheelchair accessible" doesn't make it so. Sure, the right set of stairs has fewer steps, and it is certainly an easier climb. But for those who can't navigate steps, a few steps can be just as insurmountable as many.

So what does that have to do with the church?

In the evangelical church, we do well in saying salvation is all by faith in Christ. You can't earn or work your way into heaven; just trust Christ.

So far, so good.

We're not like those *other* groups with all their rituals and rules: Orthodox Jews with their strict adherence to the law ... Muslims with their rigid prayer five times a day and other requirements ... cults with their requirements of giving, mission work, deeds that move you higher up the path. Instead, the Christian church is all about grace.

But Christians have a lot of *unwritten* rules. These "rules" vary from congregation to congregation. Staunch fundamentalist groups preach grace while expecting church members not to listen to certain styles of music ... put their kids in public schools ... play the lottery ... smoke.

Other churches can be more subtle in their expectations. To make a difference in the church and community you don't drink (in public) ... support liberal causes ... hold to reformed theology ... speak in tongues. The unwritten list varies as you drive down the street from church to church.

It's a safe assessment that no pastor promotes this. (Well ... most don't.) But we have something ingrained in our old nature that says we still play a part in our salvation. That means after we come to Christ—after we're saved and a part of His church—we still have certain things we have to do to make the cut. **Thirty-six percent of evangelicals believe their actions partly contribute to earning a place in heaven** [State of Theology Research].

If there are twelve people on your pew next Sunday or in your Bible study group, odds are that four of them believe to some degree they've got to do their part to make it to heaven. That's like saying, thanks to Jesus, Christians don't have *as many* steps to climb. **But to those of us disabled by our own faulty efforts, one step to climb is one too many steps.**



Let me be clear: In Christ, there are no steps to climb. Zip. Zilch. Nada. Jesus climbed those steps for us and now He reaches back, holds out His hand, and says, "Trust Me." And He lifts us up to be with Him.

"He also raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might display the immeasurable riches of his grace through his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift— not from works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:6-9).

Stop climbing—just walk with Jesus. And stop expecting others to climb by your set of rules.