

Start Ups

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September is the month for start-ups - a fresh cycle of school, work, and even Church activities. In our culture, we are used to planning and setting goals for our lives. God often plays a very insignificant role in these decisions. Hence, he becomes the "God of the Gaps." In other words, God is only welcomed or pursued at the margins of life – in times of trouble, at the end of life, etc. In fact, for many, those gaps are getting smaller! No wonder many believe 'religion' is irrelevant!

goodbye, august
hello, september

Deuteronomy 4:23 states: Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image...

Unless the Lord is central in our lives, we tend to make up other 'gods' that fill the vacuum. What is a 'god'? Anything that we value, adore, worship. How do we determine the 'gods' in our lives? A couple diagnostic questions may help:

1. What do we spend our money, time, and energy on?
2. What do we daydream about?

These are our significant and valued activities, possessions, and desires... our 'gods.'



For many, looking at our 'gods' in such a simple, practical way is shocking, yet can be an important reality check. For many, God plays little or no place in their lives... even those who profess to be believers! So much for Jesus being Lord of our lives. We discover that we, not Jesus, are running our lives!

One of my grade school friends married and had a family. He regularly stated that the most important thing in his life was his marriage and family. Sadly, his marriage broke up. In retrospect, he realized he spent most of his time at work and at sports – not with his wife and family and they (not surprisingly!) drifted apart!

Many Church-going people in our culture are functionally atheists. They live no differently than non-believers – same values, same priorities, etc.

Being a Christian is having a relationship with Jesus Christ. What would your spouse think if someone asked you if you are married and you gave the response – "I think so...?" or "I'm not sure...?" or "I hope so...?" These are common responses to the question, "Are you a Christian?"

It is easy to let ritual replace relationship. As one astute but sardonic observer stated, "Going to Church doesn't make you a Christian any more than going to McDonald's makes you a hamburger!"

Even St. Paul challenged the people of Corinth - *Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. (2 Corinthians 13:5)*

In one of my parishes, I challenged an unchurched guy who came with his wife to get his kid "done" – a.k.a. baptized. I suggested that he pray – "God, if You're real, show Yourself to me in a way that is personal and real!" In less than two weeks he was staunchly converted! If you do not have a relationship with Jesus, ask the Heavenly Father to show Himself to you! You will be amazed at what He will do to reveal Himself and His profound love for YOU!!