

Church, Fun for the Whole Family

BY RON MCGEHEE

I remember going to church with my family. I mean the whole family: me, my mother, father, grandmother, sister, her husband and two kids, my two brothers, their wives and five kids between them, three large cars and lots of patience. We all got there and started to split up with military precision. Preschool for the little ones, Sunday school for the older ones, my parents and grandmother going to the contemporary service with hymnals, and me, my brothers, sister and their spouses going to the rock 'n' roll, younger generation service. We all went our separate ways.

After the service, my sister and brothers' wives picked up the kids and led them to the playground area. My brothers and I went to a men's coffee and discussion group. (A mixture of faith and football... sometimes how faith could help our football teams.) My parents went to choir practice, and my grandmother went to... well, there's a room where all the older women go and... talk? plan the church year? vote on who's been naughty or nice? In any case, she goes somewhere she likes.

On the path to God there are many lanes.
If you're my father, you're in the fast lane
going slow with your turn signal on.

Then we all finish our last-minute goodbyes and pile back into the "Jesus Train." We sit around all trying to find out where we are going to go to eat. Everyone voices their opinions until my father simply tells us where he is going to eat and we can either show up or not—but he's buying. We all somehow show up where he's going. (I would later find out that this usually was a place my mother or grandmother told my father to go earlier.)

When we arrive, we basically take over the restaurant. When all the kids are happy with where they're seated, everyone starts discussing what they are ordering. Then, before we get a chance, the waiters start bringing out trays of food and the line seems to never stop. My father took the liberty of ordering for the whole family. (Mysteriously, most of the plates are favorites of my mother, father and grandmother.) Dad buys, Dad chooses. My father then prays. Not just a simple thank you for this wonderful bounty, but practically a sermon to all within hearing; quoting obscure passages from Habakkuk, and Philemon,



sometimes in the original Hebrew or Greek. Finally, we are able to begin eating our cold food.

My father then begins the discussion of all we learned today. Everyone chimes in at once and it looks like the stock market just before closing. The kids pass out their drawings. My sister and sisters-in-law talk about keeping the house in order. As she takes a piece of chicken from my plate, my grandmother talks about how the younger generation must honor their elders more. My parents say how we can learn so much by studying the hymns and their historical context. My brothers and I lament the fact that ever since Daniel defeated the

lions in the den so has everyone else. (I'm from Michigan and I root for the Lions every year; and every year I wonder, why God, why!?) We all believe our points are more important than the others. Then, finally, my niece begins singing "Jesus loves me, this I know. For the Bible tells me so..." We stop talking and listen. So

does everyone else in the restaurant. When she finishes we—and the rest of the restaurant patrons—applaud. We can all agree on that.

All of us can have our unique experiences at church and with God. But it all comes together with Jesus Christ and what He did for us on the cross. On the path to God there are many lanes. Some fast, some slow, some confused, some enlightened, and if you're my father, you're in the fast lane going slow with your turn signal on. ❖

Ron McGehee has made a number of guest television appearances including NBC's Last Comic Standing 2, Comedy Central and ABC Family, has starred in and co-produced the reality show I Love Kerri.tv and has written for The Late, Late Show with Craig Kilborn, The Carson Daily Show, and Jimmy Kimmel. Ron tours extensively performing stand-up, and speaking at churches and colleges, bringing his life lessons and multicultural humor to audiences nationally. For more information about Ron McGehee, visit www.funnyron.com.