

# The good ship “No Worries” is sinking



I live in Australia where it's usually assumed we're all largely apathetic about traditional religion in general and the Christian church in particular.

Maybe that's because we've never had a civil war, or fought off an enemy land invasion, or suffered from a violent sectarian uprising (unless you count the enemy land invasion perpetrated by British colonists upon indigenous Australians, which we should). Nevertheless, we're pretty chill about everything.

I mean, we proudly gave the world one of our favourite sayings – “No worries”.

Our struggle isn't warring religious viewpoints. It's getting people interested in religion at all.

A new **study** has just been released asking Australians what kinds of things are likely to pique their interest in religious faith. The results are fascinating. They found,



***“Observing people with genuine faith is the greatest attraction to investigating spirituality. Second is experiencing personal trauma or a significant life change.”***

More interesting were the things that turned people off being interested in religion. They hate apologetic discussions and debates. And “the top repellent to Australians investigating is public figures or celebrities who are examples of that faith. This is followed by miraculous stories of healings or supernatural occurrences.”

Wait, what?

***They hate combative apologetic presentations designed win arguments, testimonies from Christian celebrities and miraculous stories?***

Huh? Isn't that what we've been pouring all our time and money into lately?

Apologetics film series and websites, testimonials by sportspeople or pop singers, and books about people who went to heaven and came back. You mean to tell me it's just turning them off religion?

The nation of no worries isn't attracted to dramatic and miraculous stories at all.

***The thing that actually triggers an interest in investigating spirituality and religion is seeing ordinary people live out a genuine faith.***

Well, that's nice, until you read more of their findings.

The same McCrindle Research study found that only 59% of all Australians identify as Christian. That's not a huge number, but, hey, it's encouraging, right?

It's over half the population.

Of that bunch, 14%, while nominally Christian by background, see themselves as spiritual, but not religious. So, not really Christian at all. We're down to 45%.

You can then shave off another 23% who never attend church nor practice their faith openly. That leaves 22%.

Of that group, 15% identify as a “churchgoer”, attending church about once a month. That's nothing to sneeze at, but they're not the most committed cohort.

So we're down to just 7% who say they are deeply committed to their Christian faith.

So put those two findings together.

- The thing that actually triggers an interest in investigating spirituality and religion is seeing ordinary people live out a genuine faith.
- Only 7% of the population are committed to living out a genuine faith.

We're investing in websites, think-tanks, TV shows, and other resources, many of which major on testimonials of miracles and/or the faith journeys of minor celebrities. Meanwhile, our greatest resource, the ordinary committed Christian population, shrinks exponentially.

*our biggest problem is a discipleship crisis.*

I know some of my fellow Australian church leaders will read the McCrindle report and see it as good news. They'll be heartened to read that nearly 60% of all Australians identify with Christianity. They'll be relieved to hear that Aussies are open to discussing religious faith and are impressed with Christians who live out a genuine faith.

I can't help but think we're like a sinking ship named "No Worries".

Our most attractive quality – genuine believers – is shrinking, and we seem willing to do *anything* other than focus on supporting and nurturing ordinary people to live out their faith, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, champion the voiceless, and share their faith with others.

The good ship "No Worries" is sinking and as the water pours in from every angle we can't keep assuming that doing the same thing we've been doing is going to plug those holes. It's going to catch up with us sooner or later.

Rev Dr Mike Frost