A Vanishing Act

*Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered. Proverbs 28:26*

There are more than a fair number of companies that when an employee leaves, conduct what is known as an "exit interview." The purpose of such a meeting is to investigate what went wrong and what went right. In this way a company may develop a plan which will, in the future, enable them to keep qualified personnel.   
  
To the best of my knowledge there is no church body that does the same sort of thing. More often than not, when somebody decides to leave the church, they either transfer to another congregation or they just disappear. Oftentimes, it takes years before someone checks the attendance records of the church and finds out this individual or family have vanished. Of course, by then, the people are long since gone, and it's too late to do much of anything.  
  
Recently, the Pew Research Center decided to change all that. They went after a great many folk who had left the church and asked them *why*. When the results were tallied, more than half of those folks said they yanked their membership because they had lost their faith in God.  
  
The smart folks at the Research Center thought that losing your faith was a pretty big deal, so they took their interviews one step further and asked, "What special factor or event brought about your loss of faith?"  
  
Among the more frequently listed replies were not liking organized religion. In that category were things like "too many Christians doing un-Christian things" and "the church is a business and seems to be all about money."  
  
There were also those who had become too smart for God and the church. Those folks said that "common sense" or "believing science trumps miracles" or "lack of evidence" or "learning about evolution in college" was enough to separate them from the Lord.  
  
Those reasons are a sad thing. They are especially sad when they are true and are our fault.  
  
\* When members of a Christian congregation act just like the people of the world, it is understandable that some will question the legitimacy of the Gospel.  
\* When it seems like our highest priority is the raising of funds rather than the saving of souls, people will get turned off.  
\* When our answer to every legitimate question is always -- "That's an area where we just have to make a blind leap of faith" -- people will sometimes conclude our faith is built on quicksand and not the solid, factual story of the Redeemer's life, death and resurrection.  
  
With minor modifications, we can remove many of these "reasons" from the list of complaints. On the other hand, it is most difficult for us to do anything to modify the direction of a person who wants to leave the church because that is simply what he or she wants to do. If we remove one reason, they will come up with another. And if we remove every complaint, they will simply and quietly disappear. It is especially for these people that we pray today.  
  
**THE PRAYER:** Dear Lord, we pray the hearts of those who have grown hard and cold to their Redeemer might be changed. While there is time for them, may they repent of their sins and be returned to the faith that can save. This we ask in Jesus' Name. Amen.