

#108 “Dangers of the Church Growth Movement, Part 2”

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False belief #5

Man is the center of attention and the architect of his success.

God is horribly dishonored by teaching that says that God died for us because we were valuable. The truth is that we had no worth and have no worth apart from the love of God in grace and mercy reaching out toward us. It was while we were yet sinners at enmity with God that He died for us (Romans 5:8,10). The gospel is a self-help and self-esteem killer. We are to die to our old selves and be made new creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17) whose identity we are to literally take on (Galatians 2:20).

God is lowered in worship that is geared toward making us feel worshipful rather than focusing on sound doctrine and the holiness of God. Lyrics of songs in seeker-driven churches tend to be about our experience and we, my, me, I, ours, and mine. The songs infrequently ascribe glory to God for His faithfulness, provision, and awesome attributes. Worship becomes about our experience in worship rather than about the God Whom we worship. Worship is not to be about what it can do to and for us, but it is about encountering God and praising Him in spirit and in truth. There is a great difference.

Man is also treated as if he is without sin and free from Satanic influence. This is seen in the belief that if we just give the “seekers” enough facts and information, then they will make an informed decision to follow Christ. We ought to give all of the reasons for belief, but ultimately it is a spiritual battle that God must choose to win in a person’s heart. There must be a due emphasis on the need for a spiritual enlightening and the opening of the eyes and heart to see the truth. But such talk would not be seeker-friendly. Who wants to know that they are captives of the devil and deceived (2 Timothy 2:26)?

It is not merely enough to profess Christ and follow Him by going to church. A person must possess Christ, and this is ultimately only a work of God. Thus we must rely upon His Spirit to do the work through the proclamation and declaration of His Word.

This lack of a dependence upon the Holy Spirit is also a reason for the lack of prayer in many seeker-driven churches. Prayer is an acknowledgement that we need the power of God to accomplish what we could not do of ourselves. Though prayer is said to be important in seeker-driven churches, it doesn’t take long when attending a few such churches to realize that prayer is not particularly seeker-friendly. It just doesn’t happen much if at all in the service or during the week. The prayer meeting is a dinosaur to the church growth proponents.

I have seen many seeker-driven pastors give a meager gospel presentation which simply calls people to ask for forgiveness through Jesus so that they can improve their relationships and get over past disappointments. If they bother to preach the gospel at all,

they rely heavily upon creating the right moment through mood, music, gimmicks, and presentation. They are the ones trying to grow the church rather than letting Christ build His church through His ordained means. When we rely upon the Spirit and the Word of God and someone turns to Christ, we can have confidence that it indeed is miraculous and a work of God, because who in their right mind would choose persecution over pleasure and a loss of control over control?

When it comes to seeking God's will, the seeker-driven model says that we can just build it, engineer it, or vision cast and make it happen. This is absolutely contradictory to the Biblical model, which says that unless God builds it, we labor in vain (Psalm 127:1). The understanding of insufficiency apart from God and utter dependence upon Him for wisdom, direction, and strength is taken out of the equation (Zechariah 4:6, John 15:5). Church growth experts are the architects of their own "success." It requires no faith, really. This is a problem because whatever is not from faith is sin (Romans 14:23).

False belief #6

Theology is irrelevant when it comes to helping a person grow to Christian maturity.

Does it matter that we are under grace and not under law? Does it matter that man is made up of body, soul, and spirit? Does it matter that we have a mediator in Christ? Does it matter that Christ indwells us? Does it matter that discipline is commanded to be part of church practice? Does it matter whether God created the world or whether evolution was responsible? Does it matter whether wives should submit to their husbands? If so, why? These are just a few theological issues that have serious ramifications for how we live and operate in our marriages, families, and work places. We wonder why it seems like Christians lack a Christian worldview. A Christian worldview is built upon theology and a thorough understanding of the Word of God. This is why Christians fail to know how to help others who are struggling, why they buy into heretical doctrines and fall for every wind of doctrine, and why Christianity doesn't seem to get passed on to the next generation. It is at its core a body of knowledge that must be understood, believed, and applied. The faithful are to pass it on to others who are faithful who can then, in turn, teach others also (2 Timothy 2:2). If we say that the body of knowledge doesn't matter as long as we are successful relationally, financially, and in the workplace, we have failed at the Great Commission, which has nothing to say about earthly success and financial prosperity. It is about making disciples and teaching them all that Christ commanded us, even that which isn't palatable or deemed relevant by the "seeker."

False belief #7

Theology can be separated from methodology.

This is the argument church growth proponents give to justify their "innovation" and "creativity." They think that they can change how evangelism works, how discipleship happens, how victory over the flesh occurs, and how prayer ought to be done. Theology is an all-encompassing reality in that the Bible impacts all of life, including all areas of

church practice and function. To separate methodology from theology is to give license to any philosophy or idea. Its result is to draw the attention to the innovator rather than the God Who has spoken definitively in His Word. It makes it possible to add and take away from the Scripture, a dangerous action (Revelation 22:18). The Bible stands in judgment over us, not we over it. How utterly tragic it is for a pastor or church of all people to decide that they can make the rules! Yes, we should become all things to all people so that we can win some but never in violation of the Word of God or at the expense of sound doctrine. Isn't a violation of sound doctrine called heresy? It is time we call church growth innovation and creativity the liberal, sinful license that it really is.

Conclusion

We must understand that the church growth movement isn't as innocuous as it might at first seem. It is more than just a sermon with less Bible content and a service with more upbeat music. It is more than doing dramas, dance, and multimedia presentations instead of more traditional forms of worship. It is a doctrinal shift away from being God-centered toward a man-centered perspective. Theology is minimized, and doctrine is declared largely irrelevant. The gospel is minimized if not altered, and the whole counsel of God is not taught. Worship is perverted to entertainment, and the sufficiency of Christ and His Word is challenged in all areas of church life and practice. The future is bleak because those who call themselves Christians today hardly know the Bible at all. If doctrine, for which Jesus, the disciples, and many faithful believers after them died, is not the core matter, then what is?