

## Should We Be A “Full-Service” Church?

Our consumer culture drives us to search for a congregation that offers multiple ministries and programs. But the Gospel gives us no such mandate.

The religious world is one of fierce competition — just like the world of car sales. Dealerships compete for business by offering friendly salespeople, an up-to-date service center, free loaners, and comfortable waiting rooms.

Sometimes, we treat churches the same way. I get calls asking what our congregation offers. Do you have a sports program? A youth minister? Day care? A mother’s morning out program? Divorce recovery? Praise bands? Are we a full-service church?

Then I see preachers on TV, with high-priced suits, asking for money to buy high-priced jets for their work. Unlike them, I don’t stand before an audience of 10,000 or 20,000 on Sunday — not even 1,000. I don’t have a staff to write my sermons, do my research, or make hospital visits. I don’t have a drawer full of amusing stories to liven up my sermons, or material to preach on the gospel of health and wealth.

Then who am I, and what do I have to offer? I am just a preacher of the Gospel of Christ, “not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16). I have “determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 1:13).

I preach for a congregation of people who love the Lord and who love one another. I preach for people who come to worship assemblies and classes to learn, to worship, to encourage one another, to express thanksgiving to our God. The congregation may not be large, but the members have large hearts.

Do I want people to feel good after they leave? Certainly, but the Gospel doesn’t always make people feel good. Thousands were “cut to the heart” when Peter convicted them of sin in Acts 2. People rushed upon Paul and stoned him more than once for preaching the Gospel.

If emotion is what it is all about, then I guess the mega-churches and their entertainment would win the debate. But as I search the New Testament, I find no such mandate for God’s church.

There are times when preaching may make people feel bad or guilty. Paul instructed Timothy to “preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:2-4). We see this in churches that go into communities to find out what people want a church to offer and then design a church around what pleases people rather than what pleases God.

The true competition isn't between churches for the most worshippers, but between God and Satan for the souls of the lost. Satan is a good strategist. He knows how to please people. He knows how to get preachers to tell people what they want to hear. He knows how to mix the Bible with pop psychology. He knows how to wow the crowds with great entertainment and pleasing sermons. He even has his own preachers (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

If it's okay with you, I'll stick with being a simple preacher, preaching the simple Gospel. I don't think of myself as being either eloquent or powerful, just someone who loves the Lord and loves the souls of men.

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