

CHURCH GROWTH

Our Views on Church Growth - Why has the recent culture of Australian evangelicalism been so susceptible to fads? Why are evangelical churches so keen to jump on every bandwagon? Why do our people so eagerly rush to buy the latest book, CD, or cheap bit of knockoff merchandise concocted by the marketing geniuses who have taken over the Christian publishing industry? Why do Christian Publishers deliberately dumb down the message of the cross, made soft and generic and non-threatening the life-transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ so that they don't rebuke anyone's sin; they don't endanger anyone's shallowness; they don't threaten anyone's comfort zone; and they don't challenge anyone's worldliness.

The reason is simple...That's the way both the publishers and the people want it and that's the way the Seeker Sensitive Church Growth Movement has presented what ought to be life-changing truth.

That is the culture the evangelical movement deliberately created when it bought the notion that religion is something to be sold to consumers like a commodity. It created an environment where unspiritual and unscrupulous men could easily make merchandise of the gospel. It conditioned people to be like "children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting." That's Ephesians 4:14, and it is a perfect biblical description of the faddism that has overtaken the evangelical movement in recent years. Without a doubt one of the greatest of these "fads" is now commonly known as "The Purpose Driven Movement."

Despite the pressure to conform placed upon us as a church... both from unsuspecting members and from affiliated churches... we at Grace Community Bible Church openly declare our unwillingness to be a part of the Purpose Driven Fad.

Having investigated its message and its model, the sad conclusion is that the gospel according to Hybels and Warren falls far short of the biblical paradigm. Influenced more by pragmatic business principles than by prescribed biblical precepts, it is little wonder that seeker-driven churches are both numerically vast and spiritually shallow. Christ, of course, promised that He would build His church (Matt. 16:18). However, "it is obvious that the building must be according to His plan. Attempting to build the church by human means only competes with the work of Christ."

Instead of always looking for new ways to do ministry, pastors and evangelists should content themselves with studying and applying the biblical principles for evangelism— being ever mindful of their God-given calling. God has already given His church the instructions they need. When they invent their own instructions, the end result is guaranteed to fall short of His standards.



As Richard Mayhue aptly concludes:

The increase of probing, hard questions that pastors want to ask this very visible, "consumer" oriented church pastor about his ministry basis and style occasioned this article. Our fear is that if the next generation takes the path Hybels now travels [and Warren too], it will eventually arrive at the same destination as the modernist movement did earlier this century in .

In other words, the seeker-sensitive movement is quickly moving toward moral compromise and spiritual oblivion. The fact that it attracts large crowds merely suggests that its taking a lot of people down with it.