

Are Buffet-Style Churches Making Believers Lazy?

Not a fan of early mornings? That's OK. Many churches offer both an early morning and late morning service. Too busy on Sundays? Not to worry. Just fit a Saturday evening service into your schedule. Tied up every day of the week? It's OK. Hit the Internet and simply watch a sermon online, at your leisure, no inconveniencing yourself required.

All this may sound great at first blush, but is our culture making worship too convenient? Religion and culture expert Dr. Alex McFarland says the danger is very real that this is happening.

"Ten years ago, the big buzz was to go to two services to meet congregants' needs," McFarland says. "Now, it's three services or more, with perhaps a Saturday night or Thursday night service added into the mix as well. Pastors are now saying that the idea of having one service on a Sunday morning is something many people find inconvenient, so churches must make worship more convenient. But is this the right approach?

"Certainly we can worship God anywhere, any time and in any location, and God calls us to do just this, but there is something important in recognizing that there are some things in life that ought to require us to inconvenience ourselves and put some skin in the game. Purposefully setting aside time to stop my world and worship God is something for which convenience must never be my criteria."

McFarland is quick to note that there is nothing inherently wrong with service times outside of the traditional times, and he emphasizes that worship should be constant. The danger, he says, is embracing an approach in which worship must fit around our life schedules rather than reorganizing our life to

prioritize worship.

“The Christian life is not convenient, and it was never meant to be,” he continued. “Was it convenient for Jesus Christ to walk the road to Calvary? We have a Savior who took on the form of man and underwent the most horrific humiliation and death for us. Such a Savior is worthy of our worship—and worthy of our inconveniencing ourselves.”