

Beer-Based Worship Services

Explore Post-Christian Fix

You probably know some parishioners who get drunk on Saturday night and show up for church with saintly smiles on Sunday morning—but what about those that get drunk *at church* on Sunday night?

I wasn't shocked when I read about a special event at a Tulsa church that includes beer. More and more churches are meeting in pubs or otherwise sanctioning a glass of suds during fellowships. But East Side Christian Church is taking the concept to a whole new level, opening the door to worship Jesus with hymns and ale in their mouths at the very same time.

reports the church organized "Beer and Hymns Sunday" as it kicks off a discussion about the future of the Christian church around the world. In speaking about this stunt, Evan Taylor, outreach pastor at East Side, says, "We like to rattle the cage a little bit."

"Everybody's welcome. No questions are banned. No holds barred," says Michael Riggs, senior pastor at First Christian Church of Downtown Tulsa, which is also participating in a weeklong event during which several area churches are hosting Christian Piatt, who just put out a new book called *postChristian*. "Just come and respect each other's opinions, and just have a good honest conversation about God while having a few beers at the same time."

Three-Beer Limit, ID Required

Apparently, there's a three-beer limit and IDs will be checked at the door. I guess that's supposed to be a safeguard of some sort but in reality three beers is quite plenty to get more than a buzz. I'm not having the teetotalism debate here, but

even Christians who enjoy a beer or glass of wine now and then should be concerned about a bunch of church folk gathering on Sunday night to throw back brewskies in the name of Jesus.

Piatt is at the center of the beer-sipping stunt. I guess post-Christians drink beer in church. Sorry, I don't mean to be sarcastic, but why would any God-loving man or woman want to embrace a post-Christian lifestyle, which is what the title suggests to my mind. In reality, the goal of the book is to fix what's wrong with the church—and God knows there's plenty wrong with the church—but inviting the community to Sunday night worship to get an alcohol-induced buzz is not the answer. It's just not.

“People are more curious than anything,” Riggs says. “It's not a big drunk fest. It's just going to a nice time to have a beer and sing some old hymns at the same time.”

Call me old fashioned. I just can't wrap my mind around drinking beer and singing old hymns in church. I understand arguments about reaching the culture where they are, but not at the sake of becoming like the world. Jesus said His disciples were “not of the world” (John 17:16) and Paul, speaking by the Holy Spirit, cautioned us not to conform to the pattern of this world but to be renewed transformed by the renewing of our mind (see Rom. 12:2).

Culture Should Bow to Jesus

Why is it so necessary for the church and the gospel to fit into modern-day culture? Modern-day culture should not dictate the messages we preach or the outreaches we arrange. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not obligated to meet the culture where it is—the culture is obligated to bow a knee to Jesus Christ.

That doesn't mean we can't get creative in how we present the gospel or take into consideration cultural understandings. Paul said, “For though I am free from all men, I have made

myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:19-22).

Still, we're not talking about reaching out to the Jews or the Greeks or the Muslims or the Hindus. This beer-sipping stunt is in the heartland of America—and we don't need to include alcohol to be culturally relevant, either. Also keep in mind that Paul also said, "Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). (You could easily substitute wine with beer or hard liquor.) Somehow I don't think Paul invited Greeks and Jews to the temple with a three-glass-of-wine limit to hash out their philosophical differences. The point is, as Paul said, "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify" (see 1 Cor. 10:23).

Are beer-based outreaches really edifying in the end? If we compromise the purity and holiness of the Christian faith to win souls, are we really leading them into a true salvation after the bottle of beer is empty? Or are we merely compromising the gospel in the name of soul-winning without fruit that remains?

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