

Is This Reality TV Show Making a Mockery of Christian Courtship?

While many in America are watching *The Bachelor* this winter, a Christian version is set to hit the airwaves this summer with a twist on the popular reality TV show.

It Takes a Church, with 2014 Grammy Award nominee **Natalie Grant**, is set to debut on GSN midyear. GSN is now casting for what it calls “an exciting, family-friendly dating show that takes place in the best community churches in America.”

If you “belong to an amazing church filled with a lively, fun congregation” or if you “have a dynamic **pastor** who inspires you every single day,” GSN wants to hear from you. Your **church** could be part of the latest 60-minute Christian reality TV program that will document efforts to find a “romantic partner” for the show’s star. At each church, the **pastor** will ask members to play matchmaker.

According to the *Los Angeles Times*, at the end of the competition, the single person in question will have to choose his or her favorite romantic partner, and the member of the congregation who recommended the match will win a donation for the **church**.

“I’m so excited to host *It Takes a Church* and have the opportunity to interact with churches all across America to bring a family-friendly show based on **Christian** faith and values,” Grant says. “**Church** has been such an anchor and source of hope in my own life, and I look forward to showing the sense of community that can be found in the local **church**.”

I’m certainly not blasting Grant or GSN for this endeavor. But I won’t say the concept of what is essentially a **Christian**

dating game doesn't bother me. Why should churches get sucked into spending their time matchmaking on prime-time TV for the promise of a financial prize? I'm not saying the show is inherently evil in any way. But I am concerned the **church** is getting distracted from its purpose—saving the lost and making disciples—by the glaring lights of Hollywood. As I've said before, I was once invited to star in a reality TV show. I declined. I could not find any redeeming value in the broadcast.

Of course, not all Christian reality shows are created equal. Some do have redeeming value, like *The Way of the Master* or even *Duck Dynasty*, and not all of them are as blatantly troubling as *Preachers of LA*. But the continued push to drive the reality TV phenomenon into the church—we're seeing everything from *Church Rescue* to *Thicker Than Water* to ex-Mormon shows like *My Five Wives* and *Snake Salvation*, which features snake-handling Pentecostals—gives me pause.

Just think about it for a minute. Do we really need a **Christian** version of *The Bachelor* that goes into actual churches and enlists stay-at-home moms and grannies to select a romantic partner for a handsome guinea pig? Is this God's plan for finding a mate? Does this make a mockery out of Christian courtship at a time when marriage is already under attack? Should we really model the world's methods of finding love?

I don't believe the concept of *It Takes a Church* is particularly edifying to anyone. I believe it's a distraction from true discipleship and outreach programs. I believe it brings Hollywood into the church with glim and glamour more than it takes the **church** into Hollywood with the gospel of salvation. Sure, God is likely to work some good out of it because He's God. But is this the best we can do? What do you think?

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author of several books, including The Making of a Prophet. You can email Jennifer at @ or visit her website here. You can also join Jennifer on Facebook or follow her on Twitter.