

7 Market-Driven Ideals That Defy Biblical Christianity

When I say “market-driven,” I am referring to the contemporary ethos in culture whose only value is infinite growth and production. This market-driven culture is equally in the contemporary evangelical church. This is very different from the Hebraic mindset of the Word of God from which the church should be taking its cues.

The following are the characteristics of this market-driven culture:

1. The market culture celebrates growth more than quality.

In the present market-driven culture, bigger is better, having more is a sign of blessing and human identity, and self-worth arises out of the amount of possessions one has.

In biblical Christianity, obedience to the will of God is the highest goal. That being said, the focus of the New Testament is on equipping the saints for the work of the ministry and making disciples, not just gathering big crowds that come from good event planning, good location and having access and relevance to growing communities.

Although God wants every seat filled in church buildings, He does not want that to be the ultimate goal but rather as a means to an end, which is making disciples who will change the world.

2. The market culture favors competition rather than humility.

The present market economy thrives on competition, which ensures the highest quality of customer satisfaction and service because people will shop somewhere else in a free-market system if they are not satisfied. While this is a good

quality for business, it is not healthy for the body of Christ since it can cause pastors, churches and denominations to be in competition with one another for membership. This is against the prayer of Jesus in John 17:20-23 when He said the world will know that He was sent to the world when the church is one with Him and with each other. Competition among leaders is also condemned by the apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 3:4-5.

3. The market culture glorifies accomplishments more than essence of being.

The market-driven culture may make for a robust economy, but it does not make for healthy humans. Even Christianity and some of its movements have been sucked into the performance trap that equates performance with human worth. Biblical Christianity teaches that the works that please God emanate out of a broken and contrite heart, as Scripture urges us to continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ (Is. 66:2-3; 2 Pet. 3:18). Jesus condemned the Pharisees who only had outward works without inward holiness (Matthew 23). He even said that some who do wonderful works in His Name will be turned away from heaven if they had no experiential knowledge of Him (Matt. 7:21-22). Truly we are human beings before we are human doers.

4. The market culture celebrates individualism rather than community.

With the spirit of competition that arises out of the market culture comes individualism. Scripture admonishes every person to look out for the things of others (Phil. 2:1-4). Christianity elevates community over individualism, as both the Old and New Testaments teach, that God's blessings and purpose flow in the context of the life of His nation and body (Acts 2:42-47; 1 Cor. 12). Hence, if a person was outside the camp of Israel they were considered cursed, not blessed (Num. 12:14). And if a person were not part of the life of the local church, they would not even have known the Scriptures, because

individuals at that time rarely owned their own copy.

Reading and hearing the Word usually was a community event as part of the liturgy of worship services, because it was too expensive for the average believer to own their own Old Testament scroll or New Testament gospels and epistles.

5. The market culture requires conformity to global trends rather than uniqueness.

Because of technology the world is “flat” and, as a result, there is presently much conformity in style, dress, business, entertainment, music, science, philosophy and ethics. Although biblical Christianity encourages community, it values a unity in diversity based on the rich, unique gifts of individuals, ethnicities and cultures. God created people with different ethnicities, who live in different regions of the Earth, who are equipped with unique redemptive gifts for the good of humanity and glory of God. The early church did not conform to cultural norms that were contrary to Scripture, as they refused to worship the Roman emperor, nor would they worship the materialistic god of mammon. For this they were persecuted. But apostles, such as Peter and Paul, would rather die than compromise their faith through conformity to worldly culture (Rom. 12:1-3).

6. The market culture celebrates wealth-generated consumerism rather than simplicity.

This present market culture encourages people to become consumers who place much of their intrinsic worth on their ability to purchase items for pleasure whenever they want. Many have even taught that one of the primary proofs of faith is the ability to live opulent lives and be financially prosperous.

The biblical emphasis for the Christian is stewardship of the Earth's goods rather than consuming them for pleasure. The cultural mandate in Gen. 1:28 teaches us that God expected

Adam to steward the created order, not consume it or destroy it for selfish pleasure.

7. The market culture glorifies human ability above creature dependency.

The market-driven culture is the grandchild of the 19th-century philosophy of human progress with its false belief that human ingenuity and scientific progress would bring a utopia to this world. The 20th century blew that theory apart as humans demonstrated that the more technologically advanced they became, the closer they came to destroying one another and annihilating the planet. World Wars I and II witnessed the killing of millions of people, and the advent of the atomic bomb has made it possible for the whole Earth to be destroyed many times over.

On the other hand, biblical Christianity teaches us that the human heart is inherently wicked, and those who trust in fleshly wisdom and strength instead of on the Lord will not be blessed on the Earth (Jer. 17:5-10).

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