

How We Can Disrupt the Consumer Christianity That's Infiltrating the Church

It's no secret that North American Christianity has a ring of consumerism to it. It can be a self-centered, "what will you provide for me" religion that invites churchgoers to move from church to church until they find what most pleases them. Here are six ways to counter that tendency:

- 1. Critique as needed, but offer hope and transformation.** When the gospel bids us to take up our cross and deny ourselves (Matt. 16:24), we cannot ignore a Christianity that seems to put self at the center. On the other hand, we help no one if our approach is simply to blast away at the problem and offer no sense of forgiveness, hope and change.
- 2. Don't miss the Bible's teachings on sin, lostness and grace.** I don't know many preachers who intentionally ignore these topics in their sermons, but I'm not sure we always help people see the depth of their lostness without Christ. As long as people fail to see their desperate need for Jesus, they'll lean toward self-centeredness.
- 3. Strive for excellence in all you do as a church.** None of us is perfect, and the church must be a place where hurting, flawed people can come. At the same time, though, we sometimes settle for mediocrity in how we do church—and then wonder why no one pays attention to what we do. Do church well, but do it to glorify God rather than to attract consumers.
- 4. Reject the spirit of competition among churches.** I saw it first as a pastor (and if I'm honest, I must admit that I played the game, too), and I still see it as I speak around the country. Too many church leaders and

members build themselves up by tearing down sister congregations; that is, they appeal to consumers by showing how their “product” is better than others. In my judgment, consumerism would not be as strong if we promoted and honored other congregations that preach the gospel.

5. **Work with other pastors to identify “shoppers.”** My point here is that some church members move from church to church in the same community, coming and going whenever they feel a church has not met their needs. If we pastors allow them to move their membership around the city without anyone’s raising questions about their track record, we’re unintentionally promoting consumerism ourselves.
6. **Be upfront with potential members of your church.** If we want to help believers see that church is not solely about us, we need to make this issue a front-door one. A strong membership class that calls potential members to Christlike living and sacrificial obedience may not solve the issue fully, but it will go a long way in the right direction.

What are your thoughts about this topic? {eoa}

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