
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: ***Should churches use gimmicks to attract people?***

The fashionable thing for churches to do today, in order to attract people, is to use some sort of gimmick which has nothing to do with the Bible. As I drive down the roads near my house, here are some things I have seen:

- One church is selling pumpkins. When it's not selling pumpkins in the fall, it has, from time to time, had a blow-up Jungle-Jim for kids to play on.
- Another church has a day-care for children and advertises "Mother's Day Out" to give mothers a break. This gimmick attracts people to come to this church.
- Another church in the area has a coffee bar. As you walk in, you may stop off and get a gourmet cup of hot, steaming coffee and take this into the auditorium with you as you sit down to be entertained with an exciting service – a service complete with strobe lights, movie screens, energetic music and performances. The services of this church are advertised as "caffeinated."
- Another church sent an advertisement to my house recently. The attractive postcard read: "Two great reasons to visit GraceWay this Fall."

This caught my attention right away, because I thought the advertisement would be presenting scriptures. In other words, I thought this church would be using Bible passages to show me two good reasons I should consider attending their services. To my disappointment, there were no scriptures used at all. None! Instead, the first "great" reason given to encourage me to come to GraceWay was "*October Missions Focus*." Several sermons are going to be presented discussing the "who-what-where-why-and –how" of modern missions. The second "great" reason given for me to come to GraceWay was called "Fall Fling." This is advertised as "family fun" featuring "lots of games, food and CANDY" (in capital letters).

Here's the question we're asking on Bible Talk this week: Is it right for churches to use such gimmicks to attract people to their organizations? If Jesus and the apostles were alive on the earth today, would they use coffee bars, "caffeinated music," drama plays, games, food and candy to attract people ... OR ... would they merely preach the words of God? What would Jesus do?

John 6

I invite your attention to Jn 6. In this chapter Jesus was preaching for so long and the hour grew so late in the day the apostles wanted to send the multitudes away. Jesus realized the multitudes needed some food to eat, but the place was a deserted place and there was no food available except five barley loaves and two small fish. Jesus took these food items and performed a miracle. With these few loaves and fish Jesus fed over five thousand people.

The next day, this multitude found Jesus and wanted to follow Him some more. Here's what Jesus said to them:

John 6:26

26 Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.

Jesus is here accusing the multitudes of following after Him because they received free food. He also said they were not following Him because they were convinced it was the right thing to do. Jesus refused to feed them any more food. Listen to what happened:

John 6:66

66 From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.

In other words, when the free food was not offered any more, the multitudes stopped following Jesus.

This is why gimmicks should not be used by churches to attract people. Gimmicks will certainly work if the object is to get a large group of people together. But the responsibility of the church is to be the "pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15), not just attract people together. Jn 6 demonstrates that when the free food is cut off, the multitudes will go away. When the gimmicks stop, so will people stop coming. If only the truth of the gospel is preached, multitudes will not come. Jesus said:

John 3:19-20

19 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

The apostle Paul wrote this:

1 Corinthians 2:1-2

1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God.

2 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

In other words, neither Paul nor any of the other apostles used gimmicks to attract people. They merely preached the gospel – the truth. If people wanted the truth, the apostles had it. If they wanted entertainment or free food, they would have to go elsewhere.

The fact of the matter is: Not one single person is converted by gimmicks. Neither Jesus nor the apostles used gimmicks to attract people. They merely preached the truth. It is a waste of the church's resources to use gimmicks to attract worldly people who will leave anyway when the gimmick has ceased. People who are attracted by gimmicks are not the sort of people who will obey the Lord and be faithful until death (Rev 2:10). On the other hand, those who are attracted by truth will come hear the truth whether there is a gimmick offered or not. Why? Because they're interested in truth.

John 8:31-32

31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.

32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Since the truth is what makes men free, the church should focus on offering the truth of the scriptures to the world – not gimmicks. Games, food, coffee bars, candy, "caffeinated music," and drama plays never saved anyone. The truth, on the other hand, sets men free from sin.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Well ... thanks for listening to our message this week. We invite you to visit our website www.WillOfTheLord.com. There you may download the notes and the audio file of the message you just listened to.

Call again next week when we consider a new subject on ***Bible Talk***.