

The Holy Church

November 18, 2018

"In recent years a new movement within the evangelical church has come into vogue, commonly referred to as 'seeker sensitive.' Generally, this movement has seen a great deal of growth. Many 'seeker' churches are now mega-churches with well-known pastors who are riding a wave of popularity in the evangelical world. The seeker-sensitive movement claims millions of conversions, commands vast resources, continues to gain popularity, and seems to be attracting millions of unchurched people into its fold."

"So, what is this movement all about? Where does it come from? And, most importantly, is it biblical? Basically, the seeker-sensitive church tries to reach out to the unsaved person by making the church experience as comfortable, inviting, and non-threatening to him as possible. The hope is that the person will believe in the gospel. The idea behind the concept is to get as many unsaved people through the door as possible, and the church leadership are willing to use nearly any means to accomplish that goal." —GotQuestions.org, "Should a Church be Seeker Sensitive?"

"In this method the church attempts to evangelize the community by attracting people to its buildings, services, events, or programs. The idea behind this approach is that you offer people what they want or enjoy and they come to your church." —The Keystone Project, keystoneproject.org

"Shortly after my daughter started training for her job at Disneyland, she noticed it attracts such a diversity of people – culturally, racially, and even in terms of sexual orientation – because 'Disney makes everyone feel accepted.' I couldn't help but blurt out 'that's what the church should be – the place where everyone wants to be because they feel loved and accepted...' Before I could finish my sentence, she finished it for me. '... but the church is often the last place they want to be because they fear they will be judged.' Sadly, Dana is right."

—5 Lessons the Church Can Learn from Disney, 3 - Make It A Safe Place For Everyone

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 NASB

3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy [KJV - falling away / ESV - rebellion] comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

Jude 1:3-4 ESV

3 Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

4 For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Is the church service for believers or unbelievers?

Should the message and the exercise of our faith be altered to be appealing and non-offensive to the unbeliever?

Ancient Church Orders

"The early Church Orders were systematic manuals of disciplinary and liturgical rules for which the collective authority of the whole apostolate was claimed."

1. **Didache** - 50-70, aka *"The Teaching of the 12 Apostles"*
2. **Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus** - before 235, Bishop of Rome, martyred
3. **Apostolic Constitutions** - 375-380, compiled by Clement, Bishop & Citizen of Rome, Constitutions of the original Apostles

APOSTOLIC TRADITION OF HIPPOLYTUS

"New converts to the faith, who are to be admitted as hearers of the Word, shall first be brought to the teachers before the people assemble. And they shall be examined as to their reason for embracing the faith, and they who bring them shall testify that they are competent to hear the word."

"Inquiry shall then be made as to the nature of their life; whether a man has a wife or is a slave. If he is the slave of a believer and he has his master's permission, then let him be received; but if his master does not give him a good character, let him be rejected. If his master is a heathen, let the slave be taught to please his master, that the word be not blasphemed. If a man has a wife or a woman a husband, let the man be instructed to content himself with his wife and the woman to content herself with her husband. But if a man is unmarried, let him be instructed to abstain from impurity, either by lawfully marrying a wife or else by remaining as he is. But if any man is possessed with demons, he shall not be admitted as a hearer until he is cleansed."

"Inquiry shall likewise be made about the professions and trades of those who are brought to be admitted to the faith. If a man is a pander, he must desist or be rejected. If a man is a sculptor or painter, he must be charged not to make idols; if he does not desist he must be rejected. If a man is an actor or pantomimist, he must desist or be rejected...A charioteer, likewise, who races or frequents races, must desist or be rejected. A gladiator or a trainer of gladiators, or a huntsman [in the wild-beast shows], or anyone connected with these shows, or a public official in charge of gladiatorial exhibitions must desist or be rejected. A heathen priest or anyone who tends idols must desist or be rejected. A soldier of the civil authority must be taught not to kill men and to refuse to do so if he is commanded, and to refuse to take an oath; if he is unwilling to comply, he must be rejected...A harlot or licentious man or one who has castrated himself, or any other who does things not to be named, must be rejected, for they are defiled. A magician must not [even] be brought for examination. An enchanter, an astrologer, a diviner, a soothsayer, a user of magic verses, a juggler, a mountebank, an amulet-maker must desist or be rejected...If a man has a concubine, he must desist and marry legally; if he is unwilling, he must be rejected. If, now, we have omitted anything (any trade?), the facts [as they occur] will instruct your mind; for we all have the Spirit of God."

"Let catechumens spend three years as hearers of the word. But if a man is zealous and perseveres well in the work, it is not the time but his character that is decisive."

“When the teacher finishes his instruction, the catechumens shall pray by themselves, apart from the believers...And when [the catechumens] finish their prayers, they must not give the kiss of peace, for their kiss is not yet pure. Only believers shall salute one another, but men with men and women with women; a man shall not salute a woman.”

“If a catechumen should be arrested for the name of a the Lord, let him not hesitate about bearing his testimony; for if it should happen that they treat him shamefully and kill him, he will be justified, for he has been baptized in his own blood.”

“They who are to be set apart for baptism shall be chosen after their lives have been examined: whether they have lived soberly, whether they have honoured the widows, whether they have visited the sick, whether they have been active in well-doing. When their sponsors have testified that they have done these things, then let them hear the Gospel. Then from the time that they are separated from the other catechumens, hands shall be laid upon them daily in exorcism and, as the day of their baptism draws near, the bishop himself shall exorcise each one of them that he may be personally assured of their purity. Then, if there is any of them who is not good or pure, he shall be put aside as not having heard the word in faith; for it is never possible for the alien to be concealed.”

Is the church service for believers or unbelievers?

Should the message and the exercise of our faith be altered to be appealing and non-offensive to the unbeliever?

- 1. Church is not a religious organization of man’s design. Church is a holy intercourse between God and his people. Church is the habitation of God where God dwells, moves, walks and talks with His people.**

Ephesians 2:20-22 ESV

**20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,
21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.
22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.**

1 Peter 2:5 ESV

5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 4:11-16 ESV

**11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,
12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,
13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,**

14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

2. The ministry of the Church is not performed by the skill, talent or wisdom of man. The ministry and function of the church assembly is supernatural - all by the initiation, unction and power of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 ESV

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;

5 and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord;

6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.

7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

8 For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit,

9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,

10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

11 All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

Colossians 3:14-16 ESV

14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Ephesians 5:18-20 ESV

18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,

19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,

20 giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 8:18-24 ESV

18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,

19 saying, "Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the

gift of God with money!

21 You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.

22 Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you.

23 For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."

24 And Simon answered, "Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."

3. The purity of the individual lives and corporate gathering has a direct bearing on the Holy Spirit's presence and interaction in that gathering.

2 Timothy 2:19 ESV

19 But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."

1 Corinthians 5:6-8 ESV

6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

7 Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

8 Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 ESV

14 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

15 What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?

16 What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you,

18 and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."

4. Church is not by the preference and selection of man. Every church assembly lives and grows by God's schedule, God's agenda, God's methods - not by marketing strategies contrived by man.

1 Corinthians 3:5-9 ESV

5 What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each.

6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.

7 So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

8 He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor.
9 For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.

Acts 2:46-47 ESV

46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,
47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Acts 2:5-13 ESV

5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven.
6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language.
7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?
8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?
9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,
10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome,
11 both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians--we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God."
12 And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"
13 But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."

- The rapid growth of the Church was not the result of human strategy or man's efforts.
- The growth came from God alone. It was supernatural, nothing that man could have imagined, initiated, contrived or controlled.

Acts 5:11-14 ESV

11 And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things [the death of Ananias and Sapphira].
12 Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico.
13 None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem.
14 And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.

Are unbelievers welcomed in church? Always!

1 Corinthians 14:23-25 ESV

23 If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds?
24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all,
25 the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.