

Words of Truth



Exposing The Community/Evangelical Church Movement (Part 1)

By: Brian A. Yeager

Over the years I have been preaching I have exposed the Community Church Movement several times. I have preached lessons about the Willow Creek Community Church, which is the first of its modern kind to get this movement started (<http://www.willowcreek.org/>). Now, as I am researching this movement in the year 2010, I see that there are some changes in terms. For one, Community Churches are also identified under a new term. That term is “Evangelical Churches”. I’ve even noticed the popularity of this terminology in the media. The Westside Community Church here in El Paso says this: “Westside Community Church is an Evangelical Christian church that holds to the clear and historic teachings of the Bible” (<http://www.westsidecommunity.org/about-what.html>).

Why is this important? You will notice that many “popular” false teachers of our day are not using the Community Church label. The “Evangelical Church” label is something they are comfortable using. For example, Joel Osteen is known as an “Evangelical” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joel_Osteen), but you cannot find any labels on his personal website. What you do find with Joel and others in the Community Church Movement is, they try to fit in with every side of most issues/doctrines. The Community/Evangelical Church Movement exists with a mindset of fitting into the member’s faith, rather than THE FAITH (cf. Jude 3). The Community Church serves the community, not the Lord!

The Community Church – Serving Whom?

“In 1975 leaders of Son City, a successful youth program at Park Ridge's South Park Church, decided to create a new ministry for unchurched adults. **A door-to-door survey of the local community taught them why people stayed away from church. Incorporating contemporary music, drama, and multimedia technology, the new congregation first met on October 12, 1975, in Palatine's Willow Creek Theater. Within two years worship services grew from 125 to 2,000 people.** In 1981 the evangelical church moved to its current location in South Barrington and continued to increase in numbers and size on its sprawling campus. By 2000, it drew 15,000 for weekly services.

Led by Pastor Bill Hybels, **Willow Creek Community Church became famous as the prototypical ‘megachurch,’** widely imitated—and criticized—for its entertaining worship style and use of modern marketing strategies. ‘Seeker services’ deliberately target the curious and the unchurched, while members worship at believer-oriented New Community services. **To connect people to the church,** Willow Creek has hundreds of small groups, devoted to everything from Bible study to singles’ fellowship to car repair. The affiliated Willow Creek Association publishes curriculum materials, runs leadership seminars, and encourages thousands of affiliated churches, extending its influence nationwide” (<http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/2382.html>).

“Abundant Living Faith Center (ALFC) is a nondenominational, multicultural church that teaches the life-changing, powerful message of victorious living through faith in God’s Word. In short, we exist to show people just like you how to live the God-kind of life. Here at Abundant Living, you’ll experience a community of relationships, support and motivation. Though we number over 20,000 active members, we’re really just one big family! **We have a wide variety of activities and ministries, for all age groups and interests**, where people can connect and discover friends and support within our church. We believe that church should be an extension of your own family”
(http://www.alfc.com/alfc/our_church/ourstorypurpose/tabid/80/Default.aspx).

Is Serving The People The Purpose Of The Lord’s Church?

The quotes above unequivocally prove that the focus of Community/Evangelical Churches is making people happy. They find out what PEOPLE want and they then make it happen. They reach out to those who want a church of their wants rather than the church of the Lord’s wants. This is backwards! Notice this: *“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen”* (Ephesians 3:14-21).

The church of Christ was founded by Christ (Matthew 16:13-18). The church of Christ is headed by Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23, Ephesians 5:23, and Colossians 1:18). The church of Christ is supposed to be under subjection to Christ (Ephesians 5:24). The Community/Evangelical Church Movement is, as the quotes earlier proved, about being in subjection to the wants of people.

True disciples/Christians (cf. Acts 11:26) are interested in pleasing the Lord (Ephesians 5:8-10 and Colossians 1:10). True disciples realize that you cannot be pleasing to the Lord and the interests of men at the same time (Galatians 1:10). True disciples of the Lord will not survey the people of a community to decide what direction the church should head in. True disciples of the Lord will search the Scriptures to find out what direction the church should be facing (Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 4:4, Luke 11:28, John 5:39, Acts 17:10-11, Colossians 3:17, I Thessalonians 5:21, and II Timothy 3:15-17). Of course, to be of the right mindset to seek the Lord’s authority for all we say and do, we have to cease living to ourselves (Matthew 16:24-26, Luke 6:46, and Colossians 3:1-4; cf. Romans 12:1-2). The Community/Evangelical Movement keeps people focused on their wants! You cannot worship God by doing what you want in worship (Matthew 15:1-9, John 4:23-24, and Colossians 2:18-23).

Conclusion

Every time I conclude an article there is often more that could be said. The same is true with this article. However, we have shown the foundation of this movement, which is the idea of being a people-pleasing church, is all wrong. Even a “good idea” without God’s authority is the wrong idea (II Samuel 7:1-7, Proverbs 14:12, Proverbs 21:2, and I Corinthians 4:6). In our second article on this movement we are going to expose the unity in diversity mindset that these churches are based upon.