

New Study Suggests Many Churches May Not Be in Tune with What People are Most Looking for in Their Church

According to a new [study](#)¹ by Gallup, the single most important thing congregants are looking for at church today is not the worship and not the pastor. It's not the smoke and lights and it's not the hip and relevant youth programs. It's not even the organic, fair trade coffee at the cafe. ***The hottest thing at church today is the preaching.*** Not just any preaching, but preaching grounded in the Scriptures. As *Christianity Today* says, "Despite a new wave of contemporary church buzzwords like relational, relevant, and intentional, people who show up on Sundays are looking for the same thing that has long anchored most services: preaching centered on the Bible."²

For decades, the Western church has been dominated by the "church growth movement,"³ a movement that drew heavily from the business principles of pragmatism. The church growth movement established the goal of having as many people as possible profess faith in Jesus Christ. To do this, it was believed that the local church would have to become more attractive to unbelievers if they were ever going to get them to walk through the doors. This demanded changing the services to make them seeker-friendly, changing the music to make it more contemporary, and even changing the gospel to make it less offensive – to make it more palatable. For many that often meant preaching themes and principles rather than preaching the Bible itself.

For just as long, detractors have expressed the opinion that the problem with the "seeker-sensitive" movement is that no one really seeks after God (Romans 3:11) and that to mistake people's desire for meaning, purpose, happiness, success, self-esteem and fulfillment as a desire for God, flies in the face of the truth that this is absolutely contrary to our sin nature and natural inclinations. (Romans 3:12ff). Rather than watering down the Gospel, what the Christian church ought to be doing, they say, is trusting in the power of the Word itself and that when it is preached in all of its completeness, it will reach into hearts and minds and change lives (Isaiah 55:11).⁴

¹ <http://www.gallup.com/poll/208529/sermon-content-appeals-churchgoers.aspx>

² *Christianity Today*, **The Hottest Thing at Church Is Not Your Pastor or Worship Leader**, April 18, 2017. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2017/april/gallup-hottest-thing-at-church-not-pastor-worship.html>

³ **Church Movements of the Last Fifty Years in the USA**, March 13, 2015

⁴ **The Problem with Seeker Friendly Churches.**
<http://www.crosswalk.com/blogs/christian-trends/the-problem-with-seeker-friendly-churches.html>

Now, new research suggests they may be right and that the church may have gotten it all wrong. While it may have helped to get some unbelievers to visit their local church, what believing Christians have wanted all along, and (they, along with unbelievers have needed), is the straightforward preaching of the Bible and help in how to apply it to their daily lives. Something to think about.

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