

“Let Me Entertain You”

Church In The Twenty-First Century - An Observation

Nov. 19, 2016

Keith Hoar, M. Min.

Today, everybody expects to be entertained, and they expect to be entertained all the time. Business meetings must be snappy and fast moving, with bulleted lists and animated graphics, so attendees do not become bored. Shopping malls and department stores must be engaging. Even grocery stores are designed to be engaging. Their entryways are filled with coffee shops, salad bars, and bistros. Today's stores must amuse as well as sell us merchandise. Politicians must have pleasing video personalities and tell us only what we want to hear. Schools must be extremely careful not to bore young minds that have been conditioned to expect the speed, complexity, and flashy content of modern digital media. Children must be amused their every waking moment. Students must be amused. Workers must be amused. Shoppers must be amused. Even church members must be amused. **Everyone** must be amused, or they will switch. They will switch brands, switch stores, switch channels, switch parties, switch loyalties, and, yes, they will also switch churches. That is the sad intellectual reality of modern society at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

There was a time in the not too distant past when human beings wanted to be saved, or to be improved, or to be freed, or to be educated. But sadly that is no longer true. Today, the world cries out to be entertained. The great fear today is not of disease or of death. There is no longer the slightest fear of angering a thrice-Holy God. No, the great fear is of boredom, the lack of entertainment. A frightening sense of time on our hands. A terrifying sense of nothing to do. A debilitating sense that we are not being entertained.

Society's increasing reliance on mobile technology combined with an insatiable hunger for social networking is leading society toward a new form of societal detachment. Go to a local mall and watch as 80-90% of the people walk around heads down like mindless zombies staring at their mobile devices. Go to a public park and watch people stare at their tablets or phones rather than enjoy a beautiful summer day or observe the marvels of nature. Stroll through a museum and observe people as they walk blindly past priceless works of art because they are obsessed with business calendars, emails, texts, or the latest insipid video that is streaming across the internet. Study your next family gathering and watch as adolescents, and increasingly adults, furiously type text messages to their peers (often in the same room with each other) rather than communicate verbally with anyone. Watch people (even adults) seated in church as they text each other, often seated in the same pew! It has gotten so bad that some cities are actually considering enacting ordinances against texting while walking because pedestrians are so engrossed by their mobile devices they are running into objects and stepping into traffic totally oblivious of their surroundings.

This societal disconnection is also being aided by the church's adaptation of modern, high power media in their worship services. Nearly all churches, both large and small, main-line and independent, have installed large, digital presentation screens and high power sound systems. Bible colleges are training

prospective pastors to use worldly marketing methods to “sell” their churches. I attended a graduation workshop at a “*supposed*” fundamental seminary where the instructor warned pastors that they **must** make their Sunday morning service an “event” by upgrading sound systems and developing a music team with professional quality musicians or lose their members to churches that will. They fill their service with slick, high-power graphics and music to “entertain” their congregation. You see it is **all** about the “performance”. The focus is on the “entertainment” value of every facet of the modern worship service. The desired result is to make their congregations “feel” good. No longer is the focus on the old-fashioned, out-dated concept of teaching sound Biblical truths from Scripture.

Sadly, even in churches that still consider themselves to be fundamental, Bible believers, even the slightest encouragement or exhortation regarding living by Biblical standards is met with the “big eye roll” and deep and heavy sighs. Gone is the desire to hear, “Thus sayeth the Lord.....”, from the pulpit, or anywhere else. Gone is the desire to be more Christ like. Gone is the call for repentance. Gone is the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Gone is the Holy Spirit inspired change to a new life.

Today, in all but a tiny handful of churches, the opening line from the preacher’s sermon should be, “Let me entertain you.”

Contemporary Christian Music’s Slippery Slope:

Concerts, Casual Dress, Conversations Pits, and Coffee Bars

Leads to:

Confusion, Compromise, Corruption, and Condemnation