

Don't Hate Me Because I'm a Church Building

Think about your commute this morning. I bet that somewhere along the way you passed through a mixed neighborhood. You know the kind, where some houses are well-kept and others aren't.

Now let's say you had to spend your money buying one of those houses. Which would you choose? Would you pick the one with the fresh paint and a straight roof or the one the tired façade and dated carpets? The answer is pretty obvious.

But it's probably not obvious at your church. If you were to visit your church for the first time, what would your "fresh eyes" see? How are your carpet, lighting, building smell, media equipment, bathrooms and paint?

CHURCH GOGGLES

Because we love our churches, **many times we don't see what visitors see**. We have our "church goggles" on. Andy Stanley likes to say our churches can be like old couches. We love our old couches because of the wonderful memories they bring to mind. But any visitor just looks at our old couch and sees junk.

Church goggles aren't our only problem. Churches can be caught in a never-ending battle to please everyone. Raise the prospect of spending any meaningful money on your church building and there will be those who criticize. "That money can be better spent on _____ (name any ministry or good cause)" they say. Of course it can. Who wouldn't agree that dollars spent helping people are better used than buying carpeting?

LIKE IT OR NOT, BUILDINGS ARE A CHOICE YOUR CHURCH MADE

This is where leadership needs to step in. Fresh carpeting *can* help reach people. When your church bought its building, it made a commitment to a ministry model. A *church building* the primary tool of the *attractional church model*. You invite people to "God's house" where they build relationships and grow spiritually. A building is no different than a family's house. You don't just purchase it once and forget about it. When you bought, you implicitly made an commitment to maintain it. My mechanic recently told me about a customer of his that bought an expensive car. He believed that because he paid a lot for it he didn't need to change the oil. It wasn't long before the car ceased to function. Do people in your congregation believe the same thing about your church building?

Leaders should remember that *your church building is the primary tool your church has chosen to reach your local mission field*. By keeping it fresh and attractive your church maintains its ability to reach people.

BUT WE REALLY WANT TO SPEND MONEY ON SOMETHING ELSE

Are you tired of spending tens of thousands of dollars on utilities, mortgage payments and maintenance? Do you want your church's dollars to go to something more worthy? Great! You can. Get rid of your building. Or downsize. Sell your building to a growing church that really needs your space. You can rent space for meetings or meet in homes. You can use live streaming video to bring together a lot of small locations. **There's no rule that says your church needs a building.** A church is not a building but a community.

Form follows function. If you want 50% of your church income to go outside the church, reduce your facilities expenses according. This way your vision and budget are aligned and your building won't be an unnecessary point of tension/conflict.

NO MIDDLE GROUND

If you have chosen to have a building, **maintain it well.** Dated, dim and dingy environments won't help Jesus. They only reinforce the negative impressions held by unchurched people. Own up to the commitment you have already made. Remind your congregation why "clean, bright and up-to-date" are important to reach people.

If you don't have a building, don't be too quick to get one. Renting and using technology to connect aren't bad things. They free you from the massive distraction and expense that come with buildings. If you're not about attractional church, don't kill yourself committing to the main tool of attractional church.

With buildings you're "all in." **Each year building environments are either getting better or getting worse.** There is no middle ground.