

Change Or Start Again?

READING

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

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One of the books I'm reading at the moment, (Who Stole My Church, by MacDonald), made an interesting statement. "I'm beginning to understand why the younger guys prefer to start churches. I sometimes think that changing one is impossible."

I've been trying to change the church for 35 years. I don't think it's impossible but it sure seems to be a slow process. I'm doing it one person at a time, (someone I think is a future leader), and assuming that the change will come in the next generation. Starting a new church is tough work. But sometimes I also think it would be **way** easier to just start again.

The (Western) church just seems so stuck in its ways.

If we were sending missionaries to another culture we would certainly expect them to "do church" in culturally relevant ways. And if someone sent new missionaries to the West, then I would be very surprised if their solution ended up looking much like how we "do church" here now.

The fundamentals of the church being a body, and working together as each part does its role would be the same. I would expect a strong sense of community. I would definitely expect them to be devoted to teaching/learning/discipleship, and to prayer. And to be showing everyone around them that they love one another.

But how that works out would almost certainly be different. And I think most other Christians would agree.

But the reality is that the 21st century church is trying to reach out to a totally different culture from the one that was surrounding the Western church even 40 or 50 years ago. But the church hasn't changed. So many churches are still trying to do things like they did 40 years ago. We are missionaries to a different culture but we are still trying to do things like we did back in the culture we came from.

That won't work.

One of the cultural changes has come through music and technology. Young people love their music. And their movies and TV. In fact, they often give the impression that they live to be entertained. The technical quality of music and video available to even the poorest people in the West is way beyond what most churches can produce. But still many churches have tried to take this head on by trying to entertain people with professional presentations that feel, (to me), like you're at a concert.

Let me say this bluntly. Entertainment might well be what they want. But it is not what they need.

What they need, is to hear from God. To receive his spirit and to build a strong relationship with him as his born again children. Then, whether they are entertained or not, their eternal future will be secure. And I suspect that they will also be much more content with the here and now, entertained or not.

By all means our music should be in a style relevant to our audience. But that is a very different focus to "entertaining".

But changing a church which doesn't think like this is not easy.

I've tried, but they don't want to listen. Instead I've been discipling people, usually one or two at a time, and helping them see what God says about how church should be.

Now they're doing the same. Some of them are even leading churches.

How are **you** going to do it?

Are you just going to start again?

However you do it... do **something**.

It's too important to just give up.