

User Pays

READING

Acts 2, 3, 5, 6

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On the surface, User Pays seems like a very fair way to do things. In Australia petrol/gasoline is taxed, (quite highly taxed), but that tax pays for all the roadworks nation wide. The idea being that if you use the roads more than me, then you'll need to buy more fuel than me, so you'll pay more tax than me. That seems fair right?

If all our tax was that way, I would pay less tax because I don't have any children attending school. And maybe I can opt out of other government services, like pensions or aged care, (because I'm not that old yet).

But what about church?
Does User Pays work for church?

Is it OK to charge \$5 for a copy of the sermon to cover the costs of recording, producing and hosting it? Is it OK to charge \$10?
Is it OK to charge \$10 for admission to church on Sunday? (Because you're hearing the sermon for free after all).

Is it OK to charge for coffee after church? Especially now that we all want better coffee and the machines are expensive. And we need an actual barista to make it.

Is it OK to charge for counselling?
Counselling is expensive outside the church. So maybe we should because people expect to pay for counselling.
Is it OK to charge for pastoral care?

Is it OK to charge for English classes?

So my big problem with all this is that there is no biblical precedent. I don't see a single instance, or even a hint, that the early church charged anyone for anything. In fact, quite the opposite. I see the early church giving things away to anyone who needed them. For free. And I see people giving substantial amounts to the work of the church. Even property. Regardless of what "services" they used themselves.

The other problem I have with it, is that it puts a barrier up for the "lower classes". Lower income people who can't afford to pay for these things. It attracts the wealthier middle class, and makes church much more socially acceptable. Like a club for the middle classes.

In the kingdom of God there are no classes.

Things have changed in Western culture haven't they.
We're now totally obsessed with money.
We don't want to give it.
We don't want anyone else to get something for free.
We somehow think that if we have money that we earned it.
Or worse. That we deserve it.
We live in million dollar houses and we won't even give someone a free coffee when they visit our church.

Church has one goal. Reaching the lost with the message of the good news of Yeshua. Everything we do should be based on that. Everything we do should be measured in terms of how it helps or hinders that goal. Not by how much it costs.

Should church be "user pays"?
You're lucky that salvation isn't user pays. Because you couldn't afford it.