

Is Your Church Evangelizing Or Just Advertising? 4 Reasons It Matters

Evangelism isn't about sales, it's about relationship. It's not about filling a building with people, it's about

filling people with Jesus.

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There are two ways for a local church to reach more people.

Advertising or evangelism.

And they are not the same thing.

There's nothing wrong with advertising, *per se*. Using social media, print ads, handouts or other means to let people know about your church or its events can be very helpful. But advertising can't be a substitute for evangelism.

At best, advertising can support evangelism. But evangelism, not advertising, must be at the core of every church's strategy for reaching new people.

Does It Matter Which One We Do?

I once talked with a pastor who told me, "It doesn't really matter if you get people in the church door through advertising or evangelism. Just get them in. After they arrive, you can preach, teach and love on them the same way. "The advantage of evangelism is it's free. If your evangelism slows down, you have to increase your advertising budget. But if you can keep evangelism up, you can spend less money on advertising."

Ugh.

No.

This kind of thinking fails on so many levels.

4 Reasons Evangelism Must Take the Lead

First, it really does matter how you bring people into the church. As the old saying goes, "what you win them *with* is what you win them *to*." If you're bringing people in primarily through well-placed advertising, you'll be drawing people who expect to receive what the ads promised. In other words, you'll be drawing potential consumers, not future disciples.

Second, advertising doesn't fulfill the Great Commission because it can be done without believers sharing their lives and stories. On the other hand, evangelism involves the entire church and it connects us to the rest of Christ's commands through ministry, fellowship, prayer and discipleship.

Third, it's not enough just to get people in the room. While we'd love to get people to come to our local church, what matters in evangelism is that we help them take a step closer to a relationship with Jesus, no matter what church they end up in. Advertising is inherently narrow and selfish that way, while evangelism is wide and selfless. Or it should be.

Fourth, the idea of seeing evangelism as a way of saving money on advertising is so horrible I don't know how to express my revulsion at it. This is not about butts in the seats or bucks in the offering. It's about souls in eternity.

What's The Difference?

Advertising is an impersonal way to convey information ("Our Easter services start at 9am and 11am at this address!")

Evangelism is about personal invitation ("Would you like to come with me to church this Sunday?")

Advertising is done by professionals.

Evangelism is done by church members.

Advertising draws a crowd.

Evangelism builds the church.

Advertising is about hype.

Evangelism is about passion.

Advertising promotes a specific church or event.

Evangelism builds the church as a whole.

Advertising uses the ideas of marketers to create customers.

Evangelism follows the mandate of Jesus to make disciples.

The Good News

Jesus did not give us the Great Commandment as an advertising scheme.

Advertising has the reputation of being one of the most manipulative, cynical jobs in the world.

Unfortunately, evangelism has developed a similar reputation. Why? I think it's because we've allowed it to be equated with advertising.

Evangelism is simply sharing of the good news of Jesus. So instead of being seen as a form of advertising, evangelism should be seen as what it is – a way of engaging in a conversation with people you care for, about someone you love more than life itself.

Genuine evangelism is like a newly-engaged woman running around showing off her wedding ring, not a cynical ad executive trying to convince the masses to buy something they don't need.

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