

# 7 Things Christians Should Give Up To Reach Unchurched People

By [Carey](#) | February 9, 2017 | [5 Comments](#)

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So you want your church to reach people who don't go to church.

That's wonderful because that's basically the mission of the church: to share the love of Christ with the world in the hopes everyone will come into a relationship with Jesus.

The challenge is that unchurched people aren't exactly flocking to most churches, and many Christians seem stumped as to why that is.

There are many reasons, but a surprising number center around one thing: Christians who treat the church as if it's their private club.

The gravitational pull of human nature is toward self, not towards others, and churches behave the same way. You will focus almost exclusively on your needs and wants unless you decide not to.

And that's exactly what far too many churches do: focus exclusively on the needs and wants of their members.

Okay, it's worse than that. Maybe it's not even about needs and wants. Maybe it's about preferences.

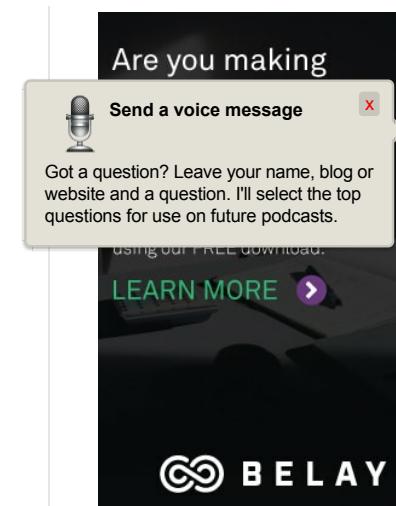
So many church leaders (staff and volunteer) struggle to lead beyond the preferences of the church members. And as soon as they try, they get inundated with complaints and angry emails. Too many Christians feel like it's their right to have a church that caters exactly to their tastes and whims, and millions are paying the price for that (including unchurched people).

Catering to the preferences of members is a terrible idea for three reasons.

First, it's killing the church. Attendance continues to stagnate or decline as people drift further and further from Christ (here's a [5 part blog series I did on declining church attendance](#)).

Second, it's an unwinnable game. Even in a church of 100 people, you'll never be able to please everyone.

Finally, and most importantly, it's just wrong. Since when did the personal preferences of members become a legitimate reason to keep people away from God's love?



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When your preferences keep unchurched people from the promise of Christ, it's time to change your preferences.

Here are 7 things Christians should give up to reach unchurched people.

Many Christians let their preferences keep unchurched people from the promises of Christ.

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## 1. Music

You would think by now we might have solved this one. But even churches who think they've solved it often haven't.

Many churches who call themselves contemporary... aren't. They're just more contemporary than they used to be.

Have you listened to the top 40 on iTunes or Spotify recently? Probably not... because you hate that music. You even tell yourself it isn't music. There's no guitar. It's all beats. And what's with the vocal Olympics? Why can't they make music like they used to (like in the 90s), you say to yourself?

Which may be part of the reason your church struggles to reach anyone under 40.

Be honest. Don't call yourself contemporary if you're some paler version of it. Self-awareness and honesty actually matter if you're trying to reach unchurched people.

Sadly, well-meaning self-deception runs rampant in church leadership today.

Be truthful about what you're doing. If you are, it might just make you frustrated enough to make you change again.

In the meantime, realize that despite all the change, you could still be miles away from being relevant to the people living around you.

If you want more on music, here are [5 ways to battle the never-ending worship wars](#).

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contemporary... aren't.

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## 2. Politics

I'm not sure politics has been this divisive in a generation or two. But I promise you; it's divisive. Just check your social media feed.

I know many people who say they have stopped following people on social channels and avoid the news because they're so upset by the divisiveness.

By definition, your church needs to include people who are different than you.

God is not a Republican, a Democrat, a conservative, a liberal or a socialist. He transcends all our political categories, however important they might be to us.

Politics matters, but it will never change the world the way the Gospel can (or has).

Should Christians vote? Of course. Should Christians run for office? Absolutely. We need more women and men of character and conviction in government.

But the church doesn't exist to elect or defeat politicians. It exists to glorify Christ and grow his Kingdom (which is an alt Kingdom) in the world. (Here are a few more thoughts on being the church in the present political climate.)

Just know this: if God has all the same opinions your political party does, you're probably not worshipping God.

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## 3. Style

It seems the likes and dislikes of Christians run deep and wide these days.

We have opinions on everything from the coffee we serve to the color of the paint to the flooring in the auditorium to what we call the auditorium ("It's a *sanctuary*, people!" he said, loudly) to the color shirt the greeting team wears.

Christians seriously leave churches and try to divide churches over issues like that?

You know what that is? It's pettiness.

Obviously, at some level, all those things matter.

But instead of running it through a filter of what *you* like, run it instead through a filter of whether what you do is effective in reaching the people you're trying to reach.

And church leaders, you need to choose who you focus on: members or those not yet coming to your church.

I agree with my friend Reggie Joiner who says leaders should focus on who they want to reach, not who they want to keep.

Focus on who you want to reach, not on who you want to keep. @ReggieJoiner

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## 4. Buildings

As Christians, sometimes we get more attached to our buildings than we do to our mission. Christians should also be willing to give up their buildings to reach more people.

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This can happen on several levels.

First, don't resist renovations. If you're still asking toddlers to meet downstairs in a mouldy basement with green carpet, don't be surprised when you can't keep young families coming to your church.

Second, be willing to do what it takes to reach people. Sometimes that might mean moving from a permanent to a portable location. Other times it might mean doing a huge expansion. Don't resist.

Finally, in a growing number of cases where churches are dying, this will mean flipping the keys to a growing church that lacks a building.

One of the oddities of the era we're in these days is that the churches who have buildings often have no people, and the church plants that have people often have no building. Flip that.

I love hearing about the growing number of churches who are giving their building, assets, and leadership over to a young church that's reaching people.

Churches with buildings but no people should give them to planters with people but no buildings.

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## 5. Money

Dying churches that own buildings also often have money.

If a church doesn't flip the keys and simply closes, then in many cases, denominations (many of which are also in decline) often take the money after a church closes and uses it to prop up, well, a dying denomination.

What if instead that money was redeployed to plant new churches?  
Even new churches that aren't part of that 'denomination'?

In the emerging post-Christian era, it's time to build THE Kingdom rather than YOUR Kingdom.

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Similarly, older Christians tend to have more money than younger Christians.

What if Christians who had money used their resources to fund innovation rather than fight it?

Could you imagine what might happen?

What if Christians who had money used their resources to fund innovation rather than fight it?

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## 6. Time

Being the church is about a lot more than showing up for an hour on Sunday or tuning in online.

If you're really going to reach the next generation, it means giving your time too.

Authentic Christianity is more about what we give than what we get. Our giving doesn't earn us our salvation, of course, but it's a joyful response to a God who gave everything for us.

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## 7. Our Lives

Christians should be the most generous and selfless people on the planet.

Sadly, we're often known as the stingiest and most selfish (ask any non-Christian who's worked at a restaurant).

The Gospel calls us to die to ourselves so that others may live and to put something bigger than ourselves above ourselves.

If you give your life away, you find it.

When you die to yourself, something greater rises.

When you die to yourself, something greater rises.

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If you do ministry in Canada, I'd love for you to take some of these ideas (and many others) and put them into practice.

I'd love for you to join me for the first ever [Canadian Church Leaders Conference](#) in June hosted at Connexus Church.

We're bringing top national speakers and practitioners for three days to learn together, grow together and equip you and your team to reach more people in your community. Plus, you'll be seated around tables, not in rows, to learn and grow from each other.

The [early bird rate](#) is on through March 17th. So register your team today to get the best rates.

You can register [here](#).

## What Do You Think?

I'd love to hear what you think Christians should do to help reach our communities and the people God loves so deeply.

Scroll down and leave a comment.

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