

Texas Mega-Church Says “Come To Church This Easter – Win Fabulous Prizes!”

by Joel Taylor, 2010

We’ve all seen the extravagant, absurd and sometimes shocking practices of apostate mega-churches. This one, at a time when Christians especially celebrate the resurrection of our Lord, is so shamelessly over-the-top, words *almost* fail me.

Bay Area Fellowship (BAF) in Corpus Christi, Texas, led by Bil Cornelius has dangled the largest carrot I’ve ever seen in order to bring the world their version of ‘the gospel’. It is a classic example of the “Let’s draw the crowd, then we’ll get ‘em saved!” attitude. According to Cornelius, “*Someone could come to church [on Easter] and walk away an hour later with a car.*” There’s 15 more cars to giveaway – and so much more. In fact, with over \$4 million in cash and prizes to be had, I suspect all 7 locations will be packed this weekend.

Here’s how BAF is kicking off their ‘Easter Celebration’:



“Corpus Christi...Come on Down!

YOU are the next winner of **The Ultimate Giveaway!** That’s right...With nearly **\$1 MILLION in prizes and giveaways,** this Easter, everyone will win something at Bay Area Fellowship! And,

wait...that’s not all. Each service we’re giving away **FREE FLATSCREENS, LAPTOPS...and CARS!!!** Be here beginning April 1 (and...no, this is no April Fool’s joke). This is the real deal! No tricks, strings or fine print! Show up and let Bay Area Fellowship bless **YOU** this Easter!”

Sandy Smith reports:

A Corpus Christi, Texas, megachurch is offering an unusual approach to bringing people to Christ this Easter. Let's call it Jesus meets Oprah.

The Bay Area Fellowship, the largest church in Corpus Christi, will give away more than \$4 million in cash and prizes to everyone who attends Easter services at one of its seven locations.

The prizes range from gift bags with \$300 worth of goods and services all the way up to cars — 16 of them, to be exact, all of them used but low-mileage. And there's everything in between: 10 furniture sets, flat-screen TVs, tickets to sporting events, 300 bicycles and skateboards, photography sessions, and more.

"Someone could come to church [on Easter] and walk away an hour later with a car," lead pastor Bil Cornelius said on MSNBC today.

Cornelius said he got the idea from a fellow pastor in Minneapolis who got a local car dealer to donate a car to give away to a lucky churchgoer at Easter. The idea apparently inspired Cornelius' flock to follow suit — all of the items being given away this Sunday are donated by church members, including an iPod donated by a 12-year-old church member. "To a 12-year-old, an iPod's a really big thing," Cornelius said. "This boy said, 'I'd rather have someone come to youth group on Sunday to learn about the love of Christ by donating my iPod to the drawing."

"It's a way to draw people in for a prize and then give them the ultimate giveaway, which is a relationship with Christ, which is free heaven, which is better than any material prize we have to offer," he continued.

Church officers anticipate the giveaway will prove a highly effective marketing tool — they're expecting 15,000 to 20,000 people, more than twice their normal weekly attendance, to show up for Easter services. One car will be given away at each of the services at the church's main campus and its six satellite locations in the Corpus Christi area.