

Why are so many churches following the purpose driven seeker-sensitive movement?



Why are so many churches following the purpose driven seeker-sensitive movement? I've seen several Southern Baptist churches go down this path as they seek to find ways to draw people into their churches. I've attended a few Southern Baptist Churches over the years, and I have family who have been in the SBC for decades. I'm not picking on the SBC only, but I will use it as my foundation (simply because I am familiar with it) to ponder why so many of churches have adopted Rick Warren's way to grow a church. As I pondered, observed, read, and talked to many people who are involved in churches that have become purpose driven, I realized the true problem lies within the church leadership. These pastors and elders are the ones driving

this shift. I believe the bulk of the problem falls upon the pastor because many members are just following his leadership. I've talked to many members who have good intentions and they are very sincere in their beliefs. So just to be very clear with everyone reading this blog, my main emphasis is on the church leadership. I do feel members of the church are responsible for speaking out against errors. I'm not giving them the pardon because they should be following the Berean example found in [Acts 17:11](#). I believe many of these people are deceived by the lure of church growth. They buy into the belief of "the end justifies the means" in order to spread the name of Jesus. With all that being said, I believe the answer to my question is a simple answer that is offensive and blunt because it hits the root of the problem. The answer is money.

Most of the churches that adopt Rick Warren's methods to grow:

- Pastors/elders from these churches are worried about money. They worry about how to pay their salaries, benefits, and bills.
- These churches are centered around numbers. They are obsessed with numbers and memberships. Church growth is all that matters to them because they look at growth as God's blessing.
- More people = more tithes (See: [Tithing](#)). Money is the driving force moving these churches toward the purpose driven seeker-sensitive movement.

1 Timothy 6:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

I believe many churches fall prey to Rick Warren's poison because their eyes have fallen away from Jesus. They are being held captive by their own goals now as they gaze upon numbers and tithing instead of sticking to God's way for growing the Kingdom of the Lord. They look around and compare themselves to these seeker-sensitive self-help centers, envying their numbers each week. This envy leads to making changes from within the church to compete with these new "hip" and "cool" modern day worship centers. The closer these churches draw to mimicking these seeker-sensitive self-help centers, the farther they remove themselves from sound doctrine and *sola scriptura*. This transition leads to a church that looks and acts just

like the world, the only difference being the church adds the name of “Jesus” and “worship” to everything.

Some signs of a purpose driven takeover from within the church:

- The church starts looking into marketing schemes.
- The church starts heavily promoting the pastor’s vision vs. simply teaching the whole council of God.
- The use of non-offensive terminology to replace words like “sinner,” “Hell deserving,” and “total depravity” in order not to offend sinners.
- When your pastor starts talking about “*life change*” and how “*Jesus wants to change your life*” will lead to the false life change gospel that depends on yourself rather than Jesus Christ.
- The formation of life groups as a way to kick start volunteer service and getting people to come to church.
- Less focus is on Bible study and more focus on reading self-help topical books by Christian authors.
- When your church starts sending out pamphlets advertising an event or guest speaker vs. promoting true discipleship.
- When your church goes into debt for a worship leader, new big screen TV’s, spends money on billboards, pays for big name speakers, etc. instead of helping those who are poor and/or in need.
- When your church starts looking at every body as an investment vs. a child of God.
- When your pastor starts quoting Rick Warren, Andy Stanley, Mark Driscoll, and other problematic leaders from the pulpits.
- When your church starts doing sermon series based on relevant issues to help with today’s problem (series that are designed for the un-churched) vs. deep sermons designed to build up the body of Christ.
- When your church starts programs on financial freedom, yet the church is still in debt and still spending money it does not have.
- When your church starts placing heavy emphasis on music and worship while down playing deep Bible teaching from the pulpit.
- When your pastor/elders start speaking against discernment and only wanting to focus on unity and love.
- When you pastor/elders turn a blind-eye to doctrinal errors taught by many leading Christian authors like Beth Moore, T.D. Jakes, Joel Osteen, etc. all in the name of church growth.

I feel one major problem that causes a church to accept the purpose driven dogma is putting too much emphasis on numbers. No church should be sending memos suggesting that the church needs to grow by “X” members this year and we would like to see “Y” baptisms take place. We should 100% depend on the preaching of the Gospel of Christ while depending on the Holy Spirit to draw people to Himself. We should be content with what the Lord gives us and not play a numbers game. I’m not saying that we should do nothing. On the contrary, I’m saying that we need to do more via the Bible’s outline and not Rick Warren’s business model. When we start looking only at numbers and dollar signs, then we are treading on dangerous grounds.

To avoid the snare of purpose driven seeker-sensitive gimmicks we should:

- Depend on the preaching of the pure Gospel.
- Always practice discernment and examine our beliefs with the scriptures.
- Only use the methods promoted by the Word of God for spreading the Gospel.
- Make disciples of new Christians and teach them how to spread the Good News.
- Not worry about our numbers.
- Understand we are not to be a mirror image of the world with “Jesus” attached to everything under the sun.
- Not worry about money because the Lord will provide as He sees fit to provide for His people.
- Not have a church that is in debt because a debtor is a slave to the lender ([Proverbs 22:7](#)).

Please feel free to comment and add to this list. I know other reasons are applicable, but I believe that money is the root problem that causes many churches to sale out to the purpose driven false gospel.

-David J. Horn