

People of YES!

IS IT TIME FOR YOUR CHURCH TO ADD A SECOND TRACK?

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Is the average age in your church or denomination climbing ominously? If so, then it is time to do what others have done to grow again.

Sandra timidly enters a worship meeting. She feels ashamed of last night's escapade and asks herself, "Can God forgive me?" Hoping desperately, she sits out of sight. Two elderly ladies spot her and whisper.

"What are they saying?" Sandra wonders. "Is it my dress? Hair too mussy? Rings in the wrong part of my body?"

Sandra waits until no one is watching and slips out of the meeting.

In another part of town, Walter admits to his friend, "I'm weary of our selfish lifestyle; it has no purpose."

His friend sighs. "Me, too. Let's try church. Maybe God can fill that vacuum in our souls."

They enter a meeting and music begins. Walter grimaces and whispers, "How could God enjoy that ugly noise!"

His friend replies, "No wonder. Nearly everyone's geriatric."

During the sermon, Walter mutters quietly, "Why does that guy hide up there behind that huge pulpit?"

"Maybe he thinks it gives authority to his dogmatic assertions. I have questions I would like to discuss about his topic, but they allow no discussion. Let's go get a beer."

Sandra, Walter and their friends need a different church experience. But why a second track? Why not simply change the first track? Church history, ancient and recent, shows that it is normally easier and causes less friction to let a few venture into new territory, than to force all believers in an older church to abandon their cherished, conventional ways.

Is it Time for your Church to Add a 2nd Track?

If a Western church's name has any of these four words in it, then it is probably in decline (we grant the exceptions): *Memorial, First, Saint* or *United*. All four names look back to the past. Looking back can paralyze a congregation, deterring it from initiating ventures that God requires in His Word. This type of spiritual fossilization is not limited to a church's name.

Too often worship style, teaching style, the building and order of service all reflect a bygone age, no longer relevant to 80% of the younger generation. If this is the case with your church, then you need to do what Luther, Wesley, Paul and Christ himself did: launch a second track of churches that adhere more closely to the New Testament in their size, worship, leadership, training and evangelism.

Steps to start your second track

- 1. Let those on the second track simply do what Jesus and His apostles required of any congregation, without forcing them to do anything else.**

It's so easy! The apostle Paul provided a striking example of a radically different track among New Testament churches. In Galatia, he severely reprimanded those who were being circumcised, yet just a few miles away in Lystra Paul circumcised Timothy because of the Jews who lived there, Acts 16:3. In both cases, Paul respected local culture. He also told the Corinthians, "Where the Spirit is there is liberty" To free up church workers on the second track, do not impose any rules that keep a new church or cell group from obeying Jesus' commands, especially to baptize and serve Communion.

- 2. Simply obey Jesus' commands above all else.**

Jesus exercises "all authority in heaven and earth." To put His command to a vote, or neglect them in any way, gives higher authority to our majority rule; Jesus is no longer our King of Kings, which is a form of apostasy. Don't try to force folk to change. Let your brothers who prefer to stay in a declining mode lie in green pastures beside still waters. Bless them and don't argue; simply step out and obey Jesus.

- 3. Let those in the second track worship in a New Testament way.**

Much of what many folk seek in a church now but fail to find is precisely what the New Testament prescribes. They want...

Experience. Let seekers meet the living, present, powerful Christ, as the apostles helped folk do. Many want more than to have you teach them abstract ideas about Him.

Interaction. Meet in groups that are small enough to heed the New Testament "one another" commands. These include teaching, edifying, strengthening, correcting and consoling *one another* instead of sitting as passive hearers.

Connection. Praise God with songs that everyone can easily sing.

4. Find the receptive sinners whom God has prepared for you to tell about Jesus.

Second track workers normally have to step outside of their familiar social venue to befriend folk who are poorer and less educated, as both Jesus and His apostles recommended and did.

Don't assume that when folk refuse to attend a conventional church that they are rejecting Christ. The correct procedure is to do what the New Testament requires: take the church to them. Meet in their homes.

5. Recognize eager lay workers among your church members.

Your church probably has a few eager, frustrated activists who want to do more for Christ and yearn for change, but the church leadership mistrusts their enthusiasm. Release them to work on a second track.

Orient these workers by gathering in a home or restaurant where the people live that you plan to serve. This will accustom the workers to serve in that new environment.

Let younger believers plan activities that create a party atmosphere. Provide food, games or whatever will make a festive gathering such as Zacheus and Levi did when they invited their friends to meet Jesus. Most seekers enjoy such a gathering, and will bring their friends. Avoid it becoming a mere Bible study.

6. When new folk start bringing their friends, let them start a home church.

Your objective should be to see hundreds, eventually thousands, of folk come to faith in Jesus in new, tiny gatherings wherever their friends or relatives will feel comfortable. The churches in the New Testament gathered in homes to experience Christ in the sacraments and loving interaction; thousands came to Christ that way. The same thing is happening today where churches are following these New Testament guidelines; more folk are coming to Christ than ever before in history.