

# 7 Things Churches No Longer Do (But Should)

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## **1. Discipline:**

In a spiritual climate that's extremely sensitive and wary of legalism, any type of authoritative action taken by a pastor or church can be highly explosive — often interpreted as aggressive, controversial, and hurtful.

Previous church models of authority and discipline have been so abused, and have such a bad historical reputation, that many Christian communities have simply abandoned the practice of church discipline.

Combine these factors with an overwhelming selection of churches to attend — where *any* type of discomfort can result in parishioners leaving to go elsewhere — and you can understand why spiritual leaders are reluctant to enforce any type of accountability.

## **2. Testimonials:**

With the rise a mega-churches and the advent of media-savvy services that leave little room for informality and spontaneity, many congregations no longer practice the valuable experience of verbalizing — and listening to — people's personal testimonies.

There's no longer the opportunity for people to communicate what's happening in their lives — whether good or bad — in corporate church services anymore. Publicly professing what God has done for us, and openly sharing our struggles has become increasingly difficult within church contexts. Grieving, rejoicing, and simply living life together involves vulnerability and intimate communication, but this has often been sacrificed for the sake of logistics and comfort.

Real life is messy, awkward, and inefficient — but church services rarely are, and this is worrisome. Christians have become afraid and uncomfortable with being honest and transparent — simply because it's become such a rare experience.

### **3. Corporate Prayer:**

The Bible commands that believers pray together, but churches are moving away from praying during major service times and are instead reserving it for much smaller and more informal venues. Prayer requests are now almost exclusively reserved for bulletins, church websites, and prayer chains (facilitated by phone and email), but we shouldn't abandon praying together as a corporate body of believers.

A lack of communal prayer has had some disturbing consequences. For example, the next time you're at church, look at the prayer request lists are accessible to the congregation — 99 percent of them will be physical ailments. Then look at what's missing: nobody will share about marital problems, depression, fears, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, domestic violence, and addictions — we've lost the ability to be spiritually transparent within our spiritual communities.

### **4. Challenge:**

For similar reasons to not practicing discipline, churches avoid *really* challenging believers to go beyond their comfort zones. Discomfort is seen as something to avoid at all costs for fear of alienation and scaring away parishioners — so few are brave enough to authentically push congregants towards higher levels of maturity, especially when the price could mean lower attendance numbers.

### **5. Academically Teach:**

Churches used to be innovative leaders in education, but now all “higher level” teaching is seemingly reserved for Christian colleges and other higher educational institutions. Local churches have outsourced their responsibility for deep, academic, and complex teaching related to the Bible, theology, philosophy, and doctrine — often trading it in for superficial entertainment.

Yes, some of Christianity's most important principles can be simplified, but Christians are losing the ability to know how to do word studies, read

Scripture within context, understand the historical roots of our faith, and comprehend basic foundational principles; it's no longer being taught within churches.

## **6. Sacrifice:**

*Growth* is the new idol of the church. It's supposedly a sign of God's favor and reflects the spiritual maturity of a community, but it's caused a serious lack of sacrificial giving. Churches often see their bottom line as the top priority, and secular business models have hijacked the values and overall mission of many churches.

Resources are diverted towards expansion rather than mission, and the gospel is sacrificed for the sake of sustainability and profitability. Churches will never admit this, but you can always see where true priorities lie by following the money.

## **7. Practical Ministry:**

Churches have become epicenters of sermons and pastoral instruction, and this isn't bad as long as it inspires people to take action and is complemented by real-world application. But this is where most churches fail: they're great at explaining the gospel and talking relentlessly about it — but are horrible at actually carrying it out.

With a fear of discomfort, and the extreme busyness of our culture, churches have stopped emphasizing practical ministry. Participating in church now means attending weekly services — but rarely requires anything beyond that. What if churches required their congregations to go out into the world and be missionaries, sacrificially, humbly, and passionately loving others just as Jesus did — practicing what is actually being preached?

Today, many churches are guilty of being too safe, convenient, and comfortable. But enjoyment isn't the overall purpose of going to church. It should often make you feel uncomfortable and uneasy — and not in an abusive or guilt-ridden manner — but in a way that emulates the life of Christ.