



## The Problem with House Church

It's not consumer oriented and thus requires servants...

**T**here is a major endemic flaw in the makeup of the modern House Church. It is a flaw so serious that it may virtually cancel its potential to become a serious threat and correction to the error of the Institutional Church any time soon.

Its flaw is in its design, which runs directly counter to the modern age in which we live. You see, our modern age is “consumer oriented,” and a true biblical Church isn't. By consumer oriented I mean that our culture has developed an unyielding demand for being able to “take from” rather than “give to” its religious organizations.

The devil, being the crafty one he is, recognized the selfishness of man, and so gave man his greatest tool of self destruction...the means to serve himself to death. What was it he gave and when did he give it? He gave man the industrial revolution beginning in the mid 1700s. From that time to now a gigantic shift in western mentality has taken place, from “I exist to care for my own and for the good of others,” to “I exist to receive for myself from others.” From a “giving mentality” to an “entitlement mentality.”

While the Industrial Revolution has brought the most unimaginable technological advancements of all time, it has also released the full ideal of Platonic Idealism by creating the most elaborate and interwoven system of personal dissatisfaction the world has ever seen. Literally, dissatisfaction rules the Western world. It is the basis upon which the Industrial Revolution finds its energy and longevity. Man is never satisfied with “what is” but must have “something better.” His striving for “the better” the “ideal” drives him to maximize his selfishness to its highest expression. He continually looks to the future and says “what is good is good, but we can provide better...” In so doing it fuels the dissatisfaction for what one has, sets him up for the greatest financial bondages of all time, through over indulgent buying and personal indebtedness. My cell phone is nice, but I “must” have the newest one. My car is nice, but I “must” have the newest model. On and on it goes. Who is behind such massive dissatisfaction and financial bondage? It certainly can't be the Lord, who leads us to be content with such things as we have and urges us to owe no man anything but to love. It leaves us with none other than the devil Himself, and the effect of this revolution has touched every facet of life and the Church is right smack in the middle of its impact.

Along with the industrial revolution man came to recognize that if he created the right kind of goods he could tap into the self centered nature of man and feed him a seemingly endless supply

of nutrients for his selfish nature. Those nutrients are “Things and Entertainment.” He created massive materialism and massive demand for being entertained. Once both of those were in place he was ready to expose his master plan for the Church - I.e. the Mega Church. What does it do? It provides Church as the ultimate consumer experience - I.e. a fancy building, a shopping mall consumer experience, and the promise that you will never have to give anything other than money to it (unless of course you want to be compensated by a staff salary and join the Church staff) to get all you desire.

What is the result? Large beautiful Church buildings and a massive consumer machine that promises no matter who you are, how old you are, or what your needs, it will provide for you. And here’s one of the most incredible elements of it, if you are a child, between 1 month and 20 years old it won’t cost you one single penny or any real effort. That’s right. You get to come and consume completely free, and bring a matured entitlement attitude with you. Parents will pay for everything and children can just come and demand that all their physical and emotional needs be met, and if the Mega Church does a good enough job then all the children will tell all their other friends, who in turn will put pressure on their parents, and the parents being afraid that their children will backslide into the devil’s arms if they aren’t given all they want, quickly move towards these mega Churches and voilá, the cycle is complete. The devil has created the perfect entrapment for all generations. Selfishness becomes the rule of the day, while true spirituality and true Church become buried beneath it all.

Thus, in creating what the Church has come to think of as a “win win” situation, in which children are cared for, giving parents a break from them, providing their children with all the sensory experiences they can handle, through high tech entertainment, activities of all sorts and stimuli, along with giving children what they most want “control,” the children are in charge of the spiritual development of the family - all tied to an integrated system of self centeredness. Parents come to understand that their highest job description is finding a Church that adequately satisfies their children’s demand to spiritually rule the home by requiring a Church environment that keeps them busy, relationally tied in, sensory overloaded, and excited. The parents can then go back to their selfish lives, and give little thought to teaching their own children, raising them up on the Word of God, or principles of service. Why should they do those things? The Church has offered to take over parenting and relieve them of virtually all spiritual responsibilities, and even more, has told them they can’t possibly compete with the Church’s ability to do for their children what their children need/demand be done for them.

Parents go to sleep at the spiritual switch, and generations of young people are lured towards a “take mentality” from Church instead of a “give mentality.” Give us all we want and we’ll act happy for a season, until of course we grow up, realize the real world demands we give, then we’ll mass exodus your churches as irrelevant to us, indulge in all manners of hedonism, only occasionally visit the Church and live a virtually godless lifestyle because they’ve never really known true Christianity...only the consumer version they’ve been fed.

Then, when the Lord of the Church begins to create a revolution in His Church, turning it away from the byproducts of the godless industrial revolution's self centeredness, and back towards a simple "non consumer orientation" within the home, all the young people, who have been trained by the consumer oriented Church complain to their parents that house church is boring, not entertaining enough, and they're not happy... Parents become flustered, have never taught their children to give in a spiritual context to the rest of the body, have never taught their children the value and place of the Word of God in their lives, and don't know how to even begin confronting this godless selfishness that erupts in their children.

What is the net effect? At just the point where parents begin to realize the institutional Church is not God's plan, and they move towards the small and simple house environment for the Church, without hierarchical leadership, they find their children are unhappy and as parents they have no spiritual equipment and no history of having taught their children godly principles of thinking and life, and their families face a crisis. "We're bored...there's nothing to do, we don't want to go anymore...!" The parents face this crisis, have no preparation for it, and turn in their pain (the pain of the fear of losing their children to the world) to the Church leadership and cry out "fix this problem...we've always expected the Church leadership to entertain and fix our families for us so we wouldn't have to...fix this or we will leave!"

But before we conclude that this issue primarily faces the young of the Church, we would be very far wrong in such a conclusion. Everyone coming out of the Institutional Church must undergo a tremendous detoxification of their thinking...away from a consumer approach, and towards a selfless giving to the body gathered.

Adults are so accustomed to sitting passively in Church meetings, being sung to, preached at, and coddled so they'll give their tithe, that they have little to any idea of the joy that comes from coming to gathering with the thought "I have the privilege and responsibility to contribute to our gathering time as much as to receive from it." Until every member of the gathered body thinks this way Church will continue its dysfunctional approach to gathering. I must come to the time of gathering as one looking to the Holy Spirit for my unique contribution to what God would do in our midst. I no longer expect others to do for me. I now come to give, rather than take.

And what do the house church leadership do? Recognize the devil has been wiser than wise and sown an expectation into God's people that completely violates the nature of godly spirituality and Church, by teaching them to demand, in their consumerism, to be entertained and provided for, rather than come to the gathered saints with the attitude of giving and serving, having a full spiritual storehouse of the Word of God to give from. The leadership begin a slow and consistent detoxifying of the Church from its self centeredness, and back towards its true call to give and serve in a spiritual context. In the process they will watch families come in, thoroughly indoctrinated into the devil's idea of a consumer oriented society, and leave their fellowships because the parents simply don't understand or have any compartments to understand that life in the kingdom and Church in the home was never meant to be consumer oriented, but rather giving oriented...not

takers but givers. Parents in their frenzy to relieve themselves of the anxiety of parental failure and the possibility of their children “falling away from God,” rush around to find something to entertain their children again, supposing this will keep them from falling away from God, failing to realize they have never truly fallen into God by virtue of failing to understand that the very nature of God and godliness is “giving” not taking, and to have a “taking” and not giving mentality means you have very little if any real touch with God to lose.

The heart of Christianity is not “taking” it is “giving.” Taking is what the devil does...giving is what God does. When we become “god-ly...i.e. like God” we become givers. Until we become god-ly we aren’t like God and we are takers. Takers don’t truly know God...they just use Him. He is little more than a Santa Claus or a Genie in the bottle. They simply want to crawl up in His lap and expect Him to give them what they want or rub his belly and get their three cherished wishes. None of this is God. He is as far removed from this image as He could be, and the Church is as far removed from understanding the true nature of Church and life in the kingdom as it could be, in its consumer orientation to kingdom life.

The job of the Church, in redirecting the Church back to biblical and godly understandings of life is beyond huge. Its task is to completely undo the effects of the industrial revolution, to expose and undo the effects of a self centered consumer orientation, and reintroduce its members to the value and joy of giving.

Until people (children included...) come to spiritual gatherings with the thought “I’m coming to give, serve, bless, encourage, and edify the brethren,” there is little hope for the house Church or true Church. For Church to distance itself from institutionalism and move back towards small and simple house church, without dealing with this consumerism issue is to experience complete failure. Until the Church realizes a consumer mentality is of the devil and resists him at every point it surfaces it stands no chance at recovering the original function and joy of being the Church.

We don’t just need a revolution in Church structure. We need a complete societal revolution, away from consumerism and back to servanthood lifestyle.