

Commercialisation of Christianity

Yeshua got pretty upset that people were making a profit from the “business” of the temple of God. (John 2, Matthew 21, Mark 11, Luke 19).

In fact, it reads to me like that was the one thing that got him more upset than at any other time of his earthly ministry.

The temple was supposed to be a house of prayer. And these guys were charging entry fees and making a profit from selling animals and exchanging currencies. All of these were legitimate businesses in any other context. But not in the temple of God.

How would Yeshua react if he walked into some of our modern churches?

Churches where we sell copies of the sermon. Where we pass a plate, (which carries a certain stigma if you don't put anything in doesn't it!), instead of having a box at the back where we can anonymously give to God if we feel burdened to do so. Where we sell music DVD's of worship songs. Songs which the authors are presenting to the church as glorifying God. Songs which they would claim the Holy Spirit helped them write. (If he didn't then we shouldn't be singing them should we).

But if the Holy Spirit helped them to write the songs, then that is his ministry isn't it? Just as if he helps me to know what to pray for you, or what advice to give you regarding your marriage, or your addiction. We haven't gone so far as to start charging for prayer, but I guess that is the next step.

We charge for music which we openly say was co-authored by the Holy Spirit.

How is that different from what Simon was thinking in Acts 8? He wanted to buy the gift of being able to give the Holy Spirit. But that ability is a gift from God, not to be bought or sold.

And yet we want to profit from music which we received freely from him. Music which was written using our music gift which came freely from God.

What are we thinking?

And it's the same with books. How dare we charge for Christian books? Either they are also the work of the Holy Spirit and so they should be free, or they are the work of a person and therefore pointless even reading.

And I guess the latest is movies. Churches produce movies like “Fireproof” and “Courageous”. Both very good movies. But if they are “from God” they should be free.

And they don't just charge a hefty price for the DVD, (\$25 where I live), if you want to show it at your church you have to pay even more. \$100 if there are less than 100 people, way more if you have a bigger audience.

So a small church that wants to use the movie as a way of outreaching to the community has to pay \$25 to buy the DVD and then \$100 every time they want to show it. They (the small church of less than 100 people) have to pay another church (a big church with thousands of people) to be allowed to use something the big church is claiming is “from God”. Even if the small church is only using it for evangelism.

I get the whole, “we need to recover our expenses” crap. Yes CRAP. But that is worldly thinking. That is business thinking. If it is from God then God will cover the expenses. They are not recovering expenses - they are making a profit.

If you are a musician, an author, a playwright, a movie director, an actor, or anything like that. And you have something from God which will be a benefit to his church. Then I challenge you to give it away for free and trust God to meet your expenses. (If he doesn't then maybe it's not from God or he doesn't want his church to have it). I challenge you to earn your reward in heaven, not on earth.

If you are just an “ordinary” Christian, then I would ask you to forgive these brothers and sisters of ours who are profiting from their spiritual gifts. Pray for them. And ask God to give you new ministers (small m) who have hearts after his own. Ministers who have the heart of Yeshua. Who are appalled that the house of God has become a den of thieves.

Yeshua said very clearly that you cannot serve both God and money. It is time to choose.

It is time to be angry. It is time to speak out. Time to do something.

Don't just sit there, letting it go by unchallenged. At least change it in your church. At least stop being a part of it.