

The Mega Church Compared and Contrasted with the Bible Believing Church

Bigger does not necessarily mean better. Whether the local assembly of believers is big or small, our responsibility is to be faithful to the Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ, and to obey and honor His infallible Word. The philosophy and practice of the Mega Church movement is outlined in the following chart:

The 'WORLD' of the Mega Church	The 'BIBLE' Believing Church
The Mega Church movement of today is described in different ways. It is known as the “purpose driven church” (Rick Warren), the super church, the seeker friendly church, the market driven church, the user friendly church, etc. It seeks to create activities and programs which will attract the masses. To do this, the Mega Church leaders feel it is important to find out what people really want and then give it to them. [An example of this is given below with respect to what kind of music people want.] Whether what they give them is really what they need is a separate question.	We are using "Bible Believing Church" here to refer to any church, regardless of name or affiliation, that is a part of that Biblically-loyal minority movement of our day, composed of men, women, boys and girls who know their God and seek to honor and obey His only written revelation. God’s Word, the 66 books of the Bible, is regarded as absolute, final, infallible, authoritative and totally inerrant (John 10:35; 17:17). All matters of faith (what we believe) and conduct (what we practice) must be based completely on “Thus Saith the LORD.”
Seeker friendly—provide various programs that will attract all kinds of people	Christ-centered—“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32).
Market driven—use marketing principles to “sell” your church program to the masses. Provide a product that will meet the real or perceived needs of the consuming public.	Spirit-filled—Looking to the Spirit of God to do His work of conviction in the hearts of men, women, boys and girls (John 16:8-11).
The church considered a market place	The church considered a holy place (1 Cor. 14:24-25)
Borrow ideas from the business world	“Be not conformed to the world” (Rom. 12:2).
Purpose driven	Holy Spirit led (in accord with Holy Scripture)
The overriding desire is to build a super church.	The overriding desire is to honor a Superlative (Supreme) God.
The gospel is a commodity (the price of which is continually lowered to meet the demands of the consumer).	The gospel is a necessity (1 Cor. 9:16, with God’s righteous standards never compromised).
The mega church “would proudly proclaim that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. But they have redefined salvation. Salvation is not simply, under the new gospel, the forgiveness of sin and the imputation of righteousness. It is not a deliverance from the wrath of God upon an undeserving and rebellious people. The new gospel is a liberation from low self-esteem, a freedom from emptiness and loneliness, a means of fulfillment and excitement, a way to receive your heart’s desires, a means of meeting our needs. The old gospel was about God; the new gospel is about us. The old gospel was about sin; the new gospel is about needs. The old gospel was about our need for righteousness; the new gospel is about our need for fulfillment. The old gospel is foolishness to those who are perishing; the new gospel is attractive.” –Gary E. Gilley, <i>The New Gospel</i>	

Salvation on the sinner's terms	Salvation on God's terms
Seekers are drawn by convenience.	Seekers are drawn by conviction (John 16:8).
The world is assimilated into the church.	The church is to be separate from the world (2 Cor. 6:14-18).
Looking to make sinners comfortable	Looking to the Comforter to convict sinners
Seeks to make people happy	Seeks to make people holy
The attendees are seeking personal fulfillment: How can my life fulfill my desires and needs?	The attendees are seeking personal faithfulness: How can my life be well pleasing to the Savior (2 Cor. 5:9)?
Friendly seekers assemble to have their itching ears scratched (2 Tim. 4:3).	God's people assemble to hear the God-breathed Scriptures which are profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
Emphasis on pleasing the sinner	Emphasis on pleasing the Saviour who died for the sinner
Overriding concern for numerical growth	Overriding concern for spiritual growth. (God rewards faithfulness, not numerical success—1 Cor. 4:2)
“We have made it easy for hundreds superficially to ‘accept Christ’ without ever having faced sin and with no sense of need. We are healing slightly the hurt of this generation, trying to treat patients who do not even know they are sick” –Vance Havner	“They that are well need not a physician, but they that are sick” (Luke 5:31). “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47).
Worship services are casual: jeans with holes, shorts, women wearing revealing tops (cleavage showing), flip flops, “ <i>advertising the world of fashion</i> ”, and etc.	Worship services are formal (in the sense of dignified, reverent, worshipful, respectful of WHO GOD IS). We are not attending a ball game or going to the beach or going to a rock concert; we are worshipping the King of Kings. (NOTE: guests or unsaved are not shunned because of dress. They are unaware of what 'church' is for.)
Come just as you are.	Come desiring to be more like Christ, to reflect SELF less and less, to reflect CHRIST more and more (2 Cor. 3:18).
Entertainment—What can this service do for me?	Reverence—What an awesome God! I adore Him! How can I please Him? (Heb. 11:6)
“If I see aright, the cross of popular evangelicalism is not the cross of the New Testament. It is, rather, a new bright ornament upon the bosom of a self-assured and carnal Christianity. The old cross slew men; the new cross entertains them. The old cross condemned; the new cross amuses. The old cross destroyed confidence in the flesh; the new cross encourages it” –A.W. Tozer (If only Tozer could see us now!)	
The pulpit and the preaching of the Word is minimized.	The pulpit and the preaching of the Word are central (2 Tim. 4:2).
Methods used: programs, drama, gospel magic, comedians, rock concerts, contemporary music, sensitivity workshops, “ <i>Christian</i> ” rock music, etc.	Method used: “the foolishness of preaching” centered in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:21; 2:2).
Entertain the people	Edify the people
Give the people what they want	Give the people what they need

Make everyone comfortable	Afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted.
A non-threatening atmosphere	An atmosphere of total indoctrination of God's truth (Acts 20:27-28, Matt. 28:20; 2 Tim. 2:2)
Keep the message positive.	Was Christ's message always positive? "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Matt. 3:7). Also read Matthew chapter 23.
A cross-less and costless Christianity—little or no self denial, little or no discipleship, as if Christians can enter the kingdom on flowery beds of ease. "The power of the world, the spirit of its literature, the temptations of business and pleasure, all unite to make up a religion in which it is sought to combine a comfortable hope for the future with the least possible amount of sacrifice in the present " (Andrew Murray)	"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). "Endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3).
Music patterned after the world	Music patterned after Biblical principles
"Purpose Driven" Rick Warren said, "At Saddleback Church, we are unapologetically contemporary...I passed out a three-by-five card to everybody in the church, and I said, 'You write down the call letters of the radio station you listen to.' I wasn't even asking unbelievers. I was asking the people in the church, 'What kind of music do you listen to?' When I got it back, I didn't have one person who said, 'I listen to organ music.' Not one. I didn't have a single person who said, 'I listen to huge choirs on the radio.' Not one. In fact, it was 96-97% adult contemporary, middle-of-the-road pop...So we made a strategic decision that we are unapologetically a contemporary music church. And right after we made that decision and stopped trying to please everybody, Saddleback exploded with growth." [<i>Please notice that the decision to go contemporary was based on a survey of what radio stations people listen to. It was not based on principles set forth in the Word of God.</i>]	
Hymn books considered obsolete; words of shallow choruses are projected on a screen.	Hymn books are used, taking advantage of the great time-tested hymns of the faith
Choruses are experiential, focused on one's own personal experience, rather than being based on objective, Biblical truth.	Hymns are God-centered, focused on the Person and work of Christ, with the believer's experience flowing from that foundation.
The music has a rock beat.	The music is honoring to the Rock of Ages.
Drama is a central ingredient of worship.	The drama of redemption is proclaimed (1 Cor. 2:2).
Performers are applauded: a horizontal response from the happy audience.	Truth is quietly "Amened"—a vertical response from the heart of the true worshipers.

Experimentation with meditation techniques gleaned from Eastern religions (contemplative prayer, prayer mantras, etc.). Emptying the mind in order to become one with the “ <i>god</i> ” that is within each and every person.	Meditation on the Word of God is practiced (Psalm 1; Psalm 119; Joshua 1). Not the emptying the mind but the filling the mind with God’s Word in order that His truth might be obeyed and displayed. God only indwells those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.
Conversion results: worldly converts (“What you win them with is what you win them to.”) Converts are brought forth “after their kind.” A worldly evangelist gives birth to a worldly convert and it is rare that the convert exceeds the spiritual level of the person who influenced him.	Conversion results: new creatures in Christ: “To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me” (Acts 26:18).
Adopt and assimilate the world’s language, clothing, customs and lifestyle in order to win the world for Christ and to show the world that if they become a “Christian” their life need not change very much.	Use servants of Christ who have been saved out of the world to show the unsaved that Christ can make a difference. The gospel demands a genuine change of mind (repentance) and change of direction (conversion).
No pressure is put on people for commitment.	Commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and to His truth is demanded (Matt. 28:20).
Joining a Mega Church is a mega mistake	Joining His Church (Matthew 16:18) is an awesome responsibility and a joyous privilege for the believer in Christ (1 Tim. 3:15).

Note: These statements are generalizations for the purpose of clarifying basic positions and principles. This does not mean that every so-called Mega Church is guilty of everything described in the left hand column. Neither does this mean that every Bible-believing church faithfully embodies everything stated in the right hand column.

The following resources were very helpful in formulating this chart:

- 1) “Seeker Sensitive or Sinner Sensitive” (Parts 1 and 2), *Faith Pulpit*, November 2006 and December 2006, a publication of Faith Baptist Theological Seminary, 1900 NW Fourth St., Ankeny, IA 50023.
- 2) “The Church Growth Movement—An Analysis of Rick Warren’s ‘Purpose Driven’ Church Growth Strategy” by Dennis W. Costella, reprint from *Foundation* magazine, published by Fundamental Evangelistic Association, P.O. Box 6278, Los Osos, CA 93412.
- 3) *This Little Church Went to Market—Is the Modern Church Reaching Out of Selling Out?* By Gary E. Gilley, Evangelical Press [ISBN 0 85234 596 8].