

Church growth does not equal kingdom growth, speaker says

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By Ken Camp

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DALLAS—Church growth does not necessarily result in expansion of God's kingdom, a Canadian pastor told a Texas Baptist conference.

"It is possible to participate in church expansion and unintentionally be an agent for shrinking the kingdom of God," Jeff Christopherson, pastor of The Sanctuary in Oakville, Ontario, said at Epicenter, a spiritual formation and missions event sponsored by the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Canadian pastor Jeff Christopherson presents his "kingdom matrix" at Epicenter.

Some Christians substitute the church for God's kingdom because they want to be able to control it, he noted, pointing out the kingdom's scope

transcends any single church.

“The church is a temporal tool to advance something eternal—the kingdom,” Christopherson said.

“The church has a shelf life. If we look at our church as the kingdom, we miss the kingdom.”

Sincere seekers outside the church may come nearer the kingdom of God than some self-centered people within the church who artificially manufacture growth but are detached from the true source of power, he asserted.

“It is possible to unknowingly value the kingdom of God before acknowledging the value of its source—the King,” he said. “We love the forms, but Jesus talked about the source.”

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Christopherson maintained people fit into one of four positions in what he referred to as the “kingdom matrix.”

- Brand-expanders.

These people are members of the church but are citizens of “the dominion of darkness,” he said.

Brand-expanders are religious consumers whose source of authority is their corporate identity.

They are energized by competition with other religionists who want to expand their own brand.

“Brand growth is a fake copy of the real deal,” Christopherson said.

- Self-seekers.

Like brand-expanders, they are captives of darkness, but at least they are honest about it.

They are narcissistic materialists energized by their own egos, he explained.

Self-seekers find their ultimate authority in themselves, and they manipulate other people to advance their own agendas.

- Kingdom-seekers.

Although they are outside the church, they value principles of God’s kingdom such as good will, community, personal transformation and spirituality, Christopherson said.

“Kingdom-seekers find the brand-expanders’ worldview unattractive and unhelpful,” he said.

“Kingdom-seekers respond when they are exposed to the authenticity of the kingdom. When they see the real thing, they want it.”

Once kingdom-seekers find faith in Christ, they become the most effective evangelists to self-seekers, he added.

“Kingdom-seekers are relationally networked and prepackaged with credibility to influence the self-seekers,” he said.

- Kingdom-expanders.

Kingdom-expanders live where the kingdom of God and the church come together.

They want to move from transformation to incarnation—living out the gospel and being the body of Christ in the world, Christopherson said.

Kingdom-expanders recognize kingdom growth involves sending out and sacrificing, not creating a club that benefits its members, he explained.

“If we see our resources as our own, we’ll never build the kingdom of God. If we see our people as our own, we’ll never build the kingdom of God,” Christopher-son said.

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