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Transformative Christian
Leadership Series

CONSUMERISM

KENT R. HUNTER

with TOM SCHAEFFER

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Scripture references in this book are from *The Message* version. Why? According to the brilliant translator, Eugene Peterson, it's not meant to be a scholarly study Bible. It's meant to be a life-learning, engaging Bible that helps you to appropriate God's teaching to everyday life. God's plan is to effectively change your life through the divine power of His Word.

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Beyond Consumer Christianity

Introduction

At the time we are born, our God-given inclination is to consume. It begins at our mother's breast. Our first food supply is the gift of God's creation. We grow and thrive.

Consuming is not a bad thing. Parents nurture our growth during those early years, and, if we're smart, we consume their wisdom and guidance. It is a miraculous, divinely constructed system.

As toddlers, we learn and grow. We hear the sounds of adults and consume the gift of speech as we take it all in. We enter school and consume knowledge. We meet others and experience the wonderful gift of relationships.

We learn to develop goals and aspirations. We discover that learning and work provide fulfillment and opportunities to experience our goals to create and procreate.

If we are blessed to grow up in a spiritual environment, we also begin to grow in faith—with unfathomable dimensions of spiritual and relational blessings. We consume the faith of our elders, who imprint our spiritual growth as a living testimony of life with God, love from Jesus, and spiritual power from the Holy Spirit.

Beginning with Sunday school, we consume what are unfathomable insights about creation, love, forgiveness, spiritual fellowship, and biblical truth. As Christians, we are

overwhelmingly consumed by the love of God and His grace, even as we experience the miracle of becoming a spiritual force in the lives of others.

At that point, we grow beyond consumers. We take on the apostolic role of spiritual influence. We become disciples, yet remain disciples. We are spiritual teachers, yet simultaneous learners.

We consume Scripture along with the disciplines of love and prayer and experience spiritual impact on others. It is a miraculous spiritual journey. We learn we can't outgive God. We can't outgrow our spiritual walk. There is always more to learn—spiritual insights to experience and mission opportunities to multiply our faith to others by the power of the Holy Spirit.

And yet, there is this subtle challenge to become a consumer of faith—in a way that diminishes our mission to others. This is our subtle enemy at work. This challenges us to subconsciously digress to spiritual consumerism. It is always subtle, tempting us to cross the line from healthy believer to self-centered consumer.

The symptoms are well known. We edge God out. Our Bibles collect dust. Our worship becomes erratic. Our service in the name of Christ diminishes. Our busyness conflicts with our Christian service. Our worship experience becomes judgmental: "I don't think the pastor's message today was worth hearing." Then we might say, "I'm too busy to serve."

It is a battle for every believer. Consumerism can edge out God. It's not new. It's been a reality since the Garden of Eden. Yet it doesn't have to be that way for you. Consume your faith, and it will consume your life.

The Church as Home: Building God's Kingdom Together

When you meet someone new and you discover that they are a Christian, what's your next question? For most, it's: "Where do you go to church?"

What's wrong with that? Well, it sounds like: "Where do you go to shop for fresh fruit?" or, "Where do you go to hang out and drink coffee?" So, what's the challenge?

It's so easy to slip into a *consumer* approach! "I" choose to go there. And, if you ask most Christians, "Why there?" you know what you hear. "I like the pastor," or, "They have a great youth program," or, "I really enjoy the music."

It's all about what "I" choose. However, in John 15:16, Jesus says, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you." He continues by talking about producing much fruit—spiritual results.

Of course, Jesus was speaking to His disciples, His followers, yet meant that for all disciples, in years to come: That's what Christianity is all about. If you conduct a word study of "choose" or "chose" and "chosen" throughout Scripture, the whole posture is that we respond to what God has done in Jesus Christ. That's a long way from a consumer mentality! It's much closer to belonging.

In Ephesians 2:16-22, Paul speaks to both Jews and Gentiles about what they have in common. The theme is clear: It is all

about what Christ does: the cross, the message of peace, unity, and new environment—a Kingdom.

Paul winds up using the metaphor of a building—but it's not a building where you go. It's not a shop for you to consume.

Your church is your *home*, where God uses everyone there. It is your launchpad for ministry. You don't go there for what you get—that's a consumer mentality. Church is not a spiritual shopping center. You're not there because you "like" this or that.

Your church is where you *belong*. You are there as a Kingdom building block, a person to help build the Kingdom of the God of the universe.

Later, in this same letter to the Christians at Ephesus, Paul expands this concept. He makes it clear about why we belong. Leaders—such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers—equip God's people for the work of ministry.

So, when you're asked, "Where do you go to church?" just say, "I *belong* to [name of church], where I *serve* in God's Kingdom. I work for the God of the universe."

Discussion Questions

How does the concept of “choosing” a church reflect a consumer mentality, and how does this contrast with the biblical perspective of being “chosen” by God as described in John 15:16?

Consider how the reasons people give for attending a particular church (e.g., liking the pastor, enjoying the music) might reflect a consumer mindset. Compare this with the idea that Jesus chose His followers to produce spiritual results, emphasizing belonging and purpose over personal preference.

In what ways does Paul’s metaphor of the church as a building in Ephesians 2:16-22 challenge the consumer mentality, and what implications does this have for how Christians should view their role within the church community?

Reflect on how Paul describes the church as a unified body built on the foundation of Christ, meant for collective growth and ministry. Discuss how this metaphor shifts the focus from individual preferences to a sense of belonging and contributing to the Kingdom of God.

The Enemy Within: Overcoming Spiritual Dry Rot in the Church

If a local church dies, it's likely it's been dying for a while. It is hard to kill a church! But many well-meaning—but misdirected—Christians do it every day. What happens?

Self-destruction of the local body of Christ is complicated. Unwillingness to change methods is one cause. Willingness to change biblical truth is another. Somewhere in the mix of church killing is consumer-oriented, self-centered mediocrity. No one wants to admit it, but it is a spiritual issue of dry rot that develops a “feel-good” body of Christ that is missionally bankrupt. The antidote is spiritual renewal.

Spiritual renewal is a resurrection. It's a personal, sometimes uncomfortable, journey of repentance, recognition of what it really means to be church, hard work, and discomfort about change. In Romans 8:9-11, Paul writes, “...if God has taken up residence in your life, you can hardly be thinking more of yourself than of Him.” The apostle goes on to say, “If God is living in you, you experience life on God's terms.”

This is a personal resurrection, first in you, then in others, then a resurrection of the body of Christ—your church! Paul says, “...if...God who raised Jesus from the dead moves into your life, He will do the same thing in you that He did in Jesus: bring you alive to Himself. When God lives and breathes in you, you are

delivered from that dead life.” Some Christians are so heavenly minded, they are no earthly good.

Paul continues in verses 12-14, “...get on with your new life. God’s Spirit beckons.” There are things to do and places to go!

In verses 15-17, Paul says, “This resurrection life ... it’s adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike ‘What’s next, Papa?’ God’s Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. If we go through the hard times with him, then we’re certainly going to go through the good times with him!” The enemy is Satan, and Satan is active. Impotent churches often reflect self-centered, self-focused people. So, we see this Enemy of the Great Commission. And often, that enemy is us!

Discussion Questions

What are the primary causes of a local church's decline as mentioned in the text, and how do these causes contribute to the overall self-destruction of the church?

Consider discussing the unwillingness to change methods, the willingness to change biblical truth, and the impact of consumer-oriented, self-centered mediocrity.

How does the concept of spiritual renewal serve as an antidote to a dying church, according to the material?

Reflect on the process of spiritual renewal described, including personal repentance, recognition of the true meaning of being a church, and the role of God's Spirit in bringing new life to both individuals and the church community.

Letting Go of Control: Trusting God's Plan Over Our Own

There is a serious, but subtle, battle taking place in every person, every church, every day. We've all heard the phrase "my way or the highway." At the epicenter of this war—this tension—is the passion to "want what I want." It drives us all.

When babies are born, they are hungry. That's good, because without nourishment, they die. But they can't talk. So, when they want food, they cry and scream. They don't care if it's 3 a.m. and you are exhausted. In effect, they have no ethical boundaries about eating. We are all born as ferocious consumers! It's God's gift for survival.

Yet, as we mature, we learn there are boundaries. If you eat whatever you want and eat too much, you gain weight—and that will eventually kill you. If you have lofty goals about wealth, there are boundaries. If you steal it, you go to prison. If you overwork, you kill yourself.

God has a great approach for dealing with this challenge. Jesus summed it up in what people call "The Lord's Prayer." Christians pray, "Your will be done, on Earth (in my life, church, world, etc.) just like it is in Heaven"—where things are perfect.

Back in 2020, the world experienced the COVID-19 pandemic. All the scientific advances, all the smart scientists, all the great medical facilities, and all the money in wealthy nations could not

stop a tiny bug you can't even see. Billions of people were sequestered in their homes. It was a global lesson about egocentric control. You can't do whatever you want. You can't go wherever you want. In short, you are not in control of your own destiny. What a lesson!

God didn't cause the pandemic. It is another part of the fallen world, and that's due to sin. Yet, it was a great lesson about how you don't really control your own life, like it's so easy to think.

In 1 Peter 4:1-2, there is a powerful reflection of that one-liner in the Lord's Prayer about God's will—what God wants. The apostle writes, "Since Jesus went through everything you're going through and more, learn to think like Him." What, Jesus went through a pandemic? No—much worse: undeserved crucifixion.

Peter continues, "Think of your suffering as a weaning"—think about the baby at the breast!—"from that old sinful habit of always expecting to get your own way." Consider your own life. This is powerful! Peter continues, "Then, you'll be able to live out your days free to pursue what God wants instead of being tyrannized by what you want." Wow!

Think about how humans organize God's church. What do we do? We have votes, basically asking believers to express their will—not God's! Look in any church: There are baby Christians and adolescent Christians. That's like asking your five-year-old daughter to weigh in on whether you should pay the mortgage or go to Disney World! There are churches that perpetuate forms of worship, use of ancient words, and clergy in garb that communicates that God is old, out-of-date, and irrelevant! Never mind that Jesus became flesh to connect with people in the context of their lives!

Oh, but try to change the styles we grew up with? What happens? We worship the package at the risk of making the Gift (Jesus) irrelevant. Bottom line: We want what we want. Peter nails it: We are tyrannized by what we want. So, we go back to the prayer that Jesus taught us: We want *whatever* God wants, just like it happens in Heaven.

Discussion Questions

How does the concept of “wanting what I want” manifest in different stages of life, and what are the potential consequences of unchecked desires?

Reflect on how the innate desire for self-satisfaction evolves from infancy to adulthood and the importance of setting boundaries to avoid negative outcomes.

Consider the analogy of a baby’s hunger and the boundaries we learn as we mature. How does this analogy help you understand the balance between human desires and spiritual growth?

Consider the lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic and 1 Peter 4:1-2. How can they instruct and guide you in overcoming the “old sinful habit” of expecting to get your own way?

Fostering Commitment: Building a Vibrant and United Church

If you put your church under the microscope or into the spotlight, what do you see? If you were to diagnose the culture of your congregation, what would stand out? What are the values, beliefs, attitudes, priorities, and worldviews that are reflected by the general lifestyle of those in your congregation?

Consider grading your congregation—and yourself—and others collectively on the basis of what Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians at the end of chapter 5. How would you rate your congregation and yourself on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being “awful” and 10 being “great”?

This is what Paul summarizes, beginning with verses 13-24 of Thessalonians chapter 5: “Get along among yourselves.” So, how does that work at your church? How would you rate it? He continues, “Warn the freeloaders, encourage the strugglers.” One of the greatest challenges that hinders revival in every church is spiritual consumerism.

Paul continues, “...reach out for the exhausted, pulling them to their feet.” How is your church doing in that area? Paul adds, “Be patient with each person, attentive to individual needs.” How does that work at your church? How does it rate?

Paul continues by focusing on patience and being “attentive to individual needs.” How do you rate on that one? He continues,

“Be careful that when you get on each other’s nerves, you don’t snap at each other.” What is that like at your church—how would you rate it?

As Paul continues in verses 16-18, he challenges Christians to “be cheerful.” Then he tells how: “Pray at all times, thank God no matter what happens.” The apostle is describing the Christian lifestyle approach. Is that like yours? Is that evident at your church?

In verses 19-22, Paul describes how all this works: “Don’t suppress the Spirit or a word from the Master.” He continues, “Don’t be gullible, check out everything, keep only what is good. Throw away anything evil.” How would you rate that performance among Christians at your church?

How would you rate yourself on these issues, on a scale of 1 to 10?

As you put it all together, how would you rate the health of your congregation? Are you a contributor or a detractor to that health? Where would you like your congregation to be? What is God saying to you? And what are you going to do about it?

Discussion Questions

Reflecting on 1 Thessalonians 5:13-24, how would you rate your church's performance in areas such as unity, encouragement, patience, and cheerfulness?

Consider specific examples from your congregation that illustrate these qualities. How can your church improve in these areas to better reflect the teachings of Paul?

In what ways can you personally contribute to the spiritual health of your congregation, as described in 1 Thessalonians 5:13-24?

Think about practical steps you can take to support unity, encourage others, and maintain a cheerful and prayerful attitude. How can your actions inspire others in your church community?

Snakes in the Sanctuary: Battling Subtle Disruptions in the Church

There is a saying: “We have seen the enemy, and the enemy is us.” Perhaps more accurately, in the spiritual realm, we should say, “We have seen the Enemy, and the Enemy is **in** us.”

Christ has defeated the real enemy—Satan. He did it on the cross, once and for all. In the end, the Enemy loses. However, in the meantime, we face a daily battle with a subtle, deceiving, treacherous Enemy. We Christians should be aware: The devil goes to church! Not to worship, but to disrupt. This enemy is “strategic,” a sneaky foe—so subtle, supernaturally stronger than humans. Literally, our only hope is in Christ, the only conqueror of the Enemy.

It’s so easy for church people to drift and open the door a crack for Satan. Rarely does the Enemy use obvious tactics: demonizing people, screaming and making sounds, or exhibiting scary behavior. Rarely is it physical murder. That kind of stuff would literally scare the hell out of wandering Christians! Instead, with Christians, the Enemy’s strategy is more subtle: sexual temptations, gossip, or spiritual negligence from worship, from prayer, from Scripture.

One of the worst temptations is one that is quiet, subtle, and under the radar: selfishness. It is sometimes called consumerism.

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul warns these early Christians. He uses great imagery from the Old Testament, such as Israel being delivered from Egyptian slavery, walking through the Red Sea on dry land, which was like a baptism of the masses, a whole nation being baptized at once. Paul talks about their journey in the desert, drinking from a rock, and he reminds them that rock was Christ, the rock of our salvation. He reminds the people of God's grace through His provision for them in the desert where they were able to eat manna and survive.

Paul says God's people in the desert were defeated, not by starvation, but by temptation. In effect, they defeated themselves! How? Under the stress of hard times, in the desert of life, they cracked, spiritually. Paul says they turned their religion into a circus!

This has occurred, subtly, in so many churches! You might say, "That's a little harsh, don't you think?" Well, you decide. Paul says, "We must never try to get Christ to serve us, instead of us serving Him." He says that the people of Israel tried that, it launched an epidemic of snakes—and 23,000 people died!

In this scenario, when you worship, what is your posture? Is it service or "serve us"? How do you approach church? Service or "serve us"? How do you look at worship, church, or your pastor? Service, or "serve us"?

The "serve us" epidemic is the consumerism trap. Paul adds that the mark of a consumer mentality is people who are consumer Christians. Consumer Christians are those who don't always get what *they* want. So, they complain. Paul says this is a signpost, a warning for you and your church: You are always on the edge of a slippery slope. There are people who complain and stir up discontent. We call them church bullies. They are like bullies on the school playground. They are verbally

dangerous dividers, unhappy because they don't get their own way. The antidote? Cultivate God confidence. The word "confidence" means "with faith." If you trust God, really trust God, no matter what, you will be overcome with spiritual confidence.

There's a lesson here: Don't ever let a few complainers disrupt you or your church. The stakes are too high! The Enemy uses these people to divide and conquer: to divide the church and to conquer your mission. Put your trust and confidence in Christ, and get real: People are not perfect, even Christians who go to church to help one another defeat the snakes of gossip, slander, complaining, and spreading discontent.

Discussion Questions

Reflecting on the subtle tactics of the Enemy described in this section, how can believers remain vigilant against spiritual negligence and selfishness within their church communities?

Consider practical steps that can be taken to prevent the drift toward consumerism and to maintain a focus on serving Christ and others.

In light of Paul's warnings in 1 Corinthians 10 and the example of the Israelites in the desert, how can churches cultivate a culture of God confidence and avoid the pitfalls of a consumer mentality?

Think about the role of church leadership and community in fostering an environment where faith is actively lived out and not just professed. How can the church support individuals in moving from a consumer mentality to a servant mentality?

Breaking the Cycle of Complaints: A Call to Faith Over Comfort

Even God-followers struggle with trusting in their faithful, heavenly Father. The result is a Christian form of consumer mentality that creeps into your mind to poison your faith.

Hebrews 11:1 says that faith is all about trust. Hebrews says, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” This has been a challenge for God’s people right from the beginning.

In Exodus 16, God’s people are liberated from slavery in Egypt, headed for the Promised Land, and—WHAT? Moaning and complaining to their pastors—well, to Moses and Aaron—about starving to death! Yeah, they missed their comfort food. Complain, complain, complain!

Fast-forward to you and me, our churches, and fellow Christians. The consumer mentality takes many forms, and they all have results: “The music is too loud,” “The preacher goes too long,” “They are asking for money again,” “They’re always begging for help.”

There are subtleties to this consumer mentality as well: chintzy giving, entertainment worship, “My way or I go somewhere else,” “Don’t ask me to serve,” “I’m not comfortable sharing my faith.”

Consumer faith kills a church. Where does it originate? One of the issues is usually under the surface. It's called "religion." This is the realm of styles, forms, rituals: "the way we've always done it." Religion says: "Can we just go back to Egypt?"

Nobody really wants to go there. But our consumer appetite takes us there all the time—subtly. There's a big difference between religion—how we do it—and faith: the real substance of following Jesus.

"But don't you think God would want us to be comfortable?" In truth, God cares very little about your comfort. Look at Jesus on the cross. Yes: Salvation at any cost—that's God's deal. It's never about what you want. Before the cross, Jesus prayed and prayed. He was not a consumer! What He said is important: "Not what I want, Father, but what You want—Your will be done—even if it means nails, blood, pain, disgrace, suffering, death."

In John 6, Jesus performs a miracle and feeds about five thousand people on five barley loaves and two fish. As you might expect, they were impressed! They said, "This guy must be a prophet! Imagine that! God's prophet here in Galilee!" (verses 6 and 14-15).

That night, the disciples got into a boat to head back to Capernaum. Jesus, perhaps deciding to get some exercise, chose to walk—on water!

The next day, the crowd of five thousand realized Jesus and the disciples were gone. They grabbed a bunch of boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus. Why? That's the question!

It would be great to say they wanted to worship Him, or learn more about salvation, or have a conference on how to reach the

world for Jesus. But Jesus knew better. He said, “You’ve come looking for Me, not because you saw God in My actions, but because I fed you, filled your stomachs—for free” (verse 26).

Everybody has appetites. Consumers have one kind of appetite that drives their lives. Believers, however, are followers of Jesus. They eat, too. But their greatest appetite is for a God who nourishes their spiritual life. It’s the kind of God Jesus is. Christians, by calling, are not consumers, fixated on self-comfort. Instead, we are hungry—starving for more of Jesus, more opportunities to serve others, hungry to worship God, intensely committed to reaching the crowd, anyone, everyone—that they might meet Jesus and get the “food” that lasts forever.

Discussion Questions

Reflecting on Hebrews 11:1 and the story of Exodus 16, how does the concept of faith as “the substance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” challenge the consumer mentality within the church today?

Consider how the Israelites’ complaints in the wilderness mirror modern-day complaints within the church. How can focusing on faith rather than comfort help address these issues?

In John 6, Jesus highlights the difference between seeking Him for physical needs versus spiritual nourishment. How can this distinction help believers shift from a consumer mindset to a servant mindset within their church communities?

Think about the ways in which Jesus’ actions and teachings encourage believers to prioritize spiritual growth and service over personal comfort and preferences. How can this perspective transform church culture and values?

From Words to Fruit: Living Out Genuine Christianity

In James 3:13, the Scripture says, “It’s the way you live, not the way you talk, that counts.”

It’s so easy for believers to slip into *nominalism*. That word that means “in name only.” So, if you’re born in America, but live in another country and swear allegiance to that other country, then become a citizen, are you still an American? You might say so, but your actions speak louder than your words.

This has always been a curse to the Christian movement: people who claim citizenship in the Kingdom of God, but whose lives lack any evidence.

Perhaps you’ve heard of “C&E Christians.” They show up only at Christmas and Easter. The danger? We Christians can’t judge them. Why? We can’t see into their hearts, their minds, or their lives. This is a dicey, fine-line subject.

There are so many Christians who go through the religious motions but demonstrate no spiritual lifestyle. They are baptized when young, then show up to be married in the church, and they look to the church to bury them when they die. In between, they’re AWOL—“Absent Without Official Leave,” a military term that spells major trouble. In the realm of faith, you might call it “Christianity Lite.”

Paul addresses this tough issue in his first letter to the Corinthians. In Chapter 15 verses 1-2, he begins, “Friends, let me go over the Message with you one final time—the Message that I proclaim and that you made your own; this Message on which you took your stand and by which your life has been saved.”

Paul continues, “I’m assuming, now, that your belief was the real thing and not a passing fancy, that you’re in this for good....”

We, too, should “assume” the best for people. That, by itself, is simple. Yet, Jesus—talking about false prophets preaching fake spiritual news—says, “You will know them by their fruit” (Matthew 7:16).

Consumer mentality is rampant in the world, and only a fool would believe Christians are inoculated from potential drift. That consumer life puts the person in control: “I’ll decide when I feel it’s time to worship. I’ll choose when to read my Bible. I’ll think about when I want to attend a Bible class and learn more about God. How I direct my secret thoughts, desires, and activities is my business.”

The challenge? In that mentality, that approach, “God” is now “I.” That, of course, means that God is not God.

What do you think? Could you, could your church, get more real about genuine Christianity? Do we help people to keep from this natural drift or, like laissez-faire parents, do we just avoid the hard challenges and let the children of God wander off into the woods of self-destruction?

Discussion Questions

Reflecting on James 3:13 and the concept of nominalism (when one identifies as a Christian but does not practice or follow the teachings of Christianity), how can believers ensure that their actions align with their professed faith?

Consider practical steps that can be taken to avoid the trap of being a “C&E Christian” and instead live out a consistent, genuine Christian lifestyle.

In light of Paul’s message in 1 Corinthians 15:1-2 and Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 7:16, how can the church address the issue of “Christianity Lite” and encourage deeper spiritual commitment among its members?

Think about the role of church leadership and community in fostering an environment where faith is actively lived out and not just professed. How can the church support individuals in moving from a consumer mentality to a servant mentality?

Conclusion

The Jesus Way of Discipleship

Jesus was an amazing leader who inspired people to move from just consuming to actively living for God's Kingdom. Let's see how He did this.

Jesus' method of discipleship was based on two key ideas: invitation and challenge. We can see this in the Gospel of Mark. At the start of His ministry, Jesus invited Peter and Andrew by saying, "Follow me." This was an invitation to a relationship, a promise to be with them. After His resurrection, Jesus challenged His followers by saying, "Go into all the world and share the good news." This was a call to action, a challenge to serve.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus balanced these two ideas. When He blessed, called, promised, or forgave, He was inviting. When He corrected, commanded, commissioned, or empowered, He was challenging. Here are some examples:

- "If you want to follow me, deny yourself and take up your cross [challenge], and follow me [invitation]" (Matthew 16:24).
- "You lack one thing; sell what you own, give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven [challenge]; then come, follow me [invitation]" (Mark 10:21).

- “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “No one, sir.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you [invitation]. Go and sin no more [challenge]” (John 8:10-11).

Jesus’ example shows that effective discipleship needs a balance of invitation and challenge. Unfortunately, in today’s Christian consumerism, there’s often too much invitation and not enough challenge. Many Christians are hesitant to follow Jesus’ commands, and church leaders are often reluctant to challenge their members. This leads to a comfortable, complacent church. That’s fertile ground for consumerism.

Let’s challenge ourselves to move beyond consumer Christianity and become fully devoted disciples. Here are some next steps to help us do that.

Embrace Your Role in the Kingdom

As we grow in our faith, it’s essential to recognize that our journey doesn’t end with consumption. While consuming knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual nourishment is vital, we must also transition into being active participants in God’s Kingdom. This means moving from being mere consumers to becoming contributors, disciplers, and spiritual influencers.

Reflect on Your Church Involvement

Take a moment to evaluate your involvement in your church. Are you attending services and participating in activities primarily for what you can get out of them? Or are you actively seeking ways to serve and contribute to the spiritual growth of others? Reflect on John 15:16, where Jesus reminds us that He chose us to bear fruit. Consider how you can produce spiritual results in your community.

Cultivate a Servant Mentality

Shift your mindset from “serve us” to “service.” When you think about your church, focus on how you can serve rather than on what you can receive. This change in perspective aligns with the teachings of Ephesians 2:16-22, where Paul emphasizes unity and the collective mission of the church. Your church is not a place to consume, but a home where you belong and contribute to building God’s Kingdom.

Engage in Spiritual Renewal

Spiritual renewal is crucial for both personal growth and the health of your church. This process involves repentance, recognizing the true meaning of being the church, and embracing the discomfort that comes with change. Romans 8:9-11 encourages us to live life on God’s terms, allowing His Spirit to guide us. Embrace this personal resurrection and encourage others to do the same.

Combat Consumerism With Confidence in God

Consumerism can subtly edge out God from our lives. Combat this by cultivating confidence in God, as Paul advises. Trust in God’s provision and guidance, and let this faith drive your actions. Avoid the pitfalls of a consumer mentality by focusing on spiritual growth and service.

Foster a Culture of Belonging

When asked about your church, emphasize belonging and service. Instead of saying, “I go to [name of church],” say, “I belong to [name of church], where I serve in God’s Kingdom.” This language shift reinforces the idea that church is not a place to consume, but a community where you contribute and grow.

Address Challenges Head-on

Recognize that challenges will arise, both personally and within your church. Whether it's dealing with complainers or facing the temptation to prioritize personal comfort over service, address these issues head-on. Encourage open dialogue, foster a supportive community, and remain steadfast in your commitment to God's mission.

Live Adventurously Expectant

Embrace the adventurous and expectant life that Paul describes in Romans 8:15-17. Approach each day with a childlike wonder, asking, "What's next, Papa?" Allow God's Spirit to guide you through both the hard times and the good, knowing that you are part of a larger mission.

By taking these steps, you can move beyond consumer Christianity and fully embrace your role in God's Kingdom. Let your faith consume your life, transforming you into a vessel for God's work and a beacon of His love and grace.



Call a Church Doctor!

Are you frustrated
that your church
isn't growing?

Is it starting to feel
less like a ministry
and more like a
country club?

Do you feel like all
your efforts yield
little fruit?

As a nonprofit Christian ministry, we offer proven strategies to help Christians, pastors, and ministry leaders become more effective at their mission: the Great Commission.

Effect Life Change

Our methods help
your church grow
both deep and wide.

Increase Health & Vitality

Track the improvement
in your church via our
9 measurable metrics.

Reduce Stress & Burnout

Our proven process
takes the stress off of
your leadership and
reduces burnout among
pastors and staff.

Here's how it works

①

Discover

What is working? What is not?
What is God's vision
for your church?

③

Prescribe

We guide you in creating an
implementation plan to break
through the ceilings and roadblocks
and achieve your goals.

②

Diagnose

Identify the ceilings and roadblocks
that are holding you or
your church back.

④

See Results

Reach more people, multiply
disciples, and resource leadership.

**Partner with a Church Doctor and break through the
barriers that have held you back.**



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CONSULTING & COACHING

Healthy Churches Thrive!/The SEND Movement: A Spiritual Adventure for Your Church

True transformational change is a spiritual process. This unique transformational adventure uses our most effective tools, resources, and teachings along with a team of committed consultants and coaches to come alongside you as your guide. Members, leaders, staff, and ministry will experience spiritual change and growth to help your church reach more people for Christ in the 21st century.

Diagnostic Assessment

This is a thorough analysis of your congregation's health, strength, and challenges. Recommendations for more effective ministry are shared to help you achieve more for God's purpose. A report is generated that graphically illustrates the church's views, attitudes, and worldviews. These become the mechanisms to develop a strategic plan for recommendations to move your church to action.

Coaching for Church Leaders

Our coaching approach is simple: We help Christian leaders unleash the capacity to realize their God-inspired best in ministry. Our process is based on asset mapping, leveraging your strengths, creating disciplined action plans, and building momentum through accountability and follow-up to help you achieve success.

Finishing Well

This is transition coaching for retiring ministers, staff members, and churches transitioning toward new leadership. Your Church Doctor will help to develop a plan of succession that works. They will help you develop a transition plan philosophy of ministry document; will structure a timetable that honors the retiring staff, assimilates the successor, and serves your church; and will help you avoid transitional pitfalls.

Call 1-800-626-8515

Email info@churchdoctor.org

**Scan the code to schedule a call with a
Church Doctor today!**



About the Authors



Dr. Kent R. Hunter is the founder of Church Doctor Ministries. He believes that God has called him to help Christians and their churches become more effective for the Great Commission, to reach unbelievers and to make them disciples of Jesus Christ. Dr. Hunter is the author of more than 40 books. He has consulted more than 1,800 churches from 80 denominations, as well as nondenominational and independent churches. He developed the SEND Movement, which trains congregational members to become missionaries to those who are unchurched in their social networks. Kent writes the bimonthly Church Doctor Report, found on www.churchdoctor.org. Kent lives on a tree farm in northeast Indiana with his wife, Janet. Kent and Janet have two grown children, Laura and Jon.



Tom Schaeffer has over 30 years of experience in ministry. During that time, he has led churches through transitions ranging from the mission start of a new congregation to the mission redevelopment of a failing congregation to the launch of a satellite worship at a large congregation. He has served in rural, urban, and suburban contexts. In addition, Tom started an award-winning brewery that, during his leadership, supported his ministry and worked under the motto of “Brew good. Do good.” Tom has served as a coach for numerous pastors and ministers. Currently, Tom serves as pastor of Faith United Lutheran Church in Toledo, Ohio, a new congregation resulting from the merging of three prior congregations.