



Trends and How They Affect the Church

By Topper Reid

A trend is defined as a general tendency, movement, or direction — a current fashion or mode. Our behavior, attitudes, perceptions, worldview, morals, and values continually blend together in a world of change and evolve into trends. According to Marita Wesely-Clough, author of *Trends and Countertrends for 2005 and Beyond*, “A social trend becomes a component of a culture when it lasts five to eight years or more.”

In this article and future writings, we will examine the newest trends and discuss implications, if any, for the way we “do church” in the future. Each trend will be identified and defined, followed by discussion regarding the impact it could possibly have on church.

TREND: From Mass Marketing to Focusing on Small Target Groups

One size does not fit all. I am a unique individual and it is all about me — what I want, desire, and expect. Consumers are more interested in their own personal needs than ever before. With the world at their Internet fingertips, finding that special, perfectly priced item is now possible. Individuals no longer have to choose from the limited mass merchandise available only in chain stores.

The trend is leading us into what Trendwatching.com calls “Nouveau Niche,” where the “new riches” will come from servicing the new niches. One only has to Google his desire to locate numerous choices to satisfy unique needs and wants. The entire world market is at our fingertips! How will this trend affect how we do church in the future? Let’s consider two groups of people. First we will look at the “un-churched” group and then at the church-attending group.

In the May 4, 2004 *Barna Update*, George Barna talked about how coming to church is not even on the “un-churched” person’s radar. “Stirring music and comfortable pews will not replace the easy chair or bed they already enjoy.” Barna says that the Christian must connect personally to the lost person with a life that speaks the Gospel.

Does this mean the church must go out into the world and meet this unique lost person on his own territory, in his own little niche? The answer is YES! We must enter the lost world as individuals ready to share our stories, remembering that the lives we live must match the stories we share. Outreach Bible study groups in neighborhoods will be effective in taking the Bible study class to the lost person. Informal Bible study groups meeting in homes may help reach lost people and transition them into church. Many churches are experimenting with home Bible study fellowship groups.

How does the “niche trend” apply to the church group? Already, we are seeing

different types of worship venues offered on Sunday mornings and at other times of the week. It is not unusual for a church to offer worship in a traditional, blended, contemporary, edge, southern gospel, or acoustic music venue on a given Sunday morning in multiple hours or locations within the same building or on other campuses.

Churches are offering live teaching/preaching, video cafe (video teaching/preaching), and simulcasting teaching/preaching to these different venues. Some churches even offer worship services in other languages. Smaller groups may meet on a weeknight in a music venue that speaks to where they are and their own unique worship needs. From a facilities-use standpoint, churches may want to consider the ability to offer more large-group multi-use space for varied worship venues. The different worship rooms would attract different niche groups. These same rooms could be used for other ministries at other times of the week. ♦