

Evaluating Church Attitudes

What are some key words or phrases that describe your church's attitude toward growth and outreach to the community and the world?

Do one or more of these "Dirty Baker's Dozen" describe an attitude(s) that exist(s) in your church? Circle as many as apply and briefly explain your selection.

- **Institutionalized church**—this is the church that has lost its way within the forms and programs of ministry. This church is just going through the motions and has forgotten the real purpose for which it exists.
- **Voluntary association church**—this church functions more like a democracy rather than based on New Testament principles. Competing factions help maintain the "status quo" because of a desire to keep everyone happy.
- **Unintentional church**—this is the church that often has good intentions but have difficulty acting on those intentions. This church has a hard time embracing an intentional process for making disciples.
- **"Us four and nor more" church**—this is the church that practically believes that growth will destroy their "sweet fellowship." The desire is to maintain a "family feel" which can make it hard for new people to break into the group.
- **"We can't compete" church**—this is most often the smaller church that has concluded that there is no way they can compete with the program-rich larger churches, and so, they stop trying to be the church.

- **“Decently and in order” church**—this is the church that values the processes of functioning smoothly (in committees and business meetings) very highly but lacks true spiritual passion for the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. Managing the “business” of the church in an efficient way is what’s important.
- **“Square peg in a round hole” church**—this church is just concerned about “plugging people in” to serve no matter what their gifts or passions may be. This church doesn’t consider making changes in their programs and ministries. Each year it’s important to just fill the same positions with whoever can be found to fill it.
- **“Time-warp” church**—this is the church that has maintained or preserved the same positions and practices and methods of doing church for too many years. This church expects people to just accept and adapt to the way this church does things.
- **“Tidy” church**—this is the church that works really hard to keep their buildings, facilities, equipment, and grounds in great shape. If growth starts to take place and new kids and families begin to disrupt things and “mess things up,” efforts are made to contain or stop “the growth problem.”
- **“My way or the highway” church**—this church has a vocal group or groups of people who keep things “the way they want them” (whatever their preferences are). No matter the issue, these people are not satisfied until things are done their way.
- **“Chaplaincy” church**—this is the church that sees their minister as the church “chaplain” or “hired servant.” Church members identify the needs and problems of the church body and let the pastor know how he needs to spend his time. After all, the pastor has been to seminary and that’s what he’s being paid to do.

- **The “company” church**—this church stays focused on what is handed down by the denomination rather than figuring out how to reach its community. One after another, denominational programs, plans, and events are calendared and the local church seeks to apply them faithfully without considering the local context.
- **“Play it safe” church**—this church seeks to protect what it has because it has a hard time believing that God could provide anything beyond its basic needs or it needs to maintain a “safety net for a rainy day.” Spending resources to reach others for Christ is not really in the church’s plan of action.

What other descriptions could you use to identify attitude issues in your church?

Who might be willing to help evaluate your church’s current condition and begin to pray about the situation and begin to develop a plan to gradually make some changes?

Remember to apply these principles before seeking to make any major changes:

Principle #1: Pray fervently that God will clearly reveal needed changes to you and the congregation.

Principle #2: Begin to clearly and specifically define the changes that are needed.

Principle #3: Be objective—plainly outline positive and negative forces impacting the situation with other key leaders and influencers.

Principle #4: Consider issues like support level for change in the congregation, who are the key influencers, and what is your current level of credibility.

Principle #5: Create healthy discontent in one or two key areas in partnership with key influencers.

Principle #6: Strategize your approach as much as possible and expect resistance.

Principle #7: Create structures to support the change and create a systematic way to engage in conflict resolution as necessary.