

Five Things To Ruthlessly Eliminate From Your Services

In his book, *Soul Keeping*, author John Ortberg tells of his mentor, Dallas Willard, encouraging him to ruthlessly eliminate hurry from his life. I love the term “ruthlessly eliminate” because it’s so needed and because it’s so difficult to do. Pastors and creative teams often come up with new and exciting elements to add to worship services without giving equal attention to what to subtract. A key strategy in creating an amazing worship service is not what’s added, but what’s eliminated. Here are five things to ruthlessly eliminate from your worship services.

Awkward Pauses

I’ve visited churches where awkward pauses seemed to be the norm. They’d wait for the scripture reader to get on stage, or the choir director to get the choir on and off the platform. Often people would look to the back of the Worship Center to try to figure who was supposed to be on stage and why they weren’t there.



Make sure you have a plan. A typical Order of Service is only the first step. Prepare and follow a detailed Service Planning Sheet to eliminate awkward pauses. Make certain the key players in the service know where they’re to be, what they’re to do, and when they’re to do it.

Uncomfortable Elements

The biggest offender here is the “stand and greet your neighbor” time. Churches have been using this service element in an effort to feel like they have a “friendly” church. If your service runs over 500 attendees, it’s very uncomfortable, especially for introverted and new people. When the Pastor or Worship Leader stands up and says, “Ok everyone, please turn to your neighbor, introduce yourself and say ‘You look great

today,” he might as well say, “Stand up, turn to a complete stranger and say something awkward.”

If you’re currently using the “greet your neighbor” time, please consider new people who probably want to go unnoticed, and introverted people who like to keep to themselves. The negative aspects of this element far out-weigh the positive.

Strange Traditions

Many denominations have long-held traditions that were meaningful at one time. But several have outlived their usefulness. If you need to explain the tradition you are practicing, what to do and why you’re doing it, it may not be worth doing anymore. Ask yourself, “Why did our denomination do this in the first place? Why is our church doing it now? Is it necessary? Is it helpful?” If you answered “I’m not sure” or “no” to any of these questions, you may want to consider a change.



I’m not saying get rid of all traditions. There’s a big difference between tradition and traditionalism. A tradition is a custom passed down from generation to generation. But traditionalism is the upholding of a tradition, especially so as to resist change. So, if it no longer makes sense and has stopped being helpful, eliminate it.

Archaic Language

I once visited a church that offered classes called “Alpha”, “Sozo” and “Skepsis.” I knew what Alpha was and I thought Sozo was the common name for the Led Zeppelin IV album. I had no idea what Skepsis meant. I also thought the church leaders forgot that no one speaks Greek anymore.

Many churches still use outdated, theological or “churchy” language to communicate. You might want to create a “taboo word” list. Document words that you won’t use anymore, like “righteousness”, “testimony” or “bulletin.” Instead, replace them with “right living”, “faith story” and “program.” You get the point. If most non-churched people won’t understand it, either explain it or replace it with a word that makes sense.

Anything Cheesy

Excellence honors God and inspires people. Cheesy does neither. If you get tense as an element in your service is about to happen; if you cringe a little; if you’d be

embarrassed by it if you invited someone to church that day, then get rid of that element. Bottom line, if there's a "cringe factor", don't do it.

So if you want your service to clearly communicate your intended message, remember, it's not what you add, it's what you eliminate. Consider ruthlessly eliminating these five elements and take note of the overall increased comfort and engagement level of your crowd. They'll be glad you did.

Originally:

<https://interactivechurchconsulting.com/2016/03/5-things-to-ruthlessly-eliminate-from-your-services/>