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Stuff that matters to Wayne

House Church Vs Brick and Mortar Church Building

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Is it better to meet in a church building or be part of a house church? I have asked myself this question for over 10 years now. Perhaps it's because all the 'downsides' of brick and mortar churches is repeated to me every seven days like clockwork, but it's due season for me to spit my thoughts out here. Please also understand my heart before reading. I want nothing more than to be as effective for my God with the limited time I have left. The purpose of writing this is that I'm hoping to make some big life decisions that will glorify the God who saved me and increase my effectiveness for Him on this earth. Please also note that I would like nothing less than any further division in the body of Christ. I hunger for the day when all the brothers and sisters will worship together in preparation of the wedding feast. However, I am compelled. It's like a bitter scroll in my belly.... so let's get into it, shall we? To begin, I thought it would be best to create a simple pros and cons bullet list for each which could be edited over the years. Perhaps someone might read this post and even feel compelled to participate. Clarification: please note that the usage of 'house church' or 'home church' does *not* mean watching your brick and mortar church's sermon on a live internet stream from the comfort of your bed.

Pros and Cons of Traditional Brick and Mortar Church Systems

Pros

- Big Brother Approves. Is approved by governments, municipalities (and all those creeps who spy on you) and should therefore be left alone until official government sanctioned persecutions begin.
- Unilateral Theology Controls. The theology can be 'kept in line' by the pastor or trained clergyman (or whatever title they get) and rogue spiritual renegades can be shut down before they mess up the faith of others.
- Nice Building. Convenient church building designed for the assembly of large groups together
- an unbeliever might feel more comfortable showing up to a church to hear about God rather than your living room or patio (have not surveyed to find out)
- Separated Children's Church. Yay "Children's Church"! (get those noisy kids outta there!)
- Cell Group Option. Can implement 'cell groups' to counteract the con list below and simulate a 'house church'
- Potentially Local. Could be 'local' if the brick and mortar building happens to be near your house. Or, you could seek out such a church.
- Building Rental Option. Could rent space in existing building instead of buying or building a church to save funds. Also, sharing with another congregation, like we do, is possible. But that's another entire series of 'pain' not to be discussed here.

Cons

- Big Brother is Watching. Is perfectly known by governments, municipalities (and all those creeps who spy on you), and when official government sanctioned persecutions begin, every single member who has made a charitable donation can be found and 'dealt with' even if they don't happen

to show up that week for the cattle herding. If you don't believe me, try searching out your favourite Canadian church [here](#) and realize that your SIN number is connected to this charitable tax number. You can run, but you ain't hidin'.

- Unilateral Theology Stream. The theology of the person delivering the messages might be messed up. In fact, the person him or herself might be messed up both spiritually and personally. Their theology and theirs alone will likely be the only teaching you get
- Shallow Relationships. Many believers find the large, convenient building of the church to be cold, disconnected, and impossible to find relationships in, even with the help of friendly 'greeters' and 'fellowship champions' (it's easy to get lost in a crowd). It's very difficult to build deep relationships with your brothers and sisters. In our case, we have a great meal every single week, prepared by the members yet it is only a rare occasion where the deep things of God are discussed and lives are penetrated. The depth of penetration into each others lives, from my experience, is average at best, but even superficial as a norm where it is not uncommon to not even communicate with someone for half a year.
- Atmosphere of evangelism. An unbeliever might feel more comfortable showing up to your patio or living room to hear about God rather than a scary church where their only goal is to preach damnation and sin (that's what many think)
- Separated Children. Almost 100% of brick and mortar churches have "Children's Church" which is, essentially, firing them off to a separate place. Should children be separated from worship with their parents? [The debate is on...](#)
- Cell Groups as a Program. Although there may be a "cell group" system in place, the physical brick and mortar con list (ie. costs, drive to main meeting, etc, etc) remain and the cell group is really just another "program" from the main church subject to the same folks and agendas.
- Waste of Time and Gas. In our case, we drive nearly 40 minutes each way to go to a building which is composed of probably 50% members who live where I drove from! This is folly for the following reasons:
 - it blows gas into the air which makes our air suck
 - the gas costs money which could have been pumped into your favourite ministry. On today's standard for a quick calculation, there is no way that trip is going to cost me less than \$5 each way or \$10/week if we just go to one meeting. My wife goes twice so that's \$20/week. \$20 x 52 weeks/year is \$1040.00. Read that again. Now think about the World Vision ads and think that you could have kept *THIRTY FIVE* children alive last year instead of death by famine. I'm just saying. This one hits me real hard with kids of my own... I almost want to say 'shame on you' but I know that we are all doing the best we can with what we know. Carpooling would obviously reduce this but still...
 - unless your stereo is turned off, there are no smart phones or tablets, and you are hyper-focused on speaking to each other, it's a waste of time
- Locally irrelevant. With a house church you can penetrate and focus on your geographical area. Realtors call this 'farming their area'. Is there any hope of us farming a 25 km area for Christ? Do I give a spiritual rats behind about a community 25km from my house? It's so far away you might as well call it a missions trip! What I see in the Bible when I read it, is 'hyper-local'. The people who meet together also live there and serve there, with the exception of the missionaries, evangelists, etc, who are always moving on.
- Geography over Theology. In order to be as local as possible, if you agree that local is better, you are forced to accept a church and its beliefs because it's close to your home, not because it's close to what you believe.
- Performance Atmosphere. No matter how you design the brick and mortar building, it always ends up looking like an stadium or auditorium where one person is up on a platform (and usually their musical rock stars as well). It's hard not to view the entire experience as a 'performance'. Those who need accountability will often find none and when questions come up, one is forced to 'save it for later' rather than simply ask. One might ask 'how do we reach the deeper parts' like this? Also,

except for when preaching to the sinners is happening, I don't see any example of this format in the Bible...

- It's expensive. If you happen to have \$500,000 to \$3,000,000 to build a basic local church, that's just the beginning of your pain. The operation costs can be fierce. With a house church the infrastructure is already in place and being paid for. The 'landlord' can be paid with milk and cookies or a kind word of encouragement.
- Sitting Ducks. If you read the end time prophecies at all, tying your place of worship to a piece of land seems, at best unwise. Should persecutions arise, all the enemy has to do is read the sign on the billboard and show up Sunday morning with their thugs.
- Immobile. As they say in real estate, it's impossible to move land. What if something changes where, say, 75% of the congregation moves 30km away from the church? Too bad you just spent \$3,000,000 on that fresh building with the big sound and screen...
- Tradition Rules. What if God wants to do something new and fresh? It seems like just walking into a brick and mortar building breeds an expected protocol that looks something like this: meet a greeter, take your seat, kid's truck off to children's church, rock band plays a few songs, choir sings a few songs (to appease the oldies, of course), the Lord's prayer is repeated, the Apostles creed is repeated, some opening prayer happens, the sermon happens, communion may or may not happen, closing prayer, blessing, the people chat, the people eat (optional), the people go. Repeat seven days later. In fact, some churches even write this order into their bulletin board so newcomers can be sure to fall back on the paper if they don't know how the program is going. Ok. No secret, this one really bugs me. I don't see God as being so small that we can put him into our program or box. What if God says "Keep the music going. I like this." Would you look at the clock and follow the bulletin? Or would you listen to God. I think in a house church there is a much greater chance of listening to God, but - I could be wrong. I'm not against order, but I'm against the order being above our God and having it tell us where to go rather than God.

Well, I feel like I've missed some so this will probably be a work in progress. I would love for others to throw some comments in here so that I and others can make the best choices as we move into the future. May all of you readers be blessed wherever you are, though. I love you in Christ.

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