



August 18, 2008

# Professional Tools

Doug Lawrence

## Quote

"A name is just a name until you have to spell it out for people." —T. Garden

## Scripture (repeated from last month)

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.—Acts 2: 44-47

## Prayer

Lord, help us to be the thoughtful people you created us to be. Open us to Your plans for us, and make us respectfully selective as we move forward in our attempts to serve you. Amen

## Leadership

Doug Lawrence is all in favor of the church trying to fulfill the Great Commission, but he believes we ought to examine how we are perceived by the very people we want to influence in the language that we choose to use. —Editor

The Father of Evangelical Protestantism would be proud!



Jacobus Arminius

## “The Stinky Church”

In Ricardo Bellino’s [“You Have Three Minutes! Learn the Secret of the Pitch from Trump’s Original Apprentice.”](#) he suggests that brevity in presentation is next to Godliness (not really, I added that). He’s right, you know. If you can pitch fast and hard, there is a greater likelihood that you will sell your idea or product. The Evangelical church has bet its Arminian backside on this fact. Witness the tag lines now rampant in the church world—most recently “The Purpose Filled” this and that, “Seeker Driven” and “The Simple Church,” and so on and so on.

A few days ago I saw an ad for the upcoming [“Sticky Church”](#) Conference. The idea is to close the back door so that people won’t graze at your church for just a week or two. My head began to spin with formulaic phrases that would fix the church once and for all? Can we find just the right words to draw people to Christ? Can we take all those sinners out there in Sinnerland and convert them to “forever friends” with Jesus? Well, I say we can and we must by using just the right branding. You can bet your ever-reinventing-herself-Madonna action doll on it!

It didn’t take long before my feisty little brain was working overtime to come up with just the right words to help leaders sell the church. So, I’m thinking about writing a book called, “The Stinky Church.” I will write additional supplements and specialized (targeted) versions for every ministry in the church. I’ll bundle them at 20% savings for your whole team! It seems to me that if you want to appeal to, and be truly authentic for the average heathen (men in particular—we’re desperate to bring them into the church—I always thought more women in the church was a good thing—they sing better!), you might want them to really feel at home. The Stinky Church, at long last, removes the one remaining excuse men use to stay home—“I don’t want to shower and go to some place where I’ll be judged!” At The Stinky Church, this is not a problem. At TSC, the riper you are, er, well...the riper you are! We want to pluck you

out of the muck and mire like some wayward pound dog and introduce you to the sweet-smelling life that only our church can offer. Our automatic aroma diffuser mechanisms pump out more fresh (“slightly lemony”), biodegradable essence than any church in town. By the time you leave, you’ll smell better than an 18th century fop! We know what you want—to clean up your act!

You get the idea. Church is all about you! The Gospel is only truly relevant if we make sure it’s relevant to you and people just like you. Let’s put the “stink” back into distinctive! After all, there’s nothing in Scripture that suggests that you shouldn’t be comfortable while you turn completely away from all that disrupts your sense of who God is toward an actual life in Him (this was formerly known as redemption—weird word).

Evidently the following formulas didn’t work:

- You don’t have to dress up to come into God’s house any more. (In the church I visited last week, in fact, it should have said over the front door, “Clothing Optional!”)
- We’ll only do music you like—as soon as we actually figure out what music you like—or, alternatively, we’ll add more services with different styles until you’re really, really happy.
- We’ll serve the very same coffee you usually have to buy— for FREE!
- We’ll figure out which muffins you like and we’ll toast them lightly just before you arrive—we’re here for you!
- “Free tool caddies for dads this Sunday [Father’s Day]—We love our dads!” (No, I’m not kidding, I was there! I love tool caddies!)

Bring on The Stinky Church! It’s YOUR turn!

(The sign found out front of one church probably better expresses my point-of-view.)



For the record,

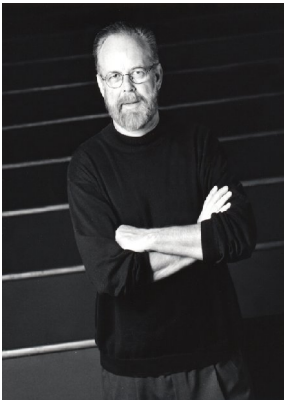
My tongue is pretty firmly rooted to my cheek on this and other MME articles I plan to write. Don't be offended by my taking shots at some of my favorite people and institutions. I consult with churches often around these and other subjects. My intent is to keep a conversation going about how we think of the church. Do we really think that every paradigm shift we make will make the seeker-friendly difference we're after. I don't want to replace the Wittenberg Door (who could?), I just want us to think through the consequences of what we perceive to be "good marketing" on an ongoing basis as we build the Kingdom of God. Also, for the record, I am a huge fan of [Leadership Network](#) which is sponsoring the Sticky Church events. In the past I have moderated many of their gatherings of church musicians . They are one of the most influential parachurch organizations in the world and I am hugely in their debt.

So, Try This...

Ask yourself these important questions when you investigate new ideas in the Evangelical church world:

- Does this idea fit the church culture in which I find myself?
- Will constant shifts in our church's vocabulary (lexicon of ministry) help or hurt our chances of expanding people's understanding of who we are, and our influence on our community?
- If we read more books will we be truly better at loving people in the ways that Jesus has loved us?

Always be open to truth from a variety of sources, just think for yourself as you adopt the thinking of others.



[Doug Lawrence](#)

Doug has been a consultant to church leaders for 35 years and is anxious to be helpful to you in leadership, musical, and staffing considerations. Please click on his name above and email him. He's available to consult on the phone as well.

Take a look...

This is a great new way for singers to connect. If you sing, you belong here! If you conduct or encourage singers, you belong here too! Join by clicking the picture below...

