

A banner with a green and yellow background featuring a field of grass. The text is centered and reads: DR. LAMAR E. SMITH CENTER FOR EVANGELISM & CHURCH GROWTH.

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Mike Slaughter feels that one of the keys to the success of the Ginghamburg Church, a church that has grown to over 4,000 people in worship in a blue-collar town, was the close attention that the church and Mike paid to *felt needs*. People have needs, and that is a simple fact, and long-term disciples have needs, as well as those who are new to the journey, and that is a simple fact. People struggle with sin, their mortality, and their relationships, we are after all human. Churches that understand this are better able to connect with their congregation, their community, and especially those they are trying to reach. Paraphrasing Adam Hamilton's statement (he made an equally powerful claim), "everyone who comes to church is hoping to experience God." The first-time guest who may not believe in God is hoping that God exists, and they might discover Him in that service. They made the decision to come to a church where they expected God to be a topic of conversation. It doesn't surprise, offend or alienate them. Most people who attend church are hoping to connect with God.

Everyone has needs, and everyone needs God! This is a very simple, foundational truth. When churches get this, these churches grow. People come back, new people come, and they invite others to come. So . . . what *felt needs* will we address on a given Sunday and how are we going to help people experience God when they come to worship on Sunday morning at one of our services or events?

When preparing for worship, instead of asking, "What great message series can we create, what innovative video can we create, or what new music can we come up with?" . . . what if we ask:

What *felt needs* are we going to connect with this week? How are we going to help people experience God in this service?

Now I believe we should be innovative, the worship music should be great, the message series should be engaging, and the sermon should be inspirational, as this is an important part of leading and growing a church. But we must be sure we are asking the right questions about the series, the video, the music, the sermon, and the prayer. This was an important shift in my own ministry that helped me connect with people long-term in the church, people from many backgrounds, and a rapidly-changing community. I hope it helps you.