

Theology and Practice: Why It's Good to Sell Coffee—and Host Fitness—in Church

A Theological and Practical Perspective from the Elders at Real Life Sango

Theological Foundation

One of the most frequently cited concerns about selling goods in church comes from the account of Jesus overturning the tables in the temple (Matthew 21:12–13, Mark 11:15–17, John 2:13–17). In this passage, Jesus reacts strongly to merchants and money changers operating within the temple courts. It is crucial to understand why He did this and how it differs from operating a coffee shop—or hosting a fitness partner—within a church today.

Jesus' anger was directed at those who were exploiting worshippers. The temple system required people to offer sacrifices, and the merchants were taking advantage of this by charging exorbitant prices for sacrificial animals and currency exchange. Instead of facilitating worship, they were turning the temple into a place of financial oppression, where people had to pay unfair prices just to fulfill their religious duties.

At Real Life Sango, selling coffee is in no way comparable to this. Nor is our decision to open our building to a fitness partner. We are not placing financial or physical barriers between people and their ability to worship God. Instead, we are cultivating environments that serve our community, foster generosity, encourage healthy living, and promote health. These activities are not distractions from the mission of the church—they are expressions of it.

Why It's Permissible and Good to Sell Coffee in Church

1. Cultivating an Environment of Hospitality

Hospitality is a core value in the Christian faith (Romans 12:13, Hebrews 13:2). A warm, welcoming environment fosters deeper relationships and meaningful conversations. Providing high-quality coffee helps create a space where people feel at home, where friendships can flourish, and where those new to the faith can feel comfortable engaging with the church community.

2. Creating Jobs that Support Real People

Selling coffee allows Real Life Sango to create jobs that provide income and stability for individuals in our church and community. Work is a gift from God (Genesis 2:15), and as a church, we believe in fostering opportunities that bless people materially and spiritually. Rather than simply collecting donations, we are enabling people to work and earn in a dignified way.

3. Supporting Local Non-Profit Organizations

Each month, our Saturday coffee shop operations contribute proceeds to a different local non-profit organization. This aligns with biblical principles of generosity (Proverbs 19:17, 2 Corinthians 9:6–7). Rather than hoarding profits, we use them as a tool to bless others, demonstrating the love of Christ in practical ways as we serve our city.

4. A Biblical Precedent

The early church often gathered in homes, which were not just places of residence but also centers of business. A key example is found in Acts 18:2–3, where we learn about Aquila and Priscilla, who were tentmakers and who also hosted a church in their home. Their household was a place of both work and worship.

This shows that commerce and Christian fellowship were not considered incompatible in the early church. Rather, work and worship naturally coexisted in the spaces where believers gathered. In the same way, Real Life Sango's coffee shop reflects this biblical model—creating a welcoming space where faith and daily life intersect, just as they did in the first-century church.

Why It's Good to Host a Fitness Partner in the Church

1. Our Bodies Are Temples of the Holy Spirit

Scripture affirms that our physical bodies matter. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:19–20:

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Stewarding our bodies is not vanity—it is obedience. Hosting a fitness partner at Real Life Sango aligns with this biblical truth. We believe caring for physical health is part of discipleship. While “bodily training is of some value” (1 Timothy 4:8), its value is real and relevant.

2. Gluttony is a Sin—and a Cultural Struggle

Scripture consistently warns against gluttony (Proverbs 23:20–21, Philippians 3:19), not just as a matter of self-control but because it dulls our spiritual awareness and pulls us away from dependence on God.

Obesity is a growing concern in both the United States and in Tennessee. According to the CDC, over **41.9% of U.S. adults** are classified as obese, with Tennessee consistently ranking among the states with the highest obesity rates—**hovering around 36%** in recent years. This isn't just a physical issue; it's a spiritual and communal one. Obesity is linked to increased risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, depression, and early death. As the church, we are called to be salt and light—not only preaching truth but also addressing the real and pressing needs of our communities.

3. Partnering for the Good of Our Community

By partnering with a local fitness organization, we are not merely leasing space—we are participating in the flourishing of our community. We're promoting healthier lifestyles, encouraging discipline, building bridges between the church and those who may never enter on a Sunday morning, and offering a physical outlet that connects to deeper spiritual and emotional health.

Just as Jesus healed physical bodies as well as spiritual ones, we want to be a place where the whole person—mind, body, and soul—is cared for. This partnership is one more way we live out the Gospel in action.

Conclusion

Selling coffee and hosting a fitness partner at Real Life Sango are not distractions from the Gospel—they are expressions of it. These practices are rooted in hospitality, generosity, health, stewardship, and community.

Unlike the merchants in the temple, who exploited worshippers for profit, we seek to bless people through these efforts. We are not creating barriers to worship but removing them. By offering good coffee, meaningful jobs, ministry-supporting revenue, and health-promoting partnerships, we demonstrate that the kingdom of God touches every area of life. In doing so, we reflect biblical values and meet real needs in our community—body and soul.