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Pastor Takes Ministry to Las Vegas Strip

A pastor with a passion to fight pornography has taken his ministry to The Las Vegas Strip, right in the middle of the action in what is famously known as sin city.

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A pastor with a passion to fight pornography has taken his ministry to The Las Vegas Strip, right in the middle of the action in what is famously known as sin city.

And the mission is simple: share Christ and, with that, steer people away from the temptations and "dangerous devices" in Vegas.

"It makes perfect sense for who we're trying to reach, the temptations that this city has to offer, and the call that we feel that God's put in our lives to do this," Craig Gross, founder of XXXChurch.com, said to ABC News. "Las Vegas is known as sin city and that's where we need to be." Gross doesn't blame "the dark for being dark" spiritually, or for Vegas being Vegas. He instead blames "the light for not shining on the darkness." In other words, the Church needs to do a better job at telling people about Jesus.

"I think the church does a poor job overall when it comes to evangelism," Gross told ABC News. "We get content with our members and then we spend time satisfying just our members and we lose that focus of Jesus [who] said 'I came for the sick, not the healthy.'"

Gross first began ministering in Las Vegas in 2002 at a porn show. He and his XXXChurch.com staff have visited the porn conventions passing out "Jesus Loves Porn Stars" Bibles and now they're calling the city their home full time.

Gross and a small staff have been out on The Strip, handing out bottled water, labeled with "Strip Church: Bringin' the desert its drink" and a website address, to passers-by. They plan to launch Strip Church in January 2009.

They believe starting a church in Las Vegas is God's biggest plan yet for them.

"We didn't move here to be Las Vegas, but we came here to change Las Vegas," he said, according to ABC News. "If that's one family at a time, it's worth it."

While the lure of Vegas surrounds them, Gross is confident in God's plan.

Central Christian Church in Mesa, Ariz., and the Christian Missionary Alliance have committed their support for the Strip Church.

Along with launching a church on The Strip, Gross plans to rent booths at conventions and trade shows in the city to share Christ and to connect attendees to churches in the area.

"[I]f we can share Jesus when there are naked people distracting from the conversation, how can we not be able share Jesus during a concrete convention or an automotive trade show? We know that the great news of God's word can compete against anything – so that is what we are preparing to do," the Strip Church website reads.

According to Strip Church, nearly 40 million people visit Las Vegas every year and 10,000 prostitutes work in the city. Meanwhile, the number of people attending church in the United States today is about 8 million less than it was 20 years ago. The percentage of people going to church has dropped to about 16 percent, the ministry reports.

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