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## Glamping



They're taking the rough out of "roughing it".

Several American operators are offering *glamping*, a combination of glamour and camping. A trend just two years old, luxury camping is particularly popular in New York State. "The camper of today wants it all, and if you have it they will come," says in-

dustry rep David Berg. "People expect Wi-Fi, (wireless internet) but they still come to a campground for the experience. You can't roast marshmallows in a motel room."

In a typical glampsite, a ten-by-fourteen-foot canvas tent comes with two single beds, complete with pillows, sheets and blankets. There's a bedside table, a sitting area with a bamboo table and matching chairs, a big cooler and two pads on the ground for sleeping bags. Outside, there's picnic table and fire pit with a grill. Nearby are showers, washrooms and laundry facilities.

In some camp resorts, visitors can choose deluxe cabins with fireplaces, screened-in porches, full kitchens, flat-screen televisions with DVD players and free Wi-Fi. There are weekends devoted to "Death By Chocolate" and ice cream festivals.

"Contentment Camping provides a service to patrons who might not otherwise camp," said Angela Bertie, spokesperson for New York State. "Get that first experience where everything is provided, and then build up your camping gear over time."

The novel approach seems to be catching on. Though most campers



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travel just one to three hours from home, glamping is drawing people from as far away as Holland and Germany.

In some ways, the church is offering its own version of glamping. The churchgoers of today want it all and, if you offer it, they will come, or so the logic goes. That's why there's a real emphasis among many groups on comfort and contentment, seen in everything from padded seats complete with cup holders, to sports and music clubs, to the latest innovation — Starbucks-style cafes inside church buildings.

None of that is harmful, unless and until those cultural accommodations begin to change the way the gospel message is presented. And that's what many religious groups are struggling with. Simply put, they're in a tight squeeze. Seekers want the church experience — especially the social aspect and sense of community — but they also expect the things of the world they take for granted, like absolute control and freedom from any accountability whatsoever.

That explains why so many are content to stay on the fringes where they can take what they want without the need to get too involved. There's little stomach for "roughing it", which is easy to understand because people are already busy, tired and involved in other things. Besides, church *should* be a place where they have their needs met.

Especially when seekers are first checking things out, they legitimately want a chance to see what things are like, before they make a substantial investment. We must welcome them, provide for them, and make things easy and accessible. But we must do so with the clear understanding that — eventually — every believer in Christ is expected to embrace a life of passionate service and personal sacrifice. Jesus said, "*If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross and follow me... Is anything worth more than your soul?*" (Matthew 16:26) When assessing whether to count on the Christ, we must count in the cost.

There are no padded crosses. Though it's up to God to determine someone's personal growth and the point at which they're ready to go all-in and all out, the expectation must be fully understood. Just as sitting around the fire then retreating to a luxury cabin with a bed and a big screen TV isn't the true *camping* experience. continually putting the focus on our own comfort and convenience isn't the true *Christian* experience. Glurching is okay for a break, but you can't stay there.