

View

Article Excerpt: "Fish Bowl Mentality"

THIS IS AN INTERESTING ARTICLE BY A PREACHER IN A DENOMINATION (I'M NOT SURE WHICH ONE). I HAVE OFTEN HEARD "GROWTH EXPERTS" (PREACHERS WHO SPEND A LOT OF TIME PREACHING ABOUT CHURCH GROWTH) STATE THE RULE, "WHEN YOU REACH 80% CAPACITY, GO TO TWO SERVICES." THIS PREACHER MAKES AN EXCELLENT POINT THAT THERE IS MORE TO IT THAN THAT. SINCE THE ARTICLE IS COPYRIGHTED, I'LL JUST QUOTE A FEW PORTIONS OF IT.

"Few people will deny the theory that a local church stops growing as the size of the church building reaches 80% capacity. The reason for this is purely human and not so spiritual. Most people simply will not tolerate feeling crowded in the pews...

"However, this is not the biggest reason for a churches lack of growth...

"...IT IS TRUE THAT MOST PEOPLE DON'T LIKE TO BE IN A CROWDED ATMOSPHERE; IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT PEOPLE WILL COME WHEN THEY ARE BEING FED."

"We use the analogy that a fish will only grow to a certain size in a small fish bowl but in a larger pond, for instance, the fish can grow much larger. I'm not so sure that God's church should so easily be compared to a fish. I suggest that the building is not necessarily the problem in most cases. In fact, we have all seen churches who were literally bursting out at the seams... Pews are packed and chairs are in the aisles...

"While it is true that most people don't like to be in a crowded atmosphere, it is also true that people will come when they are being fed. Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me Peter?" Peter responded in the affirmative and when he did, our Lord told him to "Feed my sheep." He did not tell Peter to house them or get them plenty of exercise...

"We are living in a day when people are starving spiritually. People are eating almost anything that comes along, spiritually speaking. Truth is often ignored in the famished rush to simply fill the starving spiritual belly...

The church of Christ

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Services

Sunday Morning Assembly
9:30 AM

Sunday Evening: 5:00 PM

Wednesday Bible Study
7:30 PM

Classes for all ages.
Private classes arranged
at your convenience.
www.folsomchurch.com
Webmaster: Richard Harvey

“What’s the greatest church growth program you could have this year? “Feed His sheep.” People won’t mind sitting closer to one another when your ministry is holding their family together. When the Holy Spirit is the element that is behind every song and every sermon, people will crowd in to see and hear what is going on...

“When church leaders get together early this year to put the church calendar together, the question should be asked of every event planned, “Is this really feeding people?” or are we doing this out of tradition?

“...Which churches will grow...in this new year? Is it the churches with the largest or most beautiful buildings? Is it the churches with the most talent and charisma? Not in this generation...they are longing for the thing that will fill their hungry soul...They’re looking for the church that can show them the God who truly loves them in spite of their shortcomings and mistakes. They’re hungry. Feed them!”

JAMES SMITH

Mr Smith’s article is a good reminder for those of us who are leading the church here at Folsom. While we are concerned about providing enough room for everyone who wants to attend, the

primary role of an elder is NOT growth management; our primary role is to feed and care for the flock (see Acts 20:28-30). We are to keep “watch over your souls,” not over square footage or the number of pews.

That doesn’t mean we don’t care about these issues;

“I REALIZE THAT I WOULD HAVE BEEN A BETTER HUSBAND AND DAD AND EMPLOYEE — I.E., A BETTER CHRISTIAN, IF THERE HAD BEEN A LITTLE APPLICATION AND A LITTLE LESS “SCHOLARSHIP.”

in fact, we have delegated some tasks to our deacons to look into what we might be able to do to “improve our view.” But we are not “managers”; we are “pastors” — shepherds. I hope we, as leaders, never forget that.

“Spiritual Food”

What is “spiritual food”? What is necessary to really “feed the flock”?

Peter tells us that when we speak we must speak “as the oracles of God” (I Pet. 4:11). That means that we must be careful when we are teaching and preaching to make certain everything we say is exactly what God would say.

In other words, if I’m preaching on raising children, I need to measure my words and speak them as I believe God would speak them. If I have an opinion I feel compelled to share, I need to label it as such.

One safe way to preach and teach would be to simply quote scripture and leave it at that. However, “Speaking as the oracles of God” requires more than just quoting scripture. In Nehemiah 8 we read about how Ezra read the scripture and “gave the sense.” Preachers are charged with making certain that the passages that the Holy Spirit has given us are understood and applied properly. We are not charged with making them palatable, by the way — just *clear*.

When I was young, I didn’t care much about application; I was infatuated with “theology.” I fancied myself an amateur scholar and was impressed with those who were proficient in Greek and Hebrew and who could really “wax eloquent” on the text.

As important as that is, I realize that I would have been a better husband and dad and employee — i.e., a better *Christian*, if there had been a little more application and a little less “scholarship.”

Application without doctrine is fluff, worthless; but doctrine without application is nearly as bad. We are to be “transformed” (Romans 12:2) not just “INformed.”

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