Bigger is not always Better - posted by roadsign (), on: 2010/3/1 10:15

A message to small churches

Â“But I want the big doll!Â” declared my persistent my 4 year-old granddaughter after I told her that she would wake up Mommy if she went to the bedroom to get it. Clearly, I wasnÂ’t getting through to Isabella, so I decided that it was time to launch into a sermonette geared for a 4-year-old. Isabella had no problem understanding me. She could see that she had bought into a belief that only the big doll could make her happy, and by insisting on that pursuit she was, in actuality, making herself unhappy. Her dramatic pout was the perfect visual aid for my point.

After a bit of re-educating, Isabella realized that a small doll could indeed make her happy. And furthermore, she had an ample selection of small dolls at her disposal.

My grand-daughter drove home an important lesson for small churches: Bigger does not necessarily mean better. That is true for many things in life. A big house is not necessarily better than a small house. A big hospital is not necessarily better than a small one. Yet in our society we have been programmed to value things according to size, and we believe that bigger will make us happier. However, like Isabella, when we set our expectations on what we think we should have, but cannot have, we experience unhappiness. Furthermore, we miss GodÂ’s highest blessing for us in our present life circumstances. This is true for churches too.

According to 1998 statistics on church size, the overwhelming number of Presbyterian churches in Canada are small or very small. 19% are categorized as small (75-124 at an average Sunday service) and 61% are very small (less than 75 at an average service). Prof. A. Irvine of Knox College believes that small churches can be effective churches, but they must first stop thinking that they need to be like larger congregations or like they were once. Oswald Chambers has written: Â“Beware of harking back to what you were once, when God wants you to be something you have never been.Â” from My Utmost for His Highest, June 8.

In the days ahead, when many of our churches are pondering over their Â‘smallnessÂ’, we can remember that we have one enormous advantage. We worship a BIG God who has always specialized in doing mighty things through small and humble means. The challenge for us then, is to put behind us our own expectations and desires, and seek God to show us who he wants us to become.

Diane Eaton

Re: Bigger is not always Better - posted by mguldner (), on: 2010/3/1 10:31

I concur this is actually something that my church is going through currently, we focus on numbers way to much. I am so happy that before I got into the ministry the Lord pressed on my heart something very simply yet profound, Quality over Quantity. As a youth pastor I can look at numbers and get fed up with such a small youth group but since I focus on a quality youth group over a quantity youth group God has blessed me with Youth that actually care about learning about God.

My head pastor for some reason doesn't seem to understand this because he tells me well I am not letting that be an excuse for why we don't try and get more number in the youth group. I just kind of shrug it off because God pressed quality over quantity on my heart long ago. I love it because its one less thing I have to worry about because I trust that God truly brings in the people that really need to hear a message that particular day. God is faithful and I trust in that. I can do all sorts of crazy things to bring people in but ultimately God is the only one that can truly bring in a heart that is ready. Thank you for sharing it was a deeper encouragement for me.

God Bless,
Matthew
Amen sister. Bigger is definitely not better.

Oh that we would do things in quality and all in the name of Jesus Christ. May God use what we know to the full potential and not give us what we want!

Great point, Matthew! What you're saying is that wanting a church that is more than you have can be a source of temptation for worrying.

That desire can also predispose you to:
- neglect spiritual needs
- control and manipulate people
- use people as pawns for your ambitions
- lay guilt trips on others
- experience guilt and failure
- covet
- try to be like somebody else
- spend money where you don't need to
- burnout
- heart attack
  and on it goes... (James 1:13-15)

What do you thing?

Can anyone add to the list?

Diane

These are a few I have seen from leadership in my experience plus what you have listed. The Lying comes from "protecting a reputation" the Passing the blame comes from when the church starts to fail in areas saying its the unwillingness of the congregation to do the work needed, the Denial is ignoring the facts and truth of the situation, Finicial Issues derive from the issue of the tithe message being ramped down peoples throats, Improper focus of helping the poor and the focus being switched to how to get more rich people in the church, Lack of proper Vision is unnessecary plans to add on an already small church. Our Vision must be Christ and that's it our focus should be Christ that's it. its a little discouraging being in this situation and seeing these things but I take my encouragement from the Lord :)

God Bless,
Matthew
I agree, Matthew. Of course, a vision of Christ can be perceived in all kinds of ways and with all kinds of expectations. But isn’t that the risk? After all, having passion means we are truly alive and willing to face the risk of disappointments - failure expectations of what all Christ should be for us.

Even an honourable vision can become a harmful desire. A friend once shared how revival had become an idolatrous desire for him. The Spirit revealed it to him. Otherwise his longing would have been a source of temptation in ways like you and I have listed regarding a desire for a bigger church.

But it’s not all bad. As we face our fallen-ness, we open up ourselves to Christ and his mercy. And isn’t that just how our vision for Christ aught to look?

Diane