

**News and Current Events :: Barna: Pastors Need to Push Flocks Harder on Spiritual Matters****Barna: Pastors Need to Push Flocks Harder on Spiritual Matters - posted by PreachParsly (), on: 2006/1/23 12:53**

Barna: Pastors Need to Push Flocks Harder on Spiritual Matters

By Allie Martin  
January 20, 2006

(AgapePress) - A leading Christian researcher says if churches believe in the life-changing power of the gospel, they must do a better job when it comes to holding congregants to a higher standard.

The Barna Group conducted two surveys which found a sizeable gap between the perception of pastors and the reality of people's devotion to God. For example, pastors were asked to identify what they felt was the most important priority for their church members. Overall, pastors said a majority of their members would put their faith in God at the top of the list -- but only 15 percent of church members surveyed listed their faith as their first priority. (See earlier article)

George Barna, president of the Barna Group, says core issues -- such as stewardship -- are not seen as valid indicators of church vitality. Barna says a church can establish a budget based on the notion that all church families are going to tithe (give 10 percent of their income) to the church. "But then what you're going to wind up with is a lot of disappointed people," the researcher asserts, "because we know that currently only six percent of born-again families actually tithe.

"On the other hand," he continues. "setting the standards so low that there's really no reason for people to give more generously and more biblically ... creates a different kind of problem."

Similarly, evangelism is apparently not a priority in most churches. "The fact that most church members do not verbally share the gospel in a given year is not deemed problematic," Barna's survey summary states.

The researcher says his findings indicate that many pastors and church leaders are more concerned with leading an institution than they are with people's spiritual growth and maturity. Pastors, he says, are often focused on building programs, budgets, and activities, while church members are seeking a deeper walk with the Lord.

Barna explains there is a "growing number of people" who are saying they want more of God in their life and they are willing to do whatever it takes to get it. But many of those, he claims, are saying "I'm not sure that I can get it from a local church. I may have to go outside the box, outside the walls to find that kind of relationship and opportunity and network so that I can really be the Church rather than think so much about am I just attending a church."

Barna encourages church leaders to stop pandering for popularity, and instead to challenge their congregations to a higher and more challenging standard. For example, he observes in his findings that pastors are "nine times more likely to seek reactions to their sermon than they are to assess the congregation's reactions to visitors."

"Perhaps most alarming of all," says the Barna report, "pastors were 21 times more likely to evaluate whether people showed up (i.e., attendance) than to determine whether people experienced the presence of God during their time at the church."

The surveys questioned 627 pastors and 1002 adults nationwide, and were conducted in October and November 2005. (<http://headlines.agapepress.org/archive/1/202006c.asp>) Barna: Pastors Need to Push Flocks Harder on Spiritual Matters

**Re: Barna: Pastors Need to Push Flocks Harder on Spiritual Matters, on: 2006/1/23 14:54**

How true this article is...

Krispy

**Re: Barna: Pastors Need to Push Flocks Harder on Spiritual Matters - posted by PreachParsly (), on: 2006/1/23 16:13**

Quote:  
-----Barna encourages church leaders to stop pandering for popularity, and instead to challenge their congregations to a higher and more challenging standard.  
-----

So does PreachParsly.

**Re: - posted by brentw (), on: 2006/1/23 17:33**

Still a little shallow but we're getting somewhere. ;-)

**Re: Barna: Pastors Need to Push Flocks Harder on Spiritual Matters - posted by philologos (), on: 2006/1/24 9:28**

"Pastors Need to Push Flocks..."

I don't need to read any further. I can't imagine anything more foolhardy than a shepherd trying to 'push' a flock of sheep. If there are 50 sheep they will head in 51 directions! Pastors can lead a flock *and* they can follow it, but 'push' it? Surely not?

**Re: - posted by PreachParsly (), on: 2006/1/24 11:32**

Quote:  
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philologos wrote:  
"Pastors Need to Push Flocks..."  
I don't need to read any further. I can't imagine anything more foolhardy than a shepherd trying to 'push' a flock of sheep. If there are 50 sheep they will head in 51 directions! Pastors can lead a flock *and* they can follow it, but 'push' it? Surely not?  
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Ah! I agree. It might not be that the pastor needs to 'push' anyone. Maybe its the pastor himself that needs more discipline in 'spiritual matters.'

It seems to me that who ever you are 'disciplined' by you imitate. Whether that be man or God.. or a man of God!

**Re: - posted by brentw (), on: 2006/1/24 12:38**

"Push" means here to stress a closer walk with God. Pastors don't "emphasise" a deep relationship with Christ. This is a big problem within the church that we get caught up on a word and debate about it and all along loose focus on winning souls. We play right into the devils hands. We loose focus on revival because we debate over simple doctrinal issues that don't way into eternity, or what translation we should read.....God help us! The church has so many problems of her own she can't solve let alone to try to solve the worlds problems. As Ravenhill used to say: just tell me how to get closer to God....thats all matters!! 2% of christians witness, and the 98% debate over petty issues. J. Wesley said "Gentleman you have one thing to do and one thing only WIN SOULS!!"

Re: - posted by taco, on: 2006/1/24 12:51

Quote:  
-----This is a big problem within the church that we get caught up on a word and debate about it and all along loose focus on winning souls. We play right into the devils hands. We loose focus on revival because we debate over simple doctrinal issues that dont way into eternity  
-----

The issue is far greater than a mere word debate. Words have meanings and the words we use reveal the intents of the heart. Leaders are to lead-God has appointed that 'older brothers' be established to this end. But it is incumbent upon all of us to follow Christ and thus encourage others to do the same. He gives us gifts and there are times for a word of instruction or correction to be spoken, there is even a time for authority to be excersised (by the ekklesia). But as Christ-ians our style of leadership should always be his style.

Don't forget he himself rebuked the disciples for seeking to emulate rulership positions which are fine in the political systems of the world but have no place in the house of God. He evidently didn't see it as a mere word game.

Re: - posted by brentw (), on: 2006/1/24 13:13

Jesus walked this earth as a free man. He didnt get caught up on our hang ups or debates. He was FREE. He who has ears let him hear.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/1/24 13:42

I think the points are well taken. I understand Ron (philologos) as emphasizing the need to *lead*. Ravenhill used to say th at a river will never run down any wider than its source. This is leadership leading a congregation by example. If the minister calls for something he is not walking in or willing to walk in it becomes a "do as I *tell* you and ignore what I *do*."

I think I understand what Barna means in that he is trying to show the Church through his stats and writings that things are in need of some serious changes. When I think of the word 'push' I am thinking in terms of working out at the gym. Give me just ONE more rep! Don't quit now, you have at least 2 more minutes on the bike or treadmill! Sort of the "no pain - no gain" mentality. In that context, I probably could couple his comments with many of Paul's teachings on Olympic analogies. Also, "Provoke one another to love and to good works... etc." (Hebrews 10:24)

Re: - posted by disciplejosh (), on: 2006/1/24 15:24

I agreed with brother Ron first off when i read the post title. 'Push' the flock made me think of those who 'beat' the flock rather than 'feed' the flock, feed the lambs, feed the sheep, tend the sheep.

The flock God has given to a pastor will not go where their pastor has not gone on before. The Ravenhill quote, brother Robert, I believe goes, "A river will never rise higher than it's source."

I agree concerning the situation with the topic, It's just the wording that threw me off.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2006/1/24 18:26

I wasn't just playing with words when I took issue with the word 'push'. Paul's admonition to Timothy is Let no man despise thy youth; but how do you prevent someone from despising your role in the church? The answer follows the admonition...Â"be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.Â" (1Tim. 4:12-16, KJVS) I think this is a poignant statement. Paul says let your 'profit ing' ie your 'progress' appear to all. It is not the shepherd's status that draws on the flock, not his attainments and not his words but his 'progress'. There is no greater stimulus to progress than to see our leaders pressing on with God. The authority of the 'shepherd' does not lie in his position but in his moral example. Only a 'moving man' can say 'follow me'.

Jesus didn't issue long lists of requirements, He said 'follow me'. So did Paul.1Cor. 4:16 (KJVS) Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.

1Cor. 11:1 (KJVS) Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

**Re: - posted by brentw (), on: 2006/1/24 18:49**

philologos,

"I wasn't just playing with words when I took issue with the word 'push'. Paul's admonition to Timothy is"

I dont understand what your driving at??? Are you a young preacher??

And about your comment on a pastor of "moral example" which I disagree with to a point. God delagates His authority. A pastor IS Gods delagated authority. Watchmen Nee has a whole book called Gods delagated authority which is totally biblical. Yes a pastor should be a moral example! Whether he is or isnt....doesnt take away his delagated authority.

**Re: - posted by apostlepaul (), on: 2006/1/24 22:00**

I agree to! Pastors and evangelist, and men of God need to lead with authority in their lives by living the Gospel. The Lord once told a preacher I listened to, he said, you can only bring or lead your flock into spirituality only as far as you have come. In other words only as close to me as you are and seperated from the world and its pull. We have to be examples! So I agree you can't push, but you surely should know how to lead. with the love of christ . your brother David.

**Re: - posted by brentw (), on: 2006/1/24 23:07**

I totally agree that a pastor cant "push"! I still believe Barna isnt refering to push as kicking someone to get spiritual. Emp hasize is what I think hes driving at here. But we are getting hung up on one word and maybe dont see the blessing?? I guess enough said. :-(

**Re: - posted by taco, on: 2006/1/25 6:44**

Quote:

-----A pastor IS Gods delagated authority

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Can you provide scriptural evidence of this?

**Re: Pastors Need to Push Flocks....., on: 2006/1/25 8:57**

Maybe the problem is truly with the pastors in this survey. I know that sounds harsh but in reality, sheep will only go as far up the mountain as the shepherd takes them. Shepherds cannot "push" sheep anywhere that they themselves are not willing to go first.

What does anyone else think?

**Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/1/25 9:08**

feed the flock of God that 'is' among you, overseeing not constrainedly, but willingly, neither for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind, neither as exercising lordship over the heritages, but patterns becoming of the flock. (I Peter 5:3, 4 YLT)

constrainedly• compel or force (someone) toward a particular course of action : children are constrained to work in the way the book dictates (Oxford American Dictionary).

Compare these translations:

Be mindful of those leading you, who did speak to you the word of God, whose faith -- considering the issue of the behaviour -- be imitating, (Hebrews 13:7 YLT)

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. (Hebrews 13:7 KJV)

Be obedient to those leading you, and be subject, for these do watch for your souls, as about to give account, that with joy they may do this, and not sighing, for this 'is' unprofitable to you. (Hebrews 13:17 YLT)

Obedient is Greek *peitho*. Various ways the same word is translated in the KJV:

be confident, believe, have confidence, misc, obey, persuade, trust

Interestingly in the very next verse (Hebrews 13:18) the word is translated as 'trust'.

Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. (Hebrews 13:18)

Trust and be 'subject' to those who are leading. Ephesians also tells us to submit ourselves one to another in the fear of God. It is an attitude of the heart one towards another and especially those who are leading the flock. It is different than the IRON FIST type rule that it so often comes off as. With Christ as the Head and a mutual submission to one another and especially those leading we have safety. It is when Christ is not truly the head and men LORD over God's heritage that serious problems arise.

**Re: - posted by disciplejosh (), on: 2006/1/25 10:10**

Great input, Ron and Robert.

I have really been chewing on obedience lately. I love how it keeps popping up in so many different aspects in practical daily living and walking with the Lord.

**Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/1/25 10:55**

Hi Bro. Josh,

Quote:  
-----I have really been chewing on obedience lately. I love how it keeps popping up in so many different aspects in practical daily living and walking with the Lord.  
-----

Does it seem to you that the thoughts conveyed in the scriptures are to the purpose of us doing the right thing without it causing an argument or a rift?

What I mean is, as those who lead and teach the Word declare what God expects of us through the revelation of scripture, it seems that the afore mentioned passages call upon the hearer to submit to what God has said through the word (from the hands of the shepherds) and at the same time reminding the shepherds not to get the 'big head' (so to speak) and try to overstep their role. This attitude of lowliness and meekness on both parties part seems essential to keeping things moving in the right direction without conflicting with the attitude requirements or the 'spirit' or the 'nature' of the Born Again believer.

Re: - posted by brentw (), on: 2006/1/25 16:09

taco,

"Obey them that have rule over you" Hebrews 11

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2006/1/25 17:36

brentw's

Quote:

-----philologos,

"I wasn't just playing with words when I took issue with the word 'push'. Paul's admonition to Timothy is" I dont understand what your driving at??? Are you a young preacher??

Yes.... once.... a long time ago. ;-)

trust those who are leading you - posted by philologos (), on: 2006/1/25 17:56

brentw's

Quote:

-----"Obey them that have rule over you" Hebrews 11

Perhaps you have been following some of the other threads which have touched on the way that the issue of 'authority' has a particular bias in the KJV. Your quotation is actually from Hebrews 13:17. I thought some might be interested to trace the history of this particular verse. Tyndale 1525 "Obeye the that have the oversight of you and submit youre selves to them for they watch for youre soules even as they that must geve a comptes: that they maye do it with ioye and not with grefe. For that is an vnprofitable thyng for you."

Coverdale 1535 "Obey them that haue the ouersight off you, and submytte youre selues vnto them: for they watch for yore soules, euen as they that must geue accoptes therfore, that they maye do it with ioye, and not with grefe: for that is an vnprofitable thinge for you."

Geneva Bible "Obey them that haue the ouersight off you, and submytte youre selues vnto them: for they watch for youre soules, euen as they that must geue accoptes therfore, that they maye do it with ioye, and not with grefe: for that is an vnprofitable thinge for you."

Bishops' Bible 1568 "Obey them that haue the ouersight of you, and submit your selues: for they watche for your soules, as they that must geue accomptes, that they may do it with ioy, and not with grieffe: for that is vnprofitable for you."

KJV 1611 "Obey them that haue the rule ouer you, and submit your selues: for they watch for your soules, as they that must giue account, that they may doe it with ioy, and not with grieffe: for that is vnprofitable for you." It is not difficult to see the sudden raising of the profile from 'those watching over you' to 'those who have the rule over you'. This is why we must always examine the KJV carefully when it is speaking about church order.

'hegeomai' the verb translated 'rule' is not 'rule' at all but rather 'lead. In addition the verb peitho is better translated 'trust'. A more accurate translation of this verse would be 'trust those who are leading you', conveys a very different atmosphere to 'obey those who rule you'.

Re: trust those who are leading you - posted by brentw (), on: 2006/1/25 18:27

Great insight Ron.

But to Taco this means God delegated authority. The word obey is in every translation Ron just wrote. But the word obey does mean to submit. Maybe we can just break down the whole KJV and call it greek and hebrew ;-)

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2006/1/26 10:11

Quote:

-----But the word obey does mean to submit.  
-----

Yes, I don't want to imprison ideas in boxes. It's just that quite often there are several different words in the Greek translated by just one in English. (and often vice versa) and the nuances produced by them can be quite different.

This is how Vine's describes 'peithO' the word used in Heb 13:17 **peitho** "to persuade, to win over," in the Passive and Middle Voices, "to be persuaded, to listen to, to obey," is so used with this meaning, in the Middle Voice, e.g., in Acts\_5:36-37 (in Acts\_5:40, Passive Voice, "they agreed"); Rom\_2:8; Gal\_5:7; Heb\_13:17; James\_3:3. The "obedience" suggested is not by submission to authority, but resulting from persuasion.

"Peitho and pisteuo" 'to trust,' are closely related etymologically; the difference in meaning is that the former implies the obedience that is produced by the latter, cp. Heb\_3:18,19, where the disobedience of the Israelites is said to be the evidence of their unbelief. Faith is of the heart, invisible to men; obedience is of the conduct and may be observed. When a man obeys God he gives the only possible evidence that in his heart he believes God. Of course it is persuasion of the truth that results in faith (we believe because we are persuaded that the thing is true, a thing does not become true because it is believed), but peitho, in NT suggests an actual and outward result of the inward persuasion and consequent faith. " You can see by this that 'peithO' is not a blind obedience but a 'persuaded obedience'. In a sense it is 'reasoned obedience' and the hearer obeys because of the inward persuasion rather than an outward insistence.

Notice the link that Vine makes between 'peithO' and 'pisteuO'. "Peitho and pisteuo" 'to trust,' are closely related etymologically; the difference in meaning is that the former implies the obedience that is produced by the latter.

Greek has another word for 'obey' and Vine has a list of the way this word is used. **hupakouO** "to listen, attend" (as in Acts\_12:13), and so, "to submit, to obey," is used of "obedience"

- (a) to God Heb\_5:9; Heb\_11:8;
- (b) to Christ, by natural elements, Matt\_8:27; Mark\_1:27; Mark\_4:41; Luke\_8:25;
- (c) to disciples of Christ, Luke\_17:6;
- (d) to the faith, Acts\_6:7; the Gospel, Rom\_10:16; 2\_Thess\_1:8; Christian doctrine, Rom\_6:17 (as to a form or mold of teaching);
- (e) to apostolic injunctions, Php\_2:12; 2\_Thess\_3:14;
- (f) to Abraham by Sarah, 1\_Pet\_3:6;
- (g) to parents by children, Eph\_6:1; Col\_3:20;
- (h) to masters by servants, Eph\_6:5; Col\_3:22;
- (i) to sin, Rom\_6:12;
- (j) in general, Rom\_6:16. This word seems to be much more related to 'hierarchy' of one kind or another. Literally the word means 'to hear from beneath'. ie the one hearing is 'under' the one speaking. The way this word is used is very instructive. Each time there is a specific and definable order within the relationship.

If the writer to the Hebrews had wanted to say 'obey your rulers' in the sense of unconditional hierarchical obedience I feel sure that he would have chosen **hupakouO** rather than **peitho**

Have you heard the story about the little boy in the church meeting who wanted to stand on his seat.? "Sit down" said his father

"I want to stand up" he replied

"Sit down" said his father "or I will smack your leg".

"All right" said the boy "but on the 'inside' I'm still standing up." I quote the story because although genuine 'submission' will entail 'obedience', 'obedience' does not always indicate 'submission'. :-)

Re: - posted by brentw (), on: 2006/1/26 11:40

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