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Professional Tools

Doug Lawrence

Quote

"It's both prudent and wise to recognize that you don't know everything, because at some point, others will figure it out for you." —Unknown

Scripture

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.—Acts 2: 44-47

Prayer

Lord, forgive me when my righteous indignation turns to cynicism. Teach me to know the difference. Bring your sword, oh God, to cut away what is wrong and encourage my heart to see what is right. Don't leave me to my own devices, but etch on my heart Your will for our churches and my own personal journey with you. Thank you for loving us even when we're wrong. Make the truth, Lord, have a "ring" that is heard when and where you want it heard. Amen

Leadership



The Best of Times, The Worst of Times

(An Opinion...for what it's worth.)

[Disclaimer: I just gotta say this stuff once in while. It's not deep or profound, but I think we should all be talking about these things—the good, the bad, and the ugly! —Doug]

Dickens was way ahead of us! In his [A Tale of Two Cities](#), he helped us visualize how a revolution powered changes in history that altered all the years that followed. Like the French Revolution, the church is in a similar process of—how shall I put this gently—refinement. Let's reflect on some of the things we've all been observing over the last few years...the good and the potentially bad.

The Good News

The Great Commission—we're talking about it again! That's a good thing! We're taking it to the streets as the Jesus People did in the 60's. Wahoo! I'm an Acts II guy (see above) and I believe we should be building communities of believers wherever we can.

The Potentially Bad News

We believe we can market the Kingdom of God as we market cars, shoes, clothes, and assorted other consumer items. We're sure if we can get the tag line just right (look around your town for church billboards), they will come. Look at church web sites that proclaim their worship as being, "authentic, awesome, engaging, astounding, real, meaningful, and great." Now try to imagine a non-Christian stumbling upon one of those sites and saying to his/her spouse, "Honey, it says here that First Church has authentic worship. We've never been to church before, but, for sure we should go to this one!" Get serious...

The Good News

We're searching for new ways to "do" church. Bill Hybels, at Willow Creek helped get us started, and we should be glad for the help—we needed some change. Churches have come alive in a way that is exciting and invigorating. Families are coming back to church because their children want to be there. Encouraging!

The Potentially Bad News

In our effort to "do" church in a new way, we've discarded too much stuff. By "stuff" I mean people, their feelings, their needs, and their, well...pews! Good for Gordon McDonald for writing, [Who Stole My Church](#). It is helping people understand the whys and wherefores of the drastic changes they are experiencing on Sunday mornings (actually almost any other day, including Sunday). Still, we should ask from time to time, "Is church only about young people, or, old people, or hip people, or happy people etc." Why are we "targeting markets" with our "brands?" Is this what heaven (on earth) is like?

The Good News

More and more churches are encouraging and helping lay people to do real work in the church. Thousands of people are now fully vested in the ministries of churches in a meaningful new way. Hundreds (well, dozens) of books have been written on undoing the "top down" leadership of churches and enlisting lay folks to turn the pyramid upside down. Thank God for the priesthood of the people!

The Potentially Bad News

Pastors are starting to lean toward management instead of being pastors. Do we still need pastors? Yes, and it's not enough to assume that lay folks will do everything a pastor is called to do. Ask any pastor how much time he/she has in a day to be with people on a personal level. The answer will stun you.

The Good News

We are turning to new neighborhoods to bring church closer to the incredible real estate clustering that marks the home building frenzy of the past two decades. Multi-site churches are bursting at the seams in many places. This is a very good thing.

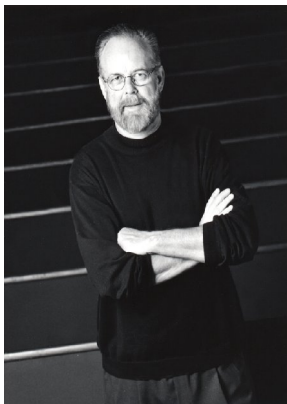
The Potentially Bad News

Churches are being divided up like pies, and sometimes it works, but often it doesn't. The so-called DNA of a big church being passed on to several small start-up churches where one pastor preaches to everybody on a big screen comes dangerously close to a novel I read in high school. Am I against it? Absolutely not! It's great when it works, but when it fails, it does serious damage to churches. The key for leaders appears to be the ability to wisely recognize when the model isn't working.

Conclusion:

I could go on and on. The church has always struggled through times of change (ask your folks). We are not alone in our historical pilgrimage. Will we be O.K.? Well...yeah! We didn't form the church, God did. He regards it with affection and protects it as would any loving father. Our job? We must be very careful not to pretend to be God in our savvy, often arrogant, strivings to make decisions about how the church should work. I get email blasts almost daily from one author/leader/teacher/guru who seems to know (and sell on his web page) almost everything about how to grow your church. How is it possible that one guy could know everything? I believe only God can know everything, and He's keeping some of it a secret.

O.K., I feel better! We should all be speaking the truth in love, don't you think? The talented pastor, the superb author, the experienced business man should not be giving exclusive direction to the church. We should all be engaged in being part of the process of growing the Kingdom of God. There is never going to be a paradigm, a movement, or a genius who is going to know everything about how and where God wants us to move. Get in the conversation!



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Doug has been a consultant to church leaders for 35 years and is anxious to be helpful to you in leadership, musical, and staffing considerations. Please click on his name above and email him. He's available to consult on the phone as well.

Take a look...

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