


Encourage

Inspiration for IPHC Leaders



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Jesus Is FOREVER PRESENT in His Church

I am so grateful that as generations come and go, Christ leads us by His Spirit.



BY DOUG
BEACHAM

DOUG BEACHAM is the presiding bishop of the IPHC. He has served in various roles in the church including Georgia Conference Superintendent, executive director of Church Education Ministries, and executive director of World Missions Ministries. You can follow Bishop Beacham on [Facebook](#) or Twitter @ [DougBeacham](#).

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever,” the apostolic writer declared in Hebrews 13:8 (NKJV). It stands in relationship to the earlier observation in Hebrews 12:1, “...we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses.”

The cloud of witnesses includes people from every generation who have served in the kingdom of God. They include the faithful named and unnamed in Genesis 2–11. They include those who followed the faith of Abraham, the account of the promise which begins in Genesis 12 and continued throughout the Old Testament era, and even into our time.

The cloud of witnesses also includes those who believed in the revelation of God found in Abraham’s descendent, Jesus of Nazareth. They include the faithful of the past 2,000 years as the gospel has spread around the world. For many of us, they include our parents, siblings, friends, and colleagues who are gathered with Christ around the throne of God.

This Spring we are beginning the IPHC quadrennial conferences in the United States. Delegates will gather in the coming months across this nation to select conference leaders for the next four years. The members of the Executive Committee will stand before you and lead in the installation service of new conference councils.

In that service, I often reflect upon Hebrews 13:8 and its context related to leaders. Among the items mentioned in that context, 13:8 calls us to “remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their faith.”

Hebrews 13:17 again refers to rulers (the same word used in verse 8) when it says: “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.”

These verses about leadership have the assurance of Hebrews 13:8 concerning Jesus as the sure foundation, link, and hope concerning human leadership in the church.

In a sense, all who have led the work of God through the ages, whether Israel as a light to the nations, or the church as the body of Christ, share in the promise that Jesus Christ is Lord over each generation of leaders and followers. Technology and methods often change; but His authority and His mission remain the same.

Leaders must live as those who declare the Word of God. We must live as those whose lives are on public display; our lives should inspire others to follow Jesus as we have followed Him. Hebrews 13:17 is a warning to leaders—challenging us to humility, godliness and prayer. We must give an account to Jesus for how we have led. We must hear the voice from heaven, and have eyes that discern and understand the world in which our flocks live.

Those who follow us in our seasons and assignments of leadership are challenged to “remember” us and to follow in such a way as to not cause “grief.” The Greek word translated “grief” in the New King James Version means to sigh, to groan. How many of us as leaders have groaned or sighed at the challenges we face! I suspect there are times the sheep in our flock sigh at us!

As a student of history, I find joy in reading about the well-known and the less-known periods of God’s

actions in the world. One of the books I’m reading is *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance* by H.A. Drake (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

I’m learning a lot from reading this: the nuances of age and conflicts that have shaped so much of our world, the dynamic interplay of spiritual and earthly powers, the dangers of over-simplifying church history, an appreciation that the same Holy Spirit in our lives today was at work in their lives 1,700 years ago. A book like this reminds me that Jesus Christ really is “the same yesterday.”

But I’m also very aware that Jesus is “the same today.” At the close of January, the IPHC Executive Committee met in our home for a light dinner and prayer. We prayed for the IPHC, for the world, for one another.

Bishop McGhee, whose Discipleship Ministries department is now leading much of our core value emphasis on “All Generations,” observed that the four members of the executive committee were all sons of IPHC pastors and preachers. Someone then remarked that the four wives were all daughters of IPHC laity. It really caused all of us to give thanks for our parents and their faithfulness to Christ that continues to live through us.

Finally, I am thankful that Jesus Christ is “the same forever.” That “forever” is the open door to our tomorrows.

Recently I was in Argentina for an event arranged by The Awakening. Several hundred young adult leaders

Encourage

A place of hope. A people of promise.

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from across Latin America gathered to meet, be mentored, and grow in the Word and prayer. As I watched them earnestly seeking God at the altars, I was so thankful for these men and women who serve Christ now and will serve in a future that transcends my time on this earth.

Their time will not transcend Jesus’ time! We know that the Son of God, the Living Word, the second person of the Godhead, has existed throughout eternity. Jesus is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, of the redemptive purposes of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As the One who “is the same yesterday, today, and forever,” He transcends time, but is manifest in time.

Jesus, who was present in the early Christian centuries, who is present with us now, will be present in the tomorrows as we await His return! □

“Jesus Christ is Lord over each generation of leaders and followers. Technology and methods often change; but His authority and His mission remain the same.”

Shoot Your Arrows into the Future



The best way to impact the future is to prepare God's young arrows today. You must embrace the power of mentoring.



BY GUILLERMO RIVERA

GUILLERMO RIVERA was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, and received Jesus through the outreach of Metro Ministries, home of the nation's largest Sunday school. He began ministering in the streets at age 11. At age 20 he began working in youth ministry. In 2008 he planted a church in Columbus, Georgia, after serving in the armed forces for 13 years. In 2011 he relocated to Oklahoma City, where he planted a second church. Today he and his wife, Jeanette, pastor The Linked Church, and Guillermo also serves as a District Director for the IPHC's Acts2Day Ministries. He and his wife have four children.

One of the most common questions that I hear church leaders ask is "How do we reach today's generation?" It seems so difficult to understand young people today. Older people don't seem to relate to the rainbow-colored hair, the clothing styles, the tattoos, the rap music or all the new forms of technology like Snapchat or Instagram.

Here is my advice: Stop trying to merely understand and practice a simple principle that works the across the board. Presently we are for the most part only trying to understand today's generation because we want to herd them into our local church pews. Instead let's forget about church growth for a moment and focus on being the church and building God's kingdom.

In my own life and ministry, I have tried to use the principle of the Bow and Arrow when it comes to reaching younger people. Let's look at the example of Isaac and his son Esau. The Bible tells us:

"Now it came to pass, when Isaac was old and his eyes were so dim that he could not see, that he called Esau his older son and said to him, "My son." And he answered him, "Here I am." Then he said, "Behold now, I am old. I do not know the day of my death. Now therefore, please take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me. And make me savory food, such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die," (Genesis 27:1-4 NKJV).

Three points that I gather from this text that we can still apply today to help us reach and mentor the new generation.

1. UNDERSTANDING THE POWER OF RELATIONSHIP.

Isaac called out, “My son.” He trusted that if he called on Esau, his son would respond to the call. Isaac had confidence that he had enough stock invested that he could rely on his son. Why is there such a lack of mentorship today? Because we wear “Busy” like a medal around our necks. We are almost too busy to leave a legacy. We will never have a generation of sons if there are no fathers.

2. UNDERSTANDING THE POWER OF PREPARATION.

Isaac would not have sent his son into harm’s way if he did not believe that Esau would be able to accomplish the task; Isaac had prepared him for this challenge.

Life has processes and these processes cannot be rushed. Hunting takes a certain level of skill that must be taught by an experienced hunter and learned through spending time in practice. Isaac was very much aware that Esau was capable.

3. UNDERSTANDING THE POWER OF SENDING.

Isaac understood that sending his son would reap a benefit. Isaac could have sent someone else because he was so close to death. Yet he sent Esau.

The sending represents a stamp of approval; it signifies affirmation and confirmation. Esau could go into the field with his head held high, knowing that his father believed in him enough to send him.

Isaac was specific in what weaponry Esau was to take with him. He told Esau to take his quiver—which held the arrows and to take his bow. The Lord began to reveal to me that Isaac was a bow and Esau was an arrow. I’ll bet that Esau felt affirmation that his dad’s last wishes were for him to hunt him a last and final meal.

I grew up in a dysfunctional environment in a single-parent home in Brooklyn, New York. My mother was often not present, which left me with a lot of questions on how to do life.

If it had not been for mentors stepping in to do life with me, I would have slipped through the cracks. I would have followed the generational patterns

that I saw around me. I would have never become involved in ministry. Yet I found people who had confidence in me.

Today we have a lot of bows and few arrows in our quivers; there are many young people around us who have potential. Yet we lack confidence in them.

I am reminded of Paul’s relationship with young Timothy. Paul mentored Timothy, who was his son in the faith. He asked Timothy to commit what he has learned to faithful men who will also teach others. He instructed his spiritual son:

“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also,” (2 Timothy 2:2).

That is mentorship of four generations: Paul, Timothy, “faithful men” and others. This is how discipleship works! Paul

mentored Timothy, Elijah mentored Elisha, Naomi mentored Ruth, but who are we mentoring? There is power in the passing of a mantle.

Jesus mentored twelve individuals who were His disciples, and eleven of them went on to change the world. I know that the measuring stick of success in the western church is the crowd, but mentorship does not happen in the crowd.

Mentorship happens in intimate settings where real face-to-face communication can occur. Communication is defined as the exchange of information. The root word of communication is “commune,” where we also get the word “communion”!

Today’s generation is requiring higher levels of relationship. If all we can offer is an invitation to church then we will miss the wave of the now generation—and the church will have more and more empty seats each week.

So, what’s the solution? If you’re a bow, grab your quiver of arrows and begin to aim them with specific assignments. Michael Jordan made a lot of shots because he took a lot of shots. The only shots you know for sure you will miss are the shots you don’t take.

We will leave a legacy if we mentor this new generation. And more importantly, the church will continue to thrive throughout future generations. □



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Don't Ignore the Older Adults in Your Church

In our rush to win the younger generation, are we forgetting the seniors? You can reach all age groups.



BY AMY HANSON

DR. AMY HANSON currently serves as the Senior Adults Consultant for Discipleship Ministries. Dr. Hanson leads a speaking, writing and consulting ministry that equips the church for ministry with the new old. She is the author of the book, *Baby Boomers and Beyond: Tapping the Ministry Talents and Passions of Adults over 50* and she regularly teaches gerontology courses to college students. Amy lives with her family in Council Bluffs, Iowa. You can read more about Dr. Hanson's ministry and follow her blog at www.amyhanson.org

Never before in history have so many adults moved into their later years of life with so much health and vitality. Pew Research Center reports that 10,000 adults are turning 65 each day. In less than fifteen years, almost 20 percent of our population will be over the age of 65.

This unprecedented growth of the older population creates great opportunities for ministry. How do we best respond? Here are four principles we must consider if we are going to unleash the power of the older generation:

1. DON'T PUT ALL OLDER ADULTS IN THE SAME CATEGORY.

I've had more than one frustrated church leader tell me, "We can't get those 60-year-olds to attend our senior adult activities!" One reason for this is that there are two distinct generations represented among the older adult demographic.

The Builder generation, born before 1945, grew up in the World War II era and were hard workers, savers and loyal to their country, family and jobs. Today they are dealing with health issues and the loss of loved ones. They are searching for meaning.

The Boomer generation, born between 1946-1964, came of age during the Vietnam War. They have been described as independent, well-educated and cause-oriented. Boomers today are facing a number of life stresses such as caring for aging parents and relating to adult children and grandchildren.

They are also wrestling with how to live out their remaining years in a purposeful way. But Boomers don't like being called seniors and they tend to reject just about anything that smacks of old age.

A handful of churches across the country are creating new ministries in addition to their current senior adult ministry in order to better reach Boomers. Regardless of

how we approach this, until we recognize and begin to respond to the differences among the generations, we will never be successful at ministering to all older adults.

2. VIEW OLDER ADULTS AS ESSENTIAL TO THE CHURCH'S MISSION.

Society tends to marginalize older adults and sends a message that being young is the preferred status. This mindset has crept into the church. We think that in order to be a growing congregation we must reach young people while de-emphasizing the old.

The apostle Paul talks about how the body of Christ is made up of many parts, and each part is necessary. "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!'" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor" (1 Cor. 12:21–23, NIV).

Every member of the body is important. We must see older adults as critical to accomplishing the great commission of evangelism and discipleship. They are not a group of people to be appeased, but rather they must be engaged in every aspect of the life of the church; mentoring young believers, leading teams, helping in their areas of their giftedness and sharing the gospel.

3. PRIORITIZE EVANGELISM AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

Many churches invest a lot of time, staff and resources into children's and youth ministry—which is important—but few churches are intentional about reaching the millions of older adults who do not know Christ. Ironically, there are some characteristics among the adults over 50 that make them very receptive to the gospel.

Older adults are facing a number of life transitions such as concerns about their own health and mortality, financial worries and evolving relationships with family and friends. These stresses provide great ministry opportunities.

Older adults are also searching for purpose. They are entering a new phase of life and are asking questions like, "Now that I am getting older, my work life is changing and the children are out of the house, what is it that gives my life meaning?" Obviously,

Christ-followers hold the only true answer to that question.

Practically, this means we need to go to where they are—gyms, coffee shops, golf courses—and build relationships with people. Older adults who are outside of the church are often interested in volunteering for important causes. Invitations to serve alongside Christian friends at soup kitchens or to collect Christmas presents for underprivileged kids can be first steps in introducing older adults to the love of Christ.

In addition to reaching those who don't yet have a relationship with Christ, we can continue to encourage the spiritual growth of those in the second half of life by making sure that our sermons and Bible studies include illustrations relevant to the lives of older adults.

For example, when teaching on selfishness, share how a retiree in your community is living out a selfless life by serving others. When talking about marriage, make sure one example includes a challenge facing the empty-nest couple. Don't make an assumption that just because someone is over 60 they are a mature follower of Christ. We all should continue learning and growing up until the time we take our last breath.

4. INTEGRATE THE GENERATIONS.

Today's church has the opportunity to foster meaningful relationships across generational lines, yet often we silo people according to age. While four different

generations may come through the door on any given Sunday morning, they quickly spread out from each other.

We have separate classes for children, young adults and senior adults. While there is a place for providing ways for people to gather with those of similar age and life circumstances, there is also great value to integrating the generations. Contrary to popular belief, young people want relationships with older adults, and older people are looking for ways to pass on their life experience to future generations.

Two effective ways of bringing multiple generations together is through service and prayer. When a retiree and a twenty-something come together to repair the home of an elderly widow, or a teenage boy and an 80-year-old man co-teach a preschool Sunday school class, friendships are forged, mutual respect is born and meaningful communication occurs.

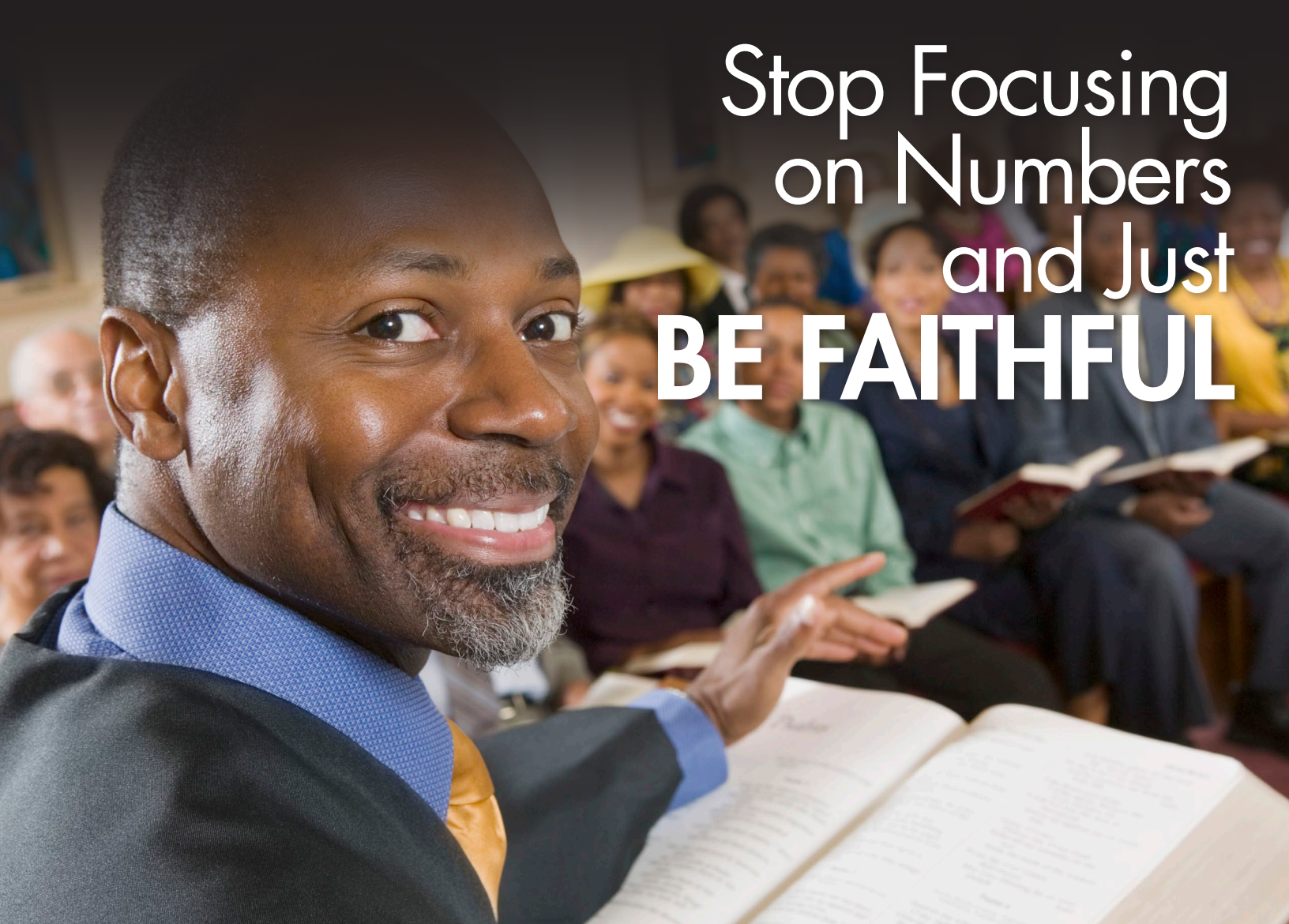
Prayer is another powerful way to bring generations together. Peggy (an older adult) was encouraged to pray for a young person in her church. After being matched with a teenager named Sara, Peggy began to talk to this young lady and pray for her regularly.

As the years passed, Sara moved out of state to attend college, but Peggy continued praying for her. Peggy even flew across the country to attend Sara's wedding! When we consistently pray for someone, our love for them grows and generational differences, such as loud music or tattoos, become irrelevant.

Today there are five generations that call your church their home. What an opportunity we have to call both the young and old into a deeper relationship with the Father and with one another. Let's purpose to not neglect one age group by focusing on another. Instead let's build up the body of Christ! □

"Society tends to marginalize older adults and send the message that being young is the preferred status. Unfortunately, this mindset has crept into the church."

Stop Focusing on Numbers and Just **BE FAITHFUL**



We often equate a church's size with its effectiveness—but God has a different criteria.



**BY J. LEE
GRADY**

J. LEE GRADY is an ordained IPHC minister who directs The Mordecai Project, an international outreach focused on confronting gender-based violence. For 18 years he served as an editor with Charisma magazine, and he is the author of several books including the newly released *Set My Heart on Fire*, a Bible study on the Holy Spirit. He and his wife, Deborah, live in LaGrange, Georgia.

There's nothing more disheartening to a preacher than to see empty seats in a church. I'll be honest—I like meetings where you have to pull out extra chairs and put people in the aisles. Why? Because I assume if God's blessing is on a meeting it will be packed. I like numbers because, in my carnal thinking, crowds are more significant.

Our culture puts value on things depending on how popular they are, and we are guilty of applying this rule in the church. We like big. We even rate the effectiveness of churches based on size.

According to *Outreach Magazine's* 2017 report, the largest churches in the United States are 1) Church of the Highlands in Birmingham, Alabama; 2) Andy Stanley's North Point Ministries in Atlanta and 3) Gateway Church in the Dallas area. These are incredible, Bible-based churches with impressive outreaches to their communities.

Other churches in the Top 10 List include Elevation Church in Charlotte, North Carolina; Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago and Rick Warren's Saddleback Community Church in Southern California. Every pastor would love to have a congregation of 40,000 like Church of the Highlands. And many pastors I know feel like failures because they've never broken through the 200 mark.

When I was looking for a church network to join in the year 2000, I considered

a lot of denominations and groups. The temptation was to join a group that had a cool vibe, the most innovative website and the hippest music.

But I chose to affiliate with the IPHC—not because its churches were bigger or because their preachers had huge followings on social media. I chose the IPHC because I met quality leaders who exhibited Christian character. They were people I wanted as role models. And they offered authentic relationships so I could grow as a leader.

God looks at quality, not quantity. He doesn't evaluate a ministry based on numbers, nor does He rate our effectiveness by comparing us to someone else. God's ways are not our ways!

We must remember these kingdom principles:

LESS IS SOMETIMES MORE.

Jesus attracted big crowds, but the numbers didn't impress Him because He knew many who were healed in His meetings wouldn't follow Him to the cross. He even told one of His crowds that the gospel seeds He was sowing would be eaten by birds, scorched and withered or choked by thorns (see Mark 4:3-8). Only a small percentage, He said, would bear fruit. Jesus was looking for quality, not quantity.

In the end, after thousands heard Jesus' messages and ate His free lunches, only 120 of His followers gathered in the upper room on the day of Pentecost. That is not an impressive number, and today's church growth specialists might say Jesus failed to break the 200 barrier within three years of ministry!

WE MUST FOLLOW THE CLOUD, NOT THE CROWD.

There are a few crowd shots in the book of Acts. But most scenes of the early church are less impressive. An Ethiopian was converted on a desert road. The Holy Spirit fell on members of an Italian family gathered in a home in Caesarea. A woman named Lydia came to Christ at a small prayer gathering by a river in Philippi, becoming the first convert in Europe.

Why are these seemingly inconsequential stories highlighted in Scripture? Because God moves as powerfully in one-on-one conversations and small group gatherings as He does in big meetings. When we follow the cloud of His presence, He often leads us to the one instead of the many.

The book of Acts ends with a scene of Paul ministering quietly to people in a small apartment while he is under house arrest (see Acts 28:30-31). Paul certainly didn't measure His

impact by large buildings, big mailing lists, media exposure or book sales. Paul never led a megachurch. And His writings didn't become popular until he was dead.

WE MUST MAKE DISCIPLES INSTEAD OF ENTERTAINING AUDIENCES.

Every man's work will be tested by fire, and every ministry will be evaluated not by church-growth experts but by God's holy standards. Sitting in a church does not make a person a faithful follower of Jesus.

We make a huge mistake when we equate success with numbers. Just because people jumped on a spiritual bandwagon to follow the latest spiritual fad does not mean they are serious Christians.

Don't confuse disciples with pew-warmers. God will not evaluate us by how many people sat in our chairs. His chief concern is how many disciples we made.

WE MUST STOP TRYING TO BE POPULAR.

The largest gathering in human history is believed to be the Kumbh Mela pilgrimage, a Hindu festival held in India in 2013. The largest concert ever held is believed to be rocker Rod Stewart's beachside concert in Rio de Janeiro in 1995. Did either of those gatherings change your life? Probably not.

Let's stop evaluating our own effectiveness—and each other's—by crowd size or popularity. If you are a leader, be faithful with the people you have, whether it is a home church of seven, a campus Bible study of 10, a rural congregation of 30 or a megachurch of 2,000. Whether you are ministering to a handful of inmates, a roomful of Alzheimer's patients, a dozen orphans or one depressed friend, forget your need for the spotlight.

Jesus gave us a refreshingly different perspective on crowd size. He told His disciples: "For where two or three are assembled in My name, there I am in their midst" (Matt. 18:20). If He loves small gatherings, why should we despise them?

Learn to be faithful with what God gives you. Don't focus on numbers. Just make Jesus popular. □

"Don't confuse disciples with pew-warmers. God will not evaluate us by how many people sat in our chairs. His chief concern is how many disciples we made."



Don't Ignore the People in the Trees

Just as Jesus called Zaccheus from a tree, you can reach the lost if your heart is full of compassion.



BY B. KAY JONES

B. KAY JONES is a life coach, mentor and speaker. Ordained in the IPHC, she speaks in churches, high schools and conferences, and she has seen people of all ages liberated by God's power. Alongside her husband, Les, she has served on the leadership team of New Song Family Church in Decatur, Alabama, for 20 years. B. Kay has served as Women's Ministry Director on state and local levels, and she is also involved in helping victims of addiction and abuse in her community.

When was the last time you struck up a conversation with a complete stranger or spent money or time on someone who could never pay you back? Try to remember the last time you allowed your plans to be interrupted to meet the needs of someone else?

The truth is most of us are pretty self-consumed. We usually focus on the needs of those in our inner circle, especially the ones who give something back to us.

I have been thinking about how we do life in comparison to how Jesus did life. Scripture says in Luke 19:10 that the Son of Man "came to seek and to save the lost" (NIV). That was his purpose, seeking and saving the lost. He went out searching for them, finding ways to meet their needs and sharing the love of the Father with them.

Are we doing that? Are we living our lives seeking out those who are lost and broken and doing what we can to bring them to Christ? Or, are we avoiding people who have issues because we don't want to get our hands messy?

Jesus never led anyone to the Father at the temple. He sought out those who were broken and needed help outside of the religious realm. Luke 19:10 is an excerpt from the passage of Jesus' encounter with Zaccheus, which has been one of my favorite since childhood.

Zaccheus was a tax collector. He was not the kind of guy everyone wanted to hang out with. He had taken advantage of some people. He probably had few friends. And he probably had some major rejection issues.

Zaccheus had heard that Jesus was coming to his town, and he wanted to secure a seat where he could have a clear view of the one so many were talking about. Being impaired by his height, he decided his best bet was watching Jesus from a tree. To me, it says a lot about Zaccheus that he would excuse himself from the crowd and climb a tree.

His behavior makes me think he was a loner. Did he want to escape the crowd, or was he hoping to be noticed? Either way, it seems he carried a sense of brokenness.

Jesus had the option of ignoring Zaccheus, yet He chose to zoom in on the man in the tree. The man the crowds called a “sinner” was the one Jesus was most interested in spending the afternoon with! Most people probably avoided eye contact with Zaccheus, and I doubt anyone trusted him.

But Jesus saw something in Zaccheus. He was so thirsty for truth that he was willing to go out on a limb, literally, just to get a look at the Savior.

Jesus did not seem to worry about Zaccheus’ tarnished reputation. He was more concerned about the state of his heart and where he would spend eternity. He didn’t approach Zaccheus with a deep theological question; he approached him as a potential friend.

Jesus’ attention to Zaccheus brought immediate repentance. The change in his life was so drastic, in fact, that Zaccheus volunteered to pay back four times what he had stolen from people. All of this happened because Jesus took the time to notice “the people in the trees.” Jesus chose to go where people were, involve himself with them and make a difference in their lives.

Jesus was a master at starting conversations. He took note of others’ needs and connected with their thoughts and feelings. He made eye contact with them and listened as they shared their pain. Jesus created an environment for the Father to move everywhere He went.

He became a funnel of love to everyone He met. He was not self-consumed; He was consumed with the Father’s heart.

I dare you to take this challenge. God has called us to look for “the people in the trees.” Look for the ones who feel uncomfortable in a crowd, or who feel peculiar and unsettled. Strike up a conversation with them so they don’t feel so alone.

Notice the people who keep watching you with curiosity in their eyes. Observe the ones who show up to work all stressed out. These are all people Christ died for, and they are in the trees of your life, peeking through the leaves. God’s Spirit is begging you to notice them, to seek them out and share a moment with them that says, “I see you and am moved with compassion for you.”

Maybe you should buy them a coffee and leave it on their desk. Send them a note or buy a box of donuts. Don’t be afraid of their problems. You came to Christ because someone was willing to get their hands dirty by getting involved in your life.

If you are feeling down or depressed, pause and look for “the people in the trees” near you. When you bring hope and love to them, it will splash back on you and you too will feel refreshed.

Take a moment and make a list of the “people in the trees” in your world. Ask the Father why He put them in your path. Ask Him for creative ways to share His unfailing love with them. Don’t waste another minute hating on your job or wishing you were elsewhere.

There are people all around you, hanging out in the trees around your life, just hoping someone will listen and care. They can encounter the love of Jesus through you. □

“The man the crowds called a ‘sinner’ was the one Jesus was most interested in spending the afternoon with!”

