

Jack Hayford: Why So Many Light Weight Christians?

A contemporary “weigh in” on an ancient value.

First, knowing so many ministry-types serve Jesus’ goals, I don’t want to seem unduly critical of any in addressing a concern. If you’re a dedicated servant-leader, I’m on your side! But I want to bluntly talk about the lessened “weight” being given today to Jesus’ strategy for advancing His church. He said, “Go—make disciples!”—and this foundational call is increasingly being “dissed.”

“Dissing”—the pop word for disrespect—is becoming normalized regarding discipleship. I don’t think it’s calculated, but it’s occurring as “doing church” supplants “becoming the church.” A dimming focus on plain, New Testament discipling is bringing us to the brink of evolving dumbed-down saints, a deceivable elect and a crippled Body emptied of ministry strength and unready to face persecution.

Without discipleship, we are at risk of garnering believers in Jesus while not growing stable, committed, empowered agents of Christ. Jesus spoke of people who “for joy” lay claim to faith, but who do not endure. They wither when trials or pressure comes (see Mark 4:5, 17)—and Christians are facing an increase of both in our world.

As leaders, we would well be warned of our common vulnerability to being distracted by the abundance of “enhancements” available to ministry today. “Make up” isn’t evil, but it’s no substitute for leading believers to “take up” the disciple’s cross and be shaped as His true followers. We’re within frightening reach of being able to grow bigger churches while failing to grow bigger people.

We are increasingly tooled and trained in technology and

management techniques, better resourced with music and media effects, and better housed and staged for added consumer appeal. While not attacking these outsourced resources, I'm asking about our outcomes. Amid our heavyweight enterprises at refining style, we are growing weak in substance. In our version of the bride "trimming to be pretty," are we ending with lightweight believers?

Here are some oft-accepted habits that hint at our weakness. I'm damning none of them, but I'm asking, "What do they weigh?"

- Special music and skills may assist our worshipping God, and real discipling indeed requires encountering Him. But if my guitarist is being given an 8-bar lick between verses, does the applause generated create an event rather than an encounter with God?
 - A 7-minute drama, carefully, cleverly prepared to reinforce the message of God's word can be heart-searching and hilarious. But if our skits become more for fun than for focus, are we simply "rolling in commercials" for an end product that isn't—or was never—in Jesus' mind?
 - Today's pastor-teacher lives in a world requiring more than a "speaker." It looks for "communicators." Has that mandate turned our focus away from our discipling task to our delivery style? In preaching, might I gain smiles with my cleverness while losing my grip on my sword, satisfying "itching ears" (2 Tim. 4:3) while watering down "the apostle's doctrine" (Acts 2:42)?
 - What about my "charismatic" potential for breeding some people whose preoccupation with "prophetic words from the Lord" have drawn them away from a hunger to be fed the word of God? My "prophesying" may attract a following, but in the end, will they follow Jesus?
- Let's focus on the real and lasting. This demanding hour calls for disciplers—leaders who won't be "diss-tanced"

from the call.

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