

Man Loses 400 Pounds in 4 Years—What's the Lesson?

Bryan Ganey is celebrating. "I lost 400 pounds in four years without any surgery or diet program!" he says. He also was \$60,000 in debt and paid that off too, exclaiming, "American Express—I finally left home without it!"

Overeating and overspending, this Christian finally came to the place where he realized time was running out and it was time for change.

Are we approaching this same place in the church today?

Today I spoke with a man who is being installed as the the pastor of a historic church in our area. After 164 years operating one way, he challenged them to change their bylaws to align with Scripture. They followed his courageous lead to "trim the fat" in a time of civilizational crisis.

In the Old Testament, we find the account of a man named Eli who disobeyed God in his leadership role. He lost his sons, his sight and God's presence. Eventually he died, falling off a wall in his overweight state (1 Sam. 2-3). Painful lessons are here about forfeiting God's presence, fresh revelation and spiritual sons by allowing ourselves to become "fat, dumb and happy."

Ganey refused to live in a state of denial any longer. He acknowledged his serious condition and said, "Enough is enough!" He incredibly lost the weight and now weighs under 200. (You can follow his story at .)

Our overweight overseer, Eli, stayed the course and suffered terrible consequences. Whose example should we follow? The answer is obvious.

How Does This Apply to the Church?

Having served as a pastor and church planter in America for more than four decades, I've been privileged to travel the nation seeing the "good, the bad and the ugly" in American Christianity. Like our Lord Jesus Christ, I love the true church, which is His bride—diverse, flawed and maturing. I believe, as Ephesians 4:11-13 teaches, there will be a generation that sees the church "attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" prior to His return. We are called, as the Scripture says, to "hasten" or "speed its coming" (2 Pet. 3:12).

Here's the deal: Although the church in America is successful numerically, let's acknowledge we are unsuccessful influentially. With each passing day, it seems that we are losing ground on critical moral issues and losing our youth. Statistics reveal that almost 60 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds with a Christian background no longer are part of a church!

Visualize Jesus wiping away a tear from His eyes as He speaks to the church in America the same words He spoke to Laodicea: "You say, "I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing. But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire so that you can become rich and white clothes to wear so you can cover your shameful nakedness and salve to put on your eyes so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent" (Rev. 3:17-19).

The urgency of the hour demands that Christians everywhere repent of any disobedience and compromise as we reclaim our call to be salt and light corporately and individually. Many have tried the "nonoffensive, keep it positive, play it safe, steer clear of controversy" approach, and while it has worked for some in drawing crowds, what real impact are we having?

False prophets, celebrities and politicians don't hold back in espousing their unbiblical and destructive views, yet why are so many Christians and pastors silent on the major cultural issues affecting our families and future as the United States of America? Of what are we afraid? Or are we finally reaching the place where we're starting to awaken, that we might actually see a heaven-sent revival in our day?

Michael Brown challenges us: "In the past we were willing to be revolutionary; today we want to be relevant. We used to be principled; today we are pragmatic. Once we were prophetic; today we are professional. We used to follow a kingdom model; now we follow a business model."

Ouch! We need this kind of provocation to finally "get on the scales" and get rid of the excess weight!

There comes a time in each of our lives where it's good to ask, "Am I ready to make a difference?" There are tipping points in history where the status quo, the path of least resistance, is no longer acceptable. I am persuaded that such a time is now.

If you are a pastor, I challenge you to take a stand for truth in our generation. If you are in a church where your pastor has been strangely silent on cultural issues, afraid of offending big donors, trying to keep everything upbeat and positive, saying "We just preach the gospel and steer clear of politics," or, "Why invite trouble or controversy?" or, "Why bother? It's all going down anyway," I invite you to pray for him, print a copy of this article, and submit it to him in a respectful way.

The Bible tells us, "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ" (Col. 2:8).

All of us in our churches need to be equipped to avoid the

above. May your pastor say like Paul, “You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you. ... I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God” (Acts 20:20, 27).

How about appealing to your spiritual shepherd along these lines ...

“Pastor, please help me to more effectively share the gospel as I engage people in my circle of influence. Conversations inevitably arise around hot-button topics in our culture, and I’m coming to you, asking that you equip me to understand the biblical worldview on these issues. As Christ’s ambassador, I really want to pray intelligently and interact with others confidently. I promise to communicate in a nonconfrontational and winsome way, but I need you to prepare me. Will you?”

10 Areas to Address

1. Religious freedom and the separation of church and state
2. Abortion and the sanctity of human life
3. Same-sex marriage and the sanctity of biblical marriage
4. Living together and the call to chastity
5. Homosexuality and calling oneself a “gay Christian”
6. Legalizing marijuana and smoking pot
7. The reality of hell and eternal judgment
8. World religions and salvation in Jesus Christ alone
9. Atheism and creationism
10. Civic responsibility and Christians involved in politics

In Deuteronomy 20, God directed individuals going out to battle to turn around and go home if they were fainthearted.

Why? Because their fear would adversely affect their fellow soldiers. May none of us shrink back in this day of unprecedented opportunity.

Bryan Ganey reached the point where he said, "Enough is enough!" and God enabled him to shed 400 pounds in four years. By faith, a turnaround occurred and the mountain was removed!

Can't our limitless God do a similar miracle today amidst the mountain of sin and the moral freefall in which we find ourselves? Will you join me in declaring, "Enough is enough!" and believing for a mighty awakening that awaits us if we will respond to this call?

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin that clings so closely and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:1-2).

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