

Why Church Size Has Nothing to Do With Anointing

Editor's Note: This is Part 2 of a two-part series. [Click here](#) to read Part 1.

The Stigma of Small Churches

I've heard it said that small is the new big. I believe that is true for many, though we have to be careful not to use that as a cop out. There are some leaders out there who have what it takes to grow a large church, yet their lack of personal growth, faith and surrender is standing in the way. Small is the new big only if God has called a particular ministry to be small. There are a lot of silly excuses pastors give for having a small church, just as there are many compromises pastors make to have a large church.

I know we could have easily seen our churches grow moderately large, but I also know I'm probably not gifted enough to lead anything in the thousands. But, in reality, if I honestly analyze God's mandate on my life, I may not be able to stay true to God's call while leading more than a hundred—if that. Twice I have traded my ability to grow a church for God's mandate for a small army of zeroed-in warriors. You have no idea how thankful I am that I didn't fail those tests (though I've certainly failed a bunch of other tests over the years). I'm thankful for God's grace and mercy.

Further, many pastors simply are not equipped or called to lead a large ministry, yet they expend ridiculous amounts of energy trying to fill the seats.

Pastors, if you have a small church, it could be that you aren't gifted to lead a larger one. God didn't give you that ability. Leadership doesn't come naturally to you. The quicker you can admit that, if it's in fact true, the quicker you can

shift expectations and pivot into strategies that take advantage of what you are gifted at.

There's such a stigma regarding small churches. People presume them to be failures. Why is that? Numeric growth should not be the barometer of health and success.

The moment you realize it's OK to be small, the stress and pride and anxiety will fall off. Joy will return as you enjoy being who God created you to be.

The truly scary reality is that many people are naturally gifted to lead a large church or ministry, but God has actually called them to lay that on the altar—and they don't. They can't imagine the ridicule, the mocking, the accusation and the massive price that would come if they took their church in a direction that few would join them in.

In fact, I wonder how many mighty church growth visions are being fulfilled as Ishmaels instead of Isaacs. I propose churches all over the world be laid on the altar of sacrifice as God brings redefinition and redirection. The revival we are yearning for requires a sacrifice—a surrender of personal ambition and dreams of success. Put it all on the altar. It requires the church is birthed supernaturally, as Isaac was, not naturally as Ishmael was.

I often think about heroes like Leonard Ravenhill. I would imagine if Ravenhill had decided to start his own church, it would probably be initially well attended and then a colossal failure. His rebukes of the church that he's so well known for in his writings would most definitely drive the typical churchgoer away with mocking and accusations flying out of their mouths. You see, if he would have experienced failure such as this, it wouldn't be his failure, it would be the failure of those who rejected the call to respond.

Leonard Ravenhill received a lot of criticism about his view of the church being weak witnesses for Christ. He sought to

rekindle the fire of the church into the devotion that the first-century church had. To him, the greatest tragedy was not sinful activities of the world; it was a sick church in a dying world and so he thought, "Save the church and you will save the world!" Leonard Ravenhill was an-old time preacher that warned of the wrath of God, hellfire, heaven, the need for repentance, confession of sin, living a life of holiness.
—Jack Wellman

If I Decided to Plant My Third Church

I'd encourage you to read an article I wrote about just what my third church plant might look like, should God direct me to launch one: [What My Third Church Plant Might Look Like](#).

Here's a portion:

We Will Be Intentionally Small

Understand, I'm someone who absolutely loves large-group meetings. I love praying and contending with thousands of people at various conferences and events. I also would have no problem with a church that does in fact explode in number as a result of revival. I believe we will see that.

However, after 26 years, much of that in pastoral ministry developing churches, I no longer value growing numerically for the sake of numbers. I don't get excited when more people show up, unless those people are hungry and ready to engage God with us at an extreme level.

I believe the sharp, offensive messages that will be preached, the call for 100 percent of the people to be invested in supernatural, fervent prayer and the extreme commitment necessary to advance apostolically will repel most people. Only a remnant will be left. It's with that remnant that we can preach what much be preached, pray what must be prayed and do what must be done to prepare a region for

revival.

It's Time for Remnant Churches—Which Means Most Current Church Members Will Leave

Large churches can be a serious threat to revival—or a great strength to revival. We cannot measure success by the number of people who are attending. We must measure by the number of remnant Christians who are fully devoted and being equipped and marked by God in the fires of intercession. Again, some leaders can gather a small group of firebrands, and some can gather hundreds or thousands. The key is the temperature of the fire and the level of surrender. When the fire gets hot, many will leave.

We have too many churches filled with people who are marginally interested in a move of God. They would be counted among those who rejected the call to the upper room. Understand, what happened in that upper room resulted in the launch of the church. If we don't see tongues of fire igniting above everyone in attendance, and we don't feel the wind of the Spirit of God blowing through the place, we have to know our church is either compromised or not ready.

The call must be so severe that most people reject it. Hundreds rejected the opportunity to be a part of the upper room prayer meeting. Those who did respond changed the world and ultimately impacted billions.

So, yes, when I gave leadership to the churches in Manitou Springs and in Detroit, I was so hungry for God to move more in the region than in my own meetings that I refused to pursue church growth at the cost of obedience and the greater vision. Those were painful years that resulted in a lot of tears as people moved on to other places. Understand, I don't blame these people. Many are great friends who simply had a different focus in their lives. It's easy for us to presume such decisions are black and white, but they rarely are.

People are at all different places in life, and sometimes one crazy and wild church may just not be what God has for them at that time. I understand that.

I blessed those who left, as difficult as it was to see them go, but I knew my heart was pure and my decision to contend for revival and God's plan instead of growing my church was correct. Would I do some things differently? Of course. But, the final, big decision to say yes to God and no to personal ambition was the only decision that really mattered.

Be Encouraged

Simply do what God calls you to do. Period. It really is that basic. There are many pastors who would be better served entering the marketplace. Others need to come to terms with the size of their ministry. Others have to mature and develop before they will see the next level. But don't allow people's analysis of your progress to control you or impact you emotionally. People, even many Christians, love to capitalize on someone who is down, and they will use that opportunity to elevate themselves. Just let them. It's OK. Love them and trust God. All eternity will be marked by the way you respond to people and challenges. It truly is a glorious thing to be free from the scrutiny of others as we allow the fear of the Lord to overcome us. He is truly a very good Father who is cheering you on, not stepping on your neck when you are down and broken. {eoa}

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