

Prophetic Warning Dream for American Church: Beware the Capsized Ship

In a recent dream, I watched a young, enthusiastic man work deep in the bowels of a massive ship. The gigantic ship was well built, and it reminded me of a battleship; something designed to withstand extreme weather or severe damage and still stay afloat. By looking at the design of this ship, I could see in the dream that it was able to cut through rocky waters at ultra-fast speeds. This massive ship, however, wasn't a battleship at all; it wasn't designed for the military. Instead, this ship was built tough with intricate technology at every level in order to carry the precious cargo that it held inside of it. The value of its design was equal to the value of what was within it.

The young man spent so much of his time in the bowels of the ship that he knew the different areas and compartments like a skilled cook knows their way around their kitchen. He had done this work for so long that it was easy to him. While he worked away deep in the heart of the ship, an older man soon appeared, working as well. They knew each other and often worked together, co-laborers and friends. They would go from compartment to compartment keeping the ship well-maintained. In the dream, I noticed that not only was the ship well-designed and built, but the inside of the ship was extremely clean and kept regularly. Everything had a place, and nothing was out of place. It would have made OSHA proud, maybe even jealous!

At one point, both men were laboring deep in the lowest level of the ship where the water intake and water systems were. (I am not sure if this is where water systems are located in a real ship; this is how it was in my dream.) In this specific

area, water would flow into the ship's water system and then leave pure, safe to drink. This massive pumping system was built within a flexible concrete system which allowed the concrete to maintain its integrity/strength while flexing as the ship adjusted to the water pressure from the outside. Coming from a non-engineer, I thought it was pretty cool! It appeared to be so sophisticated that regardless of what type of water came into the system, as the water left the pump systems and flowed to different areas of the ship, it ended up being purified water on the way out—some of the purest water I have ever seen in a dream.

As I continued watching the two men make their normal mechanic checks for that day, the younger man eventually came back to the lowest level to check the water systems again and he noticed that something was different this time. The younger man was baffled at first but continued to work on his maintenance projects. Soon the older man joined him in the water systems area and also noticed that something didn't seem right. While the younger man worked away, the older man started to panic. The older man got up abruptly and ran up the concrete steps. On his way out of the lower room, he turned back and said to the younger man, "We've got to get out of here. This is a capsized ship!" Then he left, never to return.

Suddenly it became obvious to the younger man that what was once above the water was now underneath. He hadn't even realized that the ship was upside down!

This massive ship was actually capsized—and the sad truth was that it had capsized so gradually that it wasn't even noticeable to those who worked inside of it. Some of the most dedicated and committed workers within this ship (both young and old) were operating upside down, and they couldn't even tell the difference until it was too late. The crew had become comfortable learning how to function upside down. I knew that the engineers designed this ship so if it ever capsized, people could get out, and it would still float, eventually

getting to its next destination. The designers provided advanced equipment to use to escape if the ship ever capsized. In the dream, I was confident that those working in the bowels of the ship could cut themselves out, and that the ship would stay afloat.

Then, I was suddenly watching this scene from the sky above the ship. It was easy to see that those on the outside of this massive capsized ship knew about it, but they did nothing to correct the problem. From a distance, people knew the ship was slowly tilting, but they said nothing at all. A few here and there gave a warning, but the leader(s) of the ship did nothing about it. They were more concerned with the ship's size, glamour, speed, power and amount of cargo, rather than the actual cargo's true and genuine value. The focus was on speeding away to the next destination, the next check point, the next big plan. While moving from greater to greatness and obstacle to conqueror, the crew was completely lethargic to the fact that their massive ship was now capsized.

As I watched this capsized ship still moving to its next destination, I thought:

Could this be the current state of the American church?

I think we can all agree that church leaders are truly trying, and they are, for the most part, real shepherds of the flock. Being a pastor today has to be one of the toughest jobs around, so hats off to all of you! And, structurally speaking, there are some well-built churches out there, both spiritually and physically. But over the last few decades, some of our churches may have been built so well—so large that trying to maintain it now has morphed into something so different from its original course, its compass. Perhaps, we have taken that once-pure foundation and perverted it into something that it's not just to keep the masses coming back Sunday after Sunday.

From the time I began in ministry 26 years ago until now,

churches have gone from simple worship to full-scale Sunday worship music concerts, fully equipped with the best types of smoke machines, lighting shows and sound decibels so loud that most of the older generation have to wear earplugs during worship like they did years ago in the factories. Your church worship experience doesn't have to compete with a For King and Country concert.

We also went from cluttered storage rooms within the church, to libraries, then to prayer rooms. Now we are nixing the prayer rooms to build cafes and bring in food services. I am not against the coffee and food, but if these things are what anchors people to our churches, perhaps we are already capsized and don't even realize it!

I was at a church recently that had so much smoke billowing out of its fog machine before the service started that I literally thought I was going to get choked out right there in the sanctuary. I could barely see the people sitting right beside me. I almost had to leave! It was like sitting in the 1982 movie, *The Swamp Thing*, where it was so foggy that you couldn't see the swamp monster until it came up right in front of you on the screen. That scared the daylights out of me back then. Come on, church, we don't need to kill our saints via a fog machine overdose!

I am not against the next-generation styles, but we have to remember that it is just that, a style or form. When I was younger, the older generation regularly complained about how we showed up in shorts instead of pants and played rock-n-roll with loud drums for worship instead of hymns. (A what? Yes, a hymn, Google it!) We must be careful not to worship the styles, smoke, cameras, cafes and other modern-day entertainment, which only take away from the true meaning of worship: worshiping Him.

"Yet the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. For

the Father seeks such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24).

My second thought after watching the capsized ship was this:
Is the American church about to be shaken?

God never shakes what is on His true and pure foundation. God only shakes what doesn't belong with Him. If the church (perhaps your church) is going to be shaken, it is strictly because it isn't on the right foundation to begin with.

"At that time his voice shook the earth, but now He has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our 'God is a consuming fire'(Heb. 12:26-29, NIV).

We have to bring our people to more of the Holy Spirit's presence and less of the temporary, earthly comforts. Dunkin and Starbucks can sure help a person feel better for a moment; however, it is only the power of God that can change the course of someone's life. It is past time to turn our "ships" right side up again, and in doing this, we will have to kick the secular entertainment industry out of our churches. It's time to spiritually catch our churches on fire! {eoa}

Andy Sanders has been speaking for 25 years. He has traveled extensively around the U.S. and other parts of the world. He is a prolific writer who carries both a prophetic and leadership-type message to the church. Sanders has a B.A. from Central Bible College and a master's and doctorate in Christian education from Freedom Seminary, graduating with honors. He is married to Cathy, and their family resides in Syracuse, New York.