

Unclog Your Wells

In February I spoke to a group of ministry leaders associated with a particular denomination in South Carolina. They are hungry for a fresh move of God, but they are also aware that they aren't effectively reaching people for Christ. Most of their small congregations are getting grayer by the day. I told these folks they have only two options: Change or die.

Using a story from the life of Isaac, I reminded them that we should never build our ministries with only one generation in mind. God identifies Himself as "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (Ex. 3:6, NASB). He wants His work to advance from one generation to the next. And this requires us to be open to change.

After Abraham's death, Isaac journeyed to the land of Gerar during a famine. Genesis 26:18 says, "Then Isaac dug again the wells of water which had been dug in the days of his father ... for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham."

God wants to open spiritual wells of blessing, but He doesn't want to limit that blessing to one generation. Our enemy loves to stuff our wells with all kinds of garbage—religiosity, tradition, legalism and denominational politics. We must keep our wells unclogged.

Isaac renovated his father's wells so they could be a blessing to his generation. In the same manner, we must be willing to remodel our ministries so the younger generation will want the drink we offer. I'm not talking about changing our core message or compromising on the altar of cultural fads. But we won't effectively reach the Isaac generation with a stale, outdated presentation.

We need an extreme makeover. Here are just a few areas where you may need renovation, remodeling and unclogging:

1. Genuine, authentic spirituality. We overdosed on hype during the charismatic-Pentecostal movement. We celebrated preachers who wore shiny suits and helmet hair. We felt it was OK to push people to the floor during altar-ministry times. But young people today are nauseated by fakery and pretense. We don't have to act weird to be supernatural.

2. Music styles. If we want to reach young people then we must update our playlists. We can't be selfish and build our church services around the music of 1972. And remember: It is possible to update the great hymns of the church with new instrumentation without losing those classics.

3. Dress codes. Young people feel out of place when everyone looks like they are at a funeral. Many young guys today can't afford to buy a dark suit, and young women don't want to be forced to wear a feathered hat, white gloves or a skirt that covers their ankles. Nothing will clog up your well faster than yesterday's religious garb.

4. Team leadership. The one-man show was the norm in churches in 1980. That system didn't work and wasn't biblical. Young people today want interaction and connection. In the New Testament, Paul had a multigenerational, multiethnic team that included men and women (see Rom. 16:1-16). So should we.

5. Relational discipleship. In the past season, Christians tended to be spectators who built their spiritual lives around big events. But young people don't want to learn from a guy who arrives at the church in a limousine, sits on a throne on the stage, preaches from a pedestal and then disappears. They want a real relationship with a real spiritual father (or mother) who is willing to spend time with them.

6. Technology. You would never go to a foreign country to serve as a missionary without learning its language. Yet today many churches try to reach the younger generation without mastering digital media. God wants to use all new forms of

communication to spread His truth.

Don't get stuck in an old place. The Holy Ghost offers the best Drano for your clogged wells. Open up your life to the new things God is doing in this exciting hour.

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