

## A Mission-Minded Church?

Russ Cole

(I have not met Russ Cole. This concise and perceptive article by him was brought to my attention by Louie Welch, of Houston. Louie and I were fellow-students in Abilene Christian College in prehistoric times. In the meantime he has been a devout believer, a member of the Board of Trustees of ACU for fifty years, a five-term mayor of Houston, and, yes, he even has done some preaching. Louie's desire to see this published is well-founded. So, please read and heed. Run it in your bulletin. Cecil Hook)

What would the church be like if we were really a mission-minded church? Our mission is to make disciples of Christ. If we truly believed that and practiced it, would anything change?

Two factors will cripple our mission to the lost. The first is a spirit of fear. Fear that we will become like the denominations. Fear that someone might get upset if we change anything. Fear of leaving our comfort zones for new, uncharted territory. Fear of what the leaders of the church might think. Fear of what sister congregations might say about us. Fear that any change is just "the camel's nose under the tent."

Fear is the great killer of dreams and one of the major reasons why we aren't being more effective in reaching our world. We are too afraid to mobilize and do what it takes to relate to our twenty-first century culture.

Fear is Satan's weapon and he uses it very effectively to neutralize us. Yet, if anyone ought to be courageous and bold, it's God's people. We have the Lord of heaven and earth on our side. We have the victory. We are protected by the armor of God and filled with the Spirit of God. And God did not give us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, love, and discipline. Let go of the fear and claim the power, because while we sit here trembling, millions of lost souls are going to hell without Jesus!

The second crippling factor is our traditions. It is the history of great movements to eventually crystallize into institutions. Our movement is no exception. What started out with great freedom and evangelistic zeal has become an establishment complete with its own set of rules that dare not be broken. Mind you, many of these rules are not biblical, although we've been convinced that they are. Therefore, we insist on keeping the rules of the institution and even give them scriptural authority, reprimanding anyone who dares to question their validity or suggest that there might be another way. Yet while we sit here and protect our institution, millions of lost souls are going to hell without Jesus!

I feel ashamed to say things like this. But someone has to say it. Many of us feel it and see it. The question is, what are we doing about it? When will we wake up to the truth and embrace our mission, whatever it takes?

I pray that we haven't become too institutionalized to change.

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