

Numbers Don't Matter

Neil Girrard

There are some who insist, perhaps too loudly or at least too publicly, that in measuring how effective a particular “ministry” really is, numbers just don't matter. Yet these same people will be sure to tell you how many millions of people used to visit their now defunct website and how many people are now logging on to their new internet project. They might even inflate their current numbers a bit while they ridicule a site that has only had a few hundred visitors in contrast to their “successful” site of the past. Or those who have some wide-ranging or globe-trotting “ministry” will disdain the one whose service to Christ is of a more limited or more humble nature. And no recognition of these contradictions is ever made.

But there is another perspective. Jesus, Paul and Peter each said that the deception of the end time apostasy would involve the *many* and not merely a few. (Mt. 24:5, 1 Tim. 4:1, 2 Tim. 4:3-4, 2 Pet. 2:2) Boasting of large numbers is not proof of remaining in the faith and in truth! Further, Jesus said, “What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying?” (Mt. 18:12) From the perspective of eternity and the kingdom of God, which is more important? To confirm many souls in their apostasy and deception or to rescue one stray sheep from falling away from Christ and God? In God's economy there is one particular number that is of almost infinite value to Him – the number one! But men still value the ninety-nine because they provide so much more tangible evidence for the person who needs proof that his “ministry” is reaching “lost souls.”

Such a one who is capable of making such blind statements (and judgments) about numbers should consider whether there might not be other deceptions at work in their life. What else do these say that is quickly contradicted by their next words, their actions or their title and position of “leadership”?

Many are not aware of how paradigms work in real life. What is a paradigm? It is a preconceived mindset or belief that causes us to interpret all the information that comes through our eyes and ears and experience base. Perhaps the clearest illustration of a paradigm is a pair of sunglasses. These glasses can represent any belief – there is no God, there is no sin in my life, there is no need for me to repent, there is no hell, my “church” is a good “church,” etc. Each of these mis-beliefs will color or darken everything a person hears, reads, thinks or does.

But now consider a man who is wearing extremely dark sunglasses inside a well-lit room but who is unaware that he has them on. Such a man would then say ridiculous things like “This room sure is dark” and he might even ridicule the owner of the room for having failed to pay his electric bill so as to keep the lights on! But who is the foolish one here? Some have had these blinders on for so long that they are virtually ingrown around their ears and eyes and parting from them will simply be unacceptable. Take the picture a little further and give the man something more resembling welding goggles (or Saul of Tarsus' scales – Acts 9:18) and the man might even think he was in the room alone. Put a gun in his hand and he might even think it's alright to do target practice in his darkness, never seeing the damage he's done to his victims nor, if he even hears the screams of anguish, ever once correctly interpreting his own culpability in the matter – just like Saul of Tarsus (Acts 8:3) who required (and received!) a personal encounter with the Lord whom he persecuted. (Acts 9:5)

The “church” paradigm – the belief that the way “church” is routinely practiced today is the way things are supposed to be – has enabled men to make foolish statements about well-

illuminated subjects for centuries, even millennia. The taking of titles and positions and offices within the “church” has bred an incredibly arrogant crop of men and women who think themselves superior to the common herd who so routinely plops itself at their feet and pays them handsomely to stroke their ears just right. The waste of time and financial resources on buildings and salaries when the orphans, widows and poorest (least) are left alone in their difficulties is only proof that one’s religion is twisted and distorted away from the light and the truth. (Jas. 1:27)

The affluent culture and society is perhaps the hardest to reach with the gospel of Christ because they subconsciously believe themselves wealthy (enough, at any rate) and in need of nothing. (see Rev. 3:17) Such a culture and society also feels free to subtly mold the gospel to suit their obviously superior status as they are, after all, so much more technologically advanced and more civilized and better educated than were the writers of the New Testament. Yet it is still truth that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God (Mt. 19:23) and that the kingdom of God belongs to the poor. (Lk. 6:20)

The kingdom of God is that realm, even among men on earth, where Christ and God are the actual and literal King over the actions, thoughts and beliefs of those who name His name over their lives. Where the will of God is followed, there the kingdom of God has come in the midst of human existence. (see Mt. 6:10)

Some people who like to proclaim themselves as being on “Team Jesus” also see no contradiction in labeling themselves “pastor” or “bishop” or “apostle” or “prophet” and then working to bring people under their influence and leadership, never seeing the contradiction between Jesus’ “team” and the “pastor’s” team or the “apostle’s” “tribe” or whatever title the man claims and whatever term for the common herd is used.

For those who might object to the use of the term “common herd,” let it be stated categorically that this term is used because this is what the actions of these “leaders” proclaim the people to be in their eyes. Jesus laid down His life for the sheep (Jn. 10:15) and He expects His under-shepherds to do the same. There is no “common herd” in Christ’s vocabulary – there is only His beloved bride, His own body, His own house and family. It is long overdue that those who claim to be something worth following in the body of Christ demonstrate at least some humility and stop trying to be some sort of “super sheep” over, above and beyond the common herd!

What is truly demonstrated by the carnal reliance on numbers and the subsequent (or concurrent!) denial of such reliance is the presence of the work of the deceiver. The leaders of yesterday and today have been deceived into thinking that they have the right standard by which to judge the validity of all works of God – any true work of God must match up to what they have been taught a “work of God” is supposed to look like or else it is not to be accepted. But these hold to the wrong standard and don’t know how deceived they are.

Some “church” leaders have finally been forced to note the serious decline in the number of people, especially youth and children, who are no longer attending “church” of any kind. Though exact numbers are hard to pin down, realistic estimates put it at about one million per year who are abandoning institutional “church” in America alone and there may be as many as 10 to 15 million per year around the world. Evangelical “Christianity” has particularly noted the loss of its children, estimating that 70 to 90% of the children will abandon the “church” (and likely their faith) by age 21 and will never return. But the leaders continue to try to resurrect or sustain the “church” with its “pastor,” platform and pulpit paradigm because that was what they were taught by some man (who had been taught by some man or demon –1 Tim. 4:1) that this is

how it's supposed to be. There is perhaps no deception more rampant among "church" leadership today than the idea that "there is nothing wrong with me" and "I'm here to help *them* because I've attained to a level where I can at least 'ease off the throttle' a little bit. I'm good with Jesus – I just know it." Unfortunately these deceptions have devastating and even lethal consequences attached to them.

Let those who do truly serve on "Team Jesus" recognize those who do not truly serve Him and refuse to work with them by refusing to serve the interests of "Team [insert imposter's name here]." Let us truly come out from among the "Christian" idolaters and idolatry and go meet Jesus outside the camp of men's religious trappings and find Him who is our life. (2 Cor. 6:17-18, 1 Cor. 5:11, Heb. 13:13, Col. 3:4) Anything else will simply include us in the deception that is the great falling away at the end of the age. (Mt. 24:10, 2 Ths. 2:3)

Let he who has ears hear.

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