Don’t Just Do Something – Stand There!

Forty two years I’ve been in the ministry. Seen a lot of things. Do you know what I’ve noticed? Christianity is trendy. Especially in this country where everyone follows the winds of change to exploit change. Here is what I’ve noted.

1. **Crusades and mass meetings**: These were in the 50’s and 60’s. (Before me, mind you.) Billy Graham made them famous but this was the American means of educational events for decades – lecturers and mass gatherings. They waned.

2. **Coffee houses**: Now we’re in the 50’s and 60’s again as the church noticed that youth were alienated and disengaged, we kind of followed the Paris existentialist hangouts and smoky bars for the free expression of ideas. They waned.

3. **Bands**: Christian bands took the new Christian music of the 60’s and 70’s into the coffee shops and churches “reached a new generation with their own music.” Must have been a hundred of them. They waned somewhat. They’re not as bad anyway.

4. **Bussing ministries**: Jerry Falwell got famous in the 60’s and 70’s for taking kids to Sunday School then visiting the parents. He built a church and denomination of Baptists doing this. They waned – save for Jacob Ray’s relative in Arkansas.

5. **Sharing services**: These were popular in the 70’s and 80’s. Started in California where free speech platforms were everywhere. They waned. I think people weared of hearing everyone else.

6. **Charismania**: Emotion was all in the 70’s. It evolved into Health and Wealth. People just got wore out and tired of the bizarre.

7. **Health and Wealth**: The health wore out but the success gospel continues in the big cities, but it’s too difficult to find a success motivation speaker in every location. They’re more isolated.

8. **Mini Churches**: 70’s and 80’s. They offered a more controlled sharing time. Not as ubiquitous now because discipleship didn’t follow and . . . (see #5).

9. **Multi-purpose buildings**: 70’s and 80’s phenomenon. You built your church to be converted into an indoor soccer field by 12:30 on Sundays. They waned also. I think people just got weary of a church that really wasn’t a church. Now churches look like Raytheon. Architecture is the art of ideas.

10. **Seeker sensitive**: Had a good motivation but waned because of the aftermath of spiritual shallowness and the weariness of having to be “creative” (an 80’s mantra) every Sunday.

11. **Mega Churches**: 80’s to present. Still popular because they provide the most bang for your buck. They tend to be program heavy to the exemption of discipleship. Good array of choices. Max benefit, low commitment. Still in vogue, but losing favor.

12. **Multi pastor led churches**: Preaching pastors, vision pastor, small groups pastor. A pastoral board. Problems were inherently built into this. Have waned since their hey-day in the 90’s and 2000’s. Works best when all the preachers are mediocre.
13. Elder led with no pastoral voice: Another trend from the 90’s on. Seems as though they've waned because of frustrated pastors merely being employees. There is a reason the Pastoral Epistles are to _individual_ pastors.

14. Multi Campus Churches: a 21st Century phenomenon. Waning for the same reason you don't like talking to a machine. We love humans. There is a spiritual presence of God between the pastor and his people. Hard to have that from a screen. Waning as it needs to be. Because we _can do_ doesn’t mean we _should do_. What is _possible_ may not be _best_.

All these different innovations have come and gone or are going or need to go. They are trendy. Like hair, clothing, music and dance steps. Like winds of culture determined by culture. At best these things are temporary ministerial means.

Sometimes, churches need to be distinct from all of culture. It is an old word we used, but we use no more. …“SACRED.”

It's interesting that there has never been a trend, at least in my lifetime, for exegetical expositional teaching of scripture, verse by verse, chapter by chapter.

There has never been a trend to equip the saints to share their testimony, to share the gospel, and win others to Christ. Exhortations to evangelism, yes … but never a Christian multi church trend of training everyone in sharing their faith.

There has never been a trend of individual Bible study throughout the churches. Here and there, yes, but not a sustained movement.

Discipleship? Never a trend except for maybe brief periods in early Methodism and Pietistic circles, because discipleship takes time, doesn't build numbers quickly, doesn't create architecture, nor bring ecclesiastic promotion. Plus, it doesn't create revenue. All these factors do not favor the American Protestant ambition.

Bible study, discipleship, evangelism, prayer, Bible exposition -
    They’ve _never_ been trendy …
    That’s why _other_ things have been.

People are in Cooperstown because they hit, run, and throw well _for a long time_. Canton has those who run, pass, block, kick, and tackle well _for a long time_.

The Faith?

Hit the nail till it’s gone …

Tommy