

KNOWING & DOING

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A Teaching Quarterly for Discipleship of Heart and Mind

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10 Decade of DISCIPLESHIP



President's Letter – The Forgotten Letter “D” for Discipleship

Notes from the President

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A number of years ago the beloved Chaplain of the United States Senate, Dr. Richard Halverson, summarized the history of the church in this way:

In the beginning the church was a fellowship of men and women centering on the living Christ. Then the church moved to Greece, where it became a philosophy. Then it moved to Rome, where it became an institution. Next, it moved to Europe, where it became a culture. And, finally, it moved to America, where it became an enterprise.

This American, business-minded approach to the church has led to the development of well-organized ministries and churches with large goals – the evangelization of millions and the production of more Christian books, sermons, music, radio, TV and other biblical resources than have ever been known to man in human history. We have mega-churches that attract tens of thousands of people every Sunday morning, exposing men, women and children to the message of personal salvation weekly. This fits in part with the colossal goal given to the church by Jesus, to go and make disciples of all nations. Jesus dreamed big and so should we.

However, in recent years, pastors and ministry leaders have become aware of the downside to the American church's focus on large gatherings, professional Christian resources and evangelism.

It's been described in this way, "The American church is a mile wide and an inch deep." Christian leaders fear that many sitting in the church today if tested will not stand, especially as our culture becomes more hostile to authentic Christian faith.

The "Enterprise Model of the Church" that Halverson mentioned has evaluated church success on the ABC's of Attendance, Buildings and Cash. The ministries with the most people in attendance, the largest buildings and the most money are considered to be the most effective. The problem is that cash, buildings and attendance are not the goal of the church. They are just a means to an end. They can be useful tools, but are not to be the criteria by which we judge the effectiveness of our mission.

Jesus had another means for judging the effectiveness of our ministry. It is the forgotten letter "D" for Discipleship. In giving the Great Commission to His disciples, Jesus said: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations,

baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” (Matt. 28:19-20a, *NIV*). Measuring discipleship isn’t always as easy as measuring attendance, buildings and cash.

Perhaps questions that we could use in measuring the church’s success in discipleship should be more qualitative than quantitative. For example: Are we developing men and women who love Jesus and passionately demonstrate this by obeying all that He commanded? Are we growing Christians from all nations who can articulate, defend, share and live their faith in personal and public life? Are we making disciples of Jesus who are reproducing themselves over the course of their lifetime so that 30, 60 or even 100 more people have the joy of entering into a lifelong relationship with Christ?

Michael Ramsden, International Director of Ravi Zacharias Ministries, once stated, “The American church is dying, not from lack of effective evangelism, nor from lack of resources, but from lack of effective discipleship.”

Here at the C.S. Lewis Institute, we still have a lot to learn. However, I am grateful to be part of a community of Christ-followers that is trying by God’s grace to develop wholehearted disciples of Jesus Christ through an intentional approach to discipleship of heart and mind. ■■

Joel



Joel S. Woodruff, President, C.S. Lewis Institute, has worked in higher education, “tent-making,” nonprofit administration, and pastoral ministries in Alaska, Israel, Hungary, France, and Northern Virginia. He served as Dean of Students, Chaplain, and Professor of Bible & Theology at European Bible Institute, where he helped train Europeans both for professional ministry and to be Christian leaders in the marketplace. Prior to joining the Institute, he was on the leadership team of Oakwood Services International, a nonprofit educational and humanitarian organization. He is a graduate of Wheaton College, earned his M.Div. from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and has a doctorate in Organizational Leadership from Nova Southeastern University.

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In the legacy of C.S. Lewis, the Institute endeavors to develop disciples who can articulate, defend, and live faith in Christ through personal and public life.