

DOING IT ALL OVER AGAIN

Recently, I had the opportunity to share with the Ohio CCF pastors, reflecting on my past forty years of ministry. Regarding my life and ministry, I focused on what I would do differently if I could do it over again. Well, it is as if God is giving me that opportunity in my golden years. Craig Baird, another CCF pastor, and I have planted a new life-giving, Spirit-empowered church in the Muscle Shoals area of Alabama. Most of you are aware that CSR was given a church plant in January of this year. Christ Church of the Shoals meets in this facility known as the Shoals Renewal and Resource Center.

Not that I didn't try in previous churches, but we are sincerely trying to "do this one right." We are earnestly seeking to be a part of planting a church, after Christ's own heart, according to His plan and as He intended His church to be. With God's orchestration, Christ Church of the Shoals will be a new wineskin church and a part of the new thing God is doing across the land.

What I Am Trying to Do Differently

As we set vision, values and ministry philosophy and lifestyle, these are some of the things I will do differently.

Wait on God. In this work, we are trying to avoid presumptuous sin. We are aware of the need to "inquire of the Lord" in everything we say or do. We are committed to finding out where God is already at work and joining Him.

Begin my day with God. For years this has been a part of my daily walk, but it is not always easy to walk out with consistency, especially when you are overwhelmed with Christian ministry and activity. I am committed to preserving this time with the Master...regardless of what comes and what the demands are.

Be a man of prayer and made the church I serve a House of Prayer. For many years I was in effect a prayerless pastor and the churches I served were not Houses of Prayer. I am more committed than ever before that prayer must be the bedrock and seedbed of all that we do. If I get too busy to pray, I have become too busy.

Walk more closely with my wife in life and in ministry. Those of you who know Anne know that I have a precious and exceptional wife. I am committed to drawing Anne more closely into all aspects of "our" ministry. I will listen more closely to what she says. I will trust her discernment and weigh it carefully. I will gladly receive from the Lord through Anne. She's more than a helpmeet; she's a co-laborer in the ministry.

Focus more on people and relationships. In the past, I have been more into projects than into people and relationships. I am an activist, a get things done person. It's easy for me to get so absorbed in a project that I become somewhat oblivious to people. This is over. My focus is going to be on seeing the Great Commandment and the Great Commission priority in this new ministry.

Make worshipers out of my people. For too long, we have made workers without helping our people to become lovers and worshipers. I believe this is why so many have burned out and why so many are finding their significance in the function and performance rather than in their purpose and who God says they are.

Invest my life in building men. Certainly women are just as important and they shall be nurtured and cared for, being a man, I must focus on men. My mentors in this respect, are Bob Yawberg and Jack Hayford. Both of them have "majored in men" in their long and successful ministries. I will spend significant time ministering to and discipling men. I will make a great investment in the development and maintenance of leaders. It will pay off!

We will receive the Holy Spirit and all He has to give! While believing in the reality of the Spirit, I have often held the Spirit at arm's length. No more! I will commit myself to creating an atmosphere conducive to the full operation of the Spirit, and I will never apologize for this.

Equip the saints for the work of ministry. In previous ministries, I spent far more time doing than I did equipping. At this point, I am placing a high value on teaching and the training of our people for the work.

Set God's government in order and firmly in place. Most of the problems I have encountered in previous churches and ministries have centered around poor and ineffective leadership or the lack of it. At Christ Church, we are committed to walking in the reality of the Ephesians 4:11 five-fold ministry. It is not easy, but I am convinced it is essential if we, as a body, are going to experience the fullness of Christ.

Stay in a place of rest. Busyness and activity have been the primary characteristics of my ministry in the past. No more! I am resting more. I am committed to come from a place of rest in all that I do.

Have a harvest focus in all that I do. Evangelism and the winning of souls have not had the high place in the churches I have served in the past. Much of this had to do with me. Craig and I are committed to building a Great Commission church whose focus is on the harvest. Without souls coming to Christ, our church will die and probably deserves to die.

Conclusion

You are encouraged to do a periodic assessment of your life and ministry. Face up to your mistakes and failures. Learn from them. I have found that if you don't learn what God is trying to teach you, you will get to "go around the mountain" again! Be encouraged. God is able. Change is possible and the Holy Spirit is in charge of the "helps" department.