

## ENLARGING YOUR CUP: BECOMING A SELF-FEEDER

Billy Graham: "You don't know your way to the PO."

- Do you know where you are going in 2008?
  - **Want the same results in 2008 as in 2007?**
  - God & I want something better for you in 2008.
  - Dec 30 might be a good time to assess where you are going in 2008?
- **Do you want God's best in 2008?**
  - Not an obvious question?
  - E.g. Jimmy Green? (Wanted the best.)
  - God wants 2008 to be your best year.
    - God loves to bless. **Is 30:18** "Longs."
    - Exactly what you need.
    - Always delivers.
  - **Waits Is 30:18?**
    - Stingy? Reluctant?
    - He does not force feed.
- **How can I receive more of what God is pouring out?**
  - **Ps 36:8** They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house and You give them to drink of the river of Your delights.
  - Problem? How big is your cup?

**Thesis: To experience God's maximum blessings, you must enlarge your cup. You enlarge your cup by moving into spiritual maturity ASAP. To mature you must be an effective self-feeder.**

Is Spiritual Maturity where the blessings lie?

- Miles ≠ maturity. May = aging.
  - E.g. Perfect hearing aid. (State of art. \$5,000. What kind is it? 12:30)
    - Don't mistake: aging = improvement.
    - Maturity is change in the traveler, not miles accumulated.
- Maturity requires investments.
  - Investments change our capacities.
    - E.g. musician benefits more from symphony, singer at opera, coach at game—all go to same event. See a different . . . .
  - Mature have enlarged capacity to enjoy the blessings.
- Maturity captures God's blessings.
  - God blesses His plan.
  - **Eph 4:13 (all, mature)15 (grow up in all aspects into Him)**
- Immaturity falls short of God's plan & blessings.
  - Hebrews were missing God's plan. Stalled. Plateaued. Reverted.
    - E.g. BG & wife on elevator, drunk pointed, "I know yuz. You're BG. You got me converted. (I must have converted you. It's apparent the Lord had nothing to do with it.)
    - If Lord in charge, we will seek maturity.
  - **Heb 5:11-6:2** (read Bible)

- Should be teachers of others. Teachers are self feeders.
  - “Training” is learning how to feed yourself.
  - 6:9 Brethren, we are convinced of better things concerning you.
- Are you advancing into maturity or just adding miles?
  - Howard Hendricks: old-time photograph (over exposed and underdeveloped).
  - Does God feel about you the way Lincoln felt about Geo McClellan?
    - Waiting, not moving, no action, excuses. (My Dear General, If you do not want to use the army, I would like to borrow it for awhile. Respectfully, A. Lincoln)
    - Are you moving or waiting?
  - **To develop properly into maturity you have to become a successful self-feeder.**

#### What is a self-feeder?

- Bird in nest.
  - Nesting is appropriate for a time.
  - **“S-F knows how to get and utilize resources in a way that produces maturity.”**
  - **Knows how to find the food he needs.**
- Give a fish or teach to fish?
  - Objects: Fish and pole
    - Teach a man to fish and you can get rid of him for an entire weekend.
    - Do you want to learn how to fish or just have more fish given you?
  - **“Do you want a class that will feed you or one that will teach you how to feed yourself?”**
    - Self-feeding classes have homework.
  - **I want a church that teaches me how to feed myself so I can mature.**
    - Non-self-feeders plateau, lose thrill, something missing, dull

#### How would you train to be a self-feeder?

- **You already know the answer.**
- Seminary model provides insight.
  - Why does Bible college = self-feeders but SS does not? (Same Book)
  - All true schools have common approach because necessary to produce s-f.
- Seminary & Bible college training:
  - Student assumes the **responsibility to learn**,
  - Student has **clear goals** (learn the skills to produce effective ministry),
  - Student accepts **assignments**, (Student: Punish for something I did not do?)
  - Student accepts **accountability** (tests, checks, reports),
  - **Assemblies have** important but **limited role**,
  - Student receives **in-serve training off campus** (church responsibility, neighborhood outreach),
  - Student participates in **practice sessions on campus** (devotions, sermons)
- How do we typically attempt to equip church members?
  - We do not use any of the Bible college model.
  - Professors taught differently on Sundays than Mondays.

- One system on Sunday and another on Monday.
- Sundays: bible listeners, Mondays: bible students.
- Program participants vs self-feeders.
- Sundays gave fish; Monday taught how to fish.
- Sundays produced fish eaters; Mondays, fishers.
- Do people learn same way on Sundays as on Mondays . . . ?
  - Student assumes the **responsibility to learn**,
  - Student has **clear goals** (skills)
  - Student accepts **assignments**,
  - Student is held **accountable**
  - **Assemblies** have an important but **limited role**,
  - Student receives **in-serve training** off campus
  - Student participates in **practice sessions** on campus

### Signs you are becoming an effective self-feeder

- **Becoming like Christ is the passion of your life.** Mt 28:20. IQ vs I will.
- **You practice biblical growth habits.**
  - Heb 10:24 for purpose of encouraging others, giving prior thought.
  - Heb 3:13
  - Ps 119:11 memorizing
  - Prayer: all day long,
- **You enroll in homework courses**, esp. with reports.
  - Precepts courses
  - Women: *Discerning the Voice of God*; Men: 7 Seasons
- **You initiate changes in your practices and lifestyle.** (Time w. kids, Tent of M)
- **You have your own plan for growth** and do not depend upon church programs as your primary plan.

### Signs you are a proficient self-feeder

- **You give a regular account to someone of how you are following your plan**
- **Assess your progress and plan for the coming year**
- **You have enough surplus to give away.**
  - Gary Smalley, Fill in T of M and pour out all day in service.
  - Agnes, teacher of privileged children. Dying woman.
  - Could not serve without surplus supply.

### Signs you might not be an effective self-feeder

- **“Church does not feed me enough.”**
- **“I do not do windows, floors or homework assignments.”**
- **“My main growth plan is to participate actively in the church programs.”**
- **“I do not have time to read the bible daily.”**

### Signs you are ready to be a self-feeder

- **Want spiritual growth but find you have plateaued** or at best very slow.
- **Accumulating knowledge but feelings are flat.**

- **No longer challenging and exciting.**
- **Want more from church, but church not delivering it.**
- **Willing to make changes and consider new approaches.**
- **Want suggestions about what to do next.**

### **Growth Plan for 2008**

- To invest in maturity you must have a plan.  
e.g. Mother of OSU prospect w. Woody Hays had a plan.
- **Four Relationships Plan sheet**
  - Circle one on each side.
  - Share with spouse. Develop a family plan.

### **How Self Feeder Listens to a Sermon**

- Q: Who has heard a sermon on how to benefit most out of a sermon?
  - Geo Whitefield, Great Awakening.
  - Would you consider that a primary skill for a church member?
- There is more than enough in every sermon to feed you if you know how to feed yourself. Agree?
- **Prepare yourself**
  - Read the text. (Read ahead if know the bible book.)
  - Ask God to speak to you. Ps 119:18
  - **Whitefield**, “Come . . . [with] a sincere desire to know and do your duty.”
  - Listen actively, “What are you saying to me?”
- **Write down a trigger for exploration**
  - Select a scripture to memorize.
  - Meditate during the week as you review memory verse, asking God to change you.
  - Do something about applying the scripture to your life.
- **Tell someone what you are doing with the sermon.**
- **Join a weekly sermon discussion group,**
  - Community Gathering or Home Fellowship or ATOMIC Power team.

### **Conclusion**

- **How big a cup will you bring to God’s fountain in 2008?**
  - Answer: What is your growth plan for maturity?
  - 80% of discipleship is reporting for duty. “Lord, what will you have me to do?”
- How far can the church take you? (To a plateau)
  - How do you know you have plateaued? (Programs by themselves become less and less effective.)
- When will you develop your own growth plan?
  - Music Man, Prof to Marian. “Maybe, tomorrow.” “Pile up enough tomorrows and you’ll find that you have collected nothing but a lot of empty yesterdays.”
  - Time to start. Tomorrow will soon be yesterday.

# FOUR RELATIONSHIPS GROWTH PLAN

(Daily, weekly, monthly)

## God

- Memorize scripture
- **Read Bible and pray**

## Family

- Family together event
- **Pray together**

## Christians

- Lead discussion table at Community Gathering/ABF.
- **Phone someone to ask for prayer requests.**

## World

- KIP project
- **Pray for the colleagues at my workplace.**

Reverse side

## God

- Read entire Bible
- Read same Bible book every day for a month
- Read two Christian books
- Enroll in a 13 week Bible study course
- Attend the weekly men's breakfast
- Participate in an ATOMIC Power team
- Attend the Great Banquet

## Family

- Date night
- Family meal together
- Attend a marriage retreat
- Once a month do something with an unchurched family or do a KIP project together.
- Enroll in one class on parenting children or youth
- Develop a budget and follow biblical financial principles.

## Christians

- Participate in three Team Ministry events
- Participate in the House of Prayer
- Participate church prayer chain

## World

- Lead a Bible study at work
- Pray for government leaders
- Read book on how to explain the gospel

## ENLARGING YOUR CUP

12-30-07 Bulletin

### Intro

- Do you want God's best blessing in 2008?
  - God \_\_\_\_\_ to be gracious to you. Is 30:18
  - He \_\_\_\_\_ on high to have compassion on you. Is 30:18
- To experience God's maximum blessings, you must enlarge your cup by moving into spiritual maturity, becoming an effective \_\_\_\_\_.

### Spiritual Maturity Is Where the Blessings Lie

- Maturity requires \_\_\_\_\_. Eph 4:13
- \_\_\_\_\_ falls short of God's blessings. Heb 5:11-6:2
- Are you advancing into maturity or just adding miles?

### What Is a Self-Feeder?

- "S-F knows how to get and utilize resources in a way that produces \_\_\_\_\_."
- Do you want to learn how to fish or just have more fish given you?

### Signs You Are Ready to Be a Self-Feeder

- Want spiritual growth but find you have \_\_\_\_\_
- Accumulating knowledge but feelings are flat.
- No longer challenging and exciting.
- Want more from \_\_\_\_\_.
- Willing to make changes and consider new approaches.
- Want a suggestion about what to do next.

### Applications

- Four Relationships Growth Plan (insert)
- How Self-Feeder Listens to a Sermon
  - Prepare yourself
  - Write down a \_\_\_\_\_
  - Tell someone what you are doing with the sermon
  - Join a weekly \_\_\_\_\_ discussion group

### Conclusion

- How big a cup will you bring to God's fountain?

Memory Verse: Isaiah 30:18 "Therefore the Lord longs to be gracious to you and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you."

## The homework schedule

Here is an explanation of the school homework policy for the average student. Students should not spend more than ninety minutes per night. This time should be budgeted in the following manner if the student desires to achieve moderate to good grades in his/her classes.

15 minutes looking for assignment.

11 minutes calling a friend for the assignment.

23 minutes explaining why the teacher is mean and just does not like children.

8 minutes in the bathroom.

10 minutes getting a snack.

7 minutes checking the TV Guide.

6 minutes telling parents that the teacher never explained the assignment.

10 minutes sitting at the kitchen table waiting for Mom or Dad to do the assignment.

### The dash movie.com

- What will your dash (short time) produce that matters?
  - “And then what?” story. Moral: Plan your dash with eternity in view.
- Measure by eternity.
  - If it doesn't matter in eternity,
  - What on earth are you doing,
- What is your dash producing?
  - Is your dash producing eternal junk or eternal jewels?
    - I Cor 3:10-15
    - Straw, hay, stubble or gold, silver, and precious jewels.
  - Activity does not equal productivity, e.g. carrots.
  - Not how much activity, but what investments will last?

### Scriptures

. . . until we **all** attain to . . . a **mature man**, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

Speaking the truth in love we are to **grow up in all aspects** into Him, Who is the head, even Christ. Ephesians 4:13, 15.

For though by this time you **ought to be teachers**, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God . . . Solid food is for the **mature**, who because of **practice** have their senses **trained** to discern good and evil.

Therefore, leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us **press on to maturity**.  
Heb 5:12-6:1

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, **plans for welfare** and not for calamity to give you a **future** and a **hope**. Then you will call upon Me and come to Me and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, **when you search for Me with all your heart**. Jer 29:11-13

Billy Graham tells of a time early in his ministry when he arrived in a small town to preach a sermon. Wanting to mail a letter, he asked a young boy where the post office was. When the boy had told him, Dr. Graham thanked him and said, "If you'll come to the Baptist Church this evening, you can hear me telling everyone how to get to heaven." The boy replied, "I don't think I'll be there... You don't even know your way to the post office."

October 18, 2007

Willow Creek Repents?

Why the most influential church in America now says "We made a mistake."

Few would disagree that Willow Creek Community Church has been one of the most influential churches in America over the last thirty years. Willow, through its association, has promoted a vision of church that is big, programmatic, and comprehensive. This vision has been heavily influenced by the methods of secular business. James Twitchell, in his new book *Shopping for God*, reports that outside Bill Hybels' office hangs a poster that says: "What is our business? Who is our customer? What does the customer consider value?" Directly or indirectly, this philosophy of ministry—church should be a big box with programs for people at every level of spiritual maturity to consume and engage—has impacted every evangelical church in the country.

So what happens when leaders of Willow Creek stand up and say, "We made a mistake"?

Not long ago Willow released its findings from a multiple year qualitative study of its ministry. Basically, they wanted to know what programs and activities of the church were actually helping people mature spiritually and which were not. The results were published in a book, *Reveal: Where Are You?*, co-authored by Greg Hawkins, executive pastor of Willow Creek. Hybels called the findings "earth shaking," "ground breaking," and "mind blowing."

If you'd like to get a synopsis of the research you can watch a video with Greg Hawkins [here](#). And Bill Hybels' reactions, recorded at last summer's Leadership Summit, can be seen [here](#). Both videos are worth watching in their entirety, but below are few highlights.

In the Hawkins' video he says, "Participation is a big deal. We believe the more people participating in these sets of activities, with higher levels of frequency, it will produce

disciples of Christ.” This has been Willow’s philosophy of ministry in a nutshell. The church creates programs/activities. People participate in these activities. The outcome is spiritual maturity. In a moment of stinging honesty Hawkins says, “I know it might sound crazy but that’s how we do it in churches. We measure levels of participation.”

Having put all of their eggs into the program-driven church basket you can understand their shock when the research revealed that “Increasing levels of participation in these sets of activities does NOT predict whether someone’s becoming more of a disciple of Christ. It does NOT predict whether they love God more or they love people more.”

Speaking at the Leadership Summit, Hybels summarized the findings this way:

Some of the stuff that we have put millions of dollars into thinking it would really help our people grow and develop spiritually, when the data actually came back it wasn’t helping people that much. Other things that we didn’t put that much money into and didn’t put much staff against is stuff our people are crying out for.

Having spent thirty years creating and promoting a multi-million dollar organization driven by programs and measuring participation, and convincing other church leaders to do the same, you can see why Hybels called this research “the wake up call” of his adult life.

Hybels confesses: We made a mistake. What we should have done when people crossed the line of faith and become Christians, we should have started telling people and teaching people that they have to take responsibility to become ‘self feeders.’ We should have gotten people, taught people, how to read their bible between service, how to do the spiritual practices much more aggressively on their own.

In other words, spiritual growth doesn’t happen best by becoming dependent on elaborate church programs but through the age old spiritual practices of prayer, bible reading, and relationships. And, ironically, these basic disciplines do not require multi-million dollar facilities and hundreds of staff to manage.

Does this mark the end of Willow’s thirty years of influence over the American church? Not according to Hawkins:

Our dream is that we fundamentally change the way we do church. That we take out a clean sheet of paper and we rethink all of our old assumptions. Replace it with new insights. Insights that are informed by research and rooted in Scripture. Our dream is really to discover what God is doing and how he’s asking us to transform this planet.



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