

NURSERY MINISTRY WORKERS FOR THIS WEEK

10:50 a.m. Service ----- Cradle Roll 1: Volunteer Needed
 Cradle Roll 2: Volunteer Needed
 Lord's Supper Service ----- Cradle Roll 1: Kristi Hooper
 Cradle Roll 2: Kelsey Moreno
 Wed. Evening Service ----- Cradle Roll 1: LeAnna White
 Cradle Roll 2: Seth White

AND THE PEOPLE CAME...

Week of April 20, 2014

Sunday School ----- 21
 Sunday Morning Service ----- 54
 Lord's Supper Service ----- 32
 Wed. Eve. Service, 04/23/14 ----- 18

AND THE PEOPLE GAVE...

Week of April 20, 2014

Undesignated Tithes & Offerings ----- \$ 775.00
 Total Received for Week of 04/20/14: \$ 775.00
 Average amount of Undesignated Offerings needed
 to operate the church EACH WEEK,
 as a minimum = **\$ 1,400.00**

LISTEN TO -



ABIDINGRADIO.COM

INSURANCE FUND REPORT FOR APRIL, 2014:

Monthly Requirement ----- \$ 329.66
 Amount Received thusfar during April, 2014 ----- \$ 0.00
 Amount STILL NEEDED by 05/05/14: **-\$ 329.66**

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SAVED

1. *Admit that you are a sinner.*
2. *Admit that God says all sins must be paid for.*
3. *Accept the fact that Christ took upon Himself the suffering necessary to pay for all your sins.*
4. *You must change your mind about sin and sinning (God calls this repentance).*
5. *By an act of your will, accept by faith the Lord Jesus Christ, who can save you from the penalty of sin. Then, tell God about this in a simple prayer. Believe that God keeps His promise to save you, and thank Him for His salvation.*



Please Remember To Be Faithful to Give!

As with everything else, the costs of keeping a church going never go down - they always go *up*. Bills wait for no one, and churches are no exception to this. An extra, sacrificial gift today by everyone present would go a long way...

We encourage all of our membership to practice obedience to God by being faithful every payday to give back to Him His tithe (10%). *If every family in our church would practice this one simple discipline, we would never have weeks where we have to put off paying some bills until the following week!*

Everything is expensive, especially for a small church like ours, but ours is a BIG God, and He LOVES to bless His children when they are obedient to Him!

If you are already a tither, we thank you, and encourage you to also give offerings as well. If you're currently not tithing, won't you please start **today - OK?** Thank you.

Church Directory

Todd W. White ----- Pastor
 Mickie Shatwell ----- Pianist
 Dickie Eberle ----- Greeter, Custodian
 Shayne Hooper, Caryn Quinnelly, Todd W. White ----- S.S. Teachers
 Larry & Mary Byars, Brian & Charity Crawford ----- Outreach
 Flowers ----- Shirley White, Charity Crawford

SOUTH HEIGHTS BAPTIST'S WEEKLY
REMINDER

Volume XIX

April 27, 2014

Number 14



The Entertainment Driven Church

by Michael Patton, President and Instructor, Credo House Ministries
 Bethany, Oklahoma

I recently decided to follow my own oft given advice and venture out to other churches just to see what the cultural landscape looks like and to stretch myself a bit.

First, I went to an evangelical high Anglican church. I was wanting to see something a little more traditional. It was a rewarding experience. It was also interesting to be at a church that was not to concerned about whether I was there or not. There were no greeters at the door, no one really noticed when I came in, and they did not say anything to me as I left. This is not a criticism, but just an observation. They did not let anything take them away from their reverential service in which things were done in a particular order. Because of this, it was not a primary purpose to fill the pews with guests. If a guest came in, great. They could stay and worship, but they were not going to do back flips and moonwalk for anyone but Christ.

Next, I went to a church that was just the opposite. It was a popular non-denominational Evangelical associated church. It was much more alluring in its style, having a much more amplified voice with regards to recognizing newcomers. From the moment we got in the parking lot, there were signs welcoming us along with parking lot attendants waving. These guys were so enthusiastic you would think that they had been trained at Disney World. The signs pointed to valet parking for first time guests. I would have taken them up on the offer, but pride always rules (oh . . . and then there is that awkward feeling that you are supposed to give them some money even when they say they don't take it). We were greeted by another enthusiastic character, a very nice young man, who led us around. When we told him we were first time visitors, he said "Oh, VIPs?" We then were introduced everywhere we went under this title "VIPs" (Very Important Persons). When others would hear that we were VIPs, they would have a look of excitement mixed with anxiousness. The anxiousness seemed to come from an underlying understanding that their church was focused on bringing in newcomers. Then . . . they led us to the children's area.

Here, most of the kids were playing video games along a long wall which had the game consoles built into the wall. The room itself was huge. It must have been designed by the same person who designs Chuck-E-Cheese. Seriously! (Although this is not as cool as the church we went to a few months ago where you had to climb a jungle gym two stories high and then slide through the wall in the foyer into the children's area!)

There was an elf that met the children at the door. Also in this room was a store that had Barbies, action figures, Brats Dolls, and all of the most popular items that you would find in a Toy-R-Us catalog the day after Thanksgiving. In order for kids to get the merchandise, they had to say a memory verse and earn store credits. The first thing my kids said to me when I went to pick them up was "Daddy, can we start going to *this* church?" Can you blame them? For kids, this was a dream church.

Well, I really try to keep an open mind about these things knowing that one persons church is not another's. But I had yet to go to the main service. As we walked in, I had to dodge the camera and squint to see the stage. It was dark and there was production smoke everywhere. We sat down and listened to an incredible performance by the worship team who sang many songs I was very familiar with. They were Christ centered and I sang along. I even put my hands up in the air when the worship leader instructed us

(continued inside)

to (hey, when in Rome). My wife looked at me with the “I cannot believe that you are really doing that” smile/laugh. No really, she had the “I am hiding my face because my husband is in one of those weird aggressive moods and he is going to make a fool of me” look. In reality, the worship was very well done. It could have been an opening act to a U2 concert.

After the worship, then came the announcements. That is where things really got interesting. Instead of the normal Baptist list of things giving from a random person from the pulpit, the lights went dark and there was silence. On the screens up above there were prerecorded announcement videos. These were not just your hey-I-got-a-new-digital-camera-and-I-am-now-a-professional-editor videos. No, these could have been aired during the Super Bowl. Yes, they were that good. And funny! They went through four separate announcements. The first was to welcome special guests. Then one for the men’s ministry, followed by one for the women’s ministry and one for a marriage seminar that was coming up. All the videos had a different theme and was a top rate production.

I could not believe how much time and energy must have gone into making these videos. And they do it each week!

Then comes the sermon. The message itself was good and helpful, but better suited for a Zig Ziglar seminar on self-motivation. He used Mark 7:33 to teach that Christ wants to deal with us each individually and wants our words to be for edification because what we think, we are.

How did he get this you ask? Well, let me show you.

Mark 7:33 Jesus took him aside from the crowd, by himself, and put His fingers into his ears, and after spitting, He touched his tongue with the saliva.

“Jesus took him aside”=Jesus wants to deal with us each individually.

“Jesus spit”=Jesus had to form the saliva in his mouth before He spit, therefore, we are to let Him form our words.

“[He] put His fingers into his ears...He touched his tongue...and his ears were opened and his speech impediment was removed” (v. 35)=sometimes we don’t hear people rightly because we already have the wrong words in our mouth. Therefore, we have to have the right words in our mouth.

Well, at least the principles are true generally, even if it has nothing whatsoever to do with the text. God does want us to listen to others and he does want us to think about what we say. As well, I believe that there is an individualistic way in which God wants to relate to us.

Once the service was over, I went and dragged my kids out of the amusement park (literally) and then began to reflect.

A few points of observation (the good, the bad, and the ugly):

The Good

- I really think that these people have the best of intentions.

- They did represent excellence in arts and entertainment and thereby bring glory to God.

- They were very outreach oriented.

- They had Starbucks.

The Bad

- The focus on entertaining newcomers caused them to lose focus on truth.

- The focus on entertainment took resources away from the training of the pastors to accurately handle the word of God—the very foundation of truth from where the idea of Church comes.

- The focus on entertainment smacked of irreverence. I am not one of the high church mentality, but doesn’t the purpose of worship and study of God’s word call for seriousness at some point? There was never a time when I felt that these people knew what it meant to fear the Lord.

I want to make something really clear: I don’t have anything against amusement, entertainment, or fun. I don’t even mind it in church to some degree (I wish that some preachers would just try to entertain A LITTLE). If they had just called this an event rather than church, I would have been more at ease. Call it a Christian concert, carnival, parade, entertainment production, or whatever, but please don’t call it “church.”

The Ugly

The sad fact is that there was no educational program for people to grow deep in the faith. There were plenty of opportunities for service, outreach to the community, and fellowship, but nothing that helped these people understand the why of what they are doing. I don’t necessarily expect these type of churches to do church the exact way that I would tell them, but at least have as one of the involvement suggestions a program of theological discipleship or doctrine to encourage people to know the God they are serving.

These people had no connection to the past whatsoever. They would have no idea about the history of the church outside of the history of their local gathering. What are they connected to? What makes them think that they are qualified to bring in all these visitors? Don’t they feel the least bit of a need to have a heritage? Are they not accountable to anyone past or present?

The biggest fear that I have is that this is representative of so many well meaning people who start churches. I imagine the person who started this particular church grew up in a very boring church and set it as his primary goal to someday have a church that was fun. That is nice, but, more often than not, totally destructive. The pews are filled with people who are weak and totally unestablished in the faith. Most really don’t know what the Christian message is outside of “Jesus loves you and wants you to have a wonderful life.” Many claim Jesus, serve Him, and lift up their hands in praise, but what happens when someone or something challenges their faith? Where are they going to turn? To the shallowness of the entertaining commercials or out of

context self-help lessons? Where will they go when the foundations are destroyed?

It is this type of context that gives unfortunate illustrations to books like Ruth Tucker’s Walking Away From the Faith. **“I was a Christian who used to go to church every week, served on the welcoming team for years, lifted my hands in worship, went to other countries and built churches, but I came to find out that it was all false.”** Really? What I want to know is did you ever find out that it was really true in the first place?

I could go on but this experience has confirmed to me the desperate shape that the modern church—the Evangelical church—is in and the need that we have for renewal. When things get tough (and they will), who will people turn to? Where will people go when the entrainment, laughter, and fun serve no purpose?

May God grant us a mindset to give people their true needs, not their felt needs.

Truth first, mission second, fellowship third, and if there is any room, throw in some entertainment. ■



HEAVEN IS FOR REAL: A DANGEROUS MOVIE FOR AN APOSTATE AGE

Heaven Is For Real, the account of a four-year-old boy’s supposed visit to heaven, has sold over 2 million copies in book format and has been turned into a movie which grossed \$21.5 million when it opened on Easter weekend. One pastor told me that the book is “circulating around many of our Independent Baptist camps; many are recommending it.”

It is about Colton Burpo, a Methodist pastor’s son who allegedly visits Heaven during emergency surgery. There, he meets a dead sister and great grandfather, sees Jesus, God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and Satan, and learns things not revealed in Scripture. We don’t doubt that the little boy is convinced that he visited Heaven, but we don’t believe for a minute that it actually happened.

First, the apostle Paul said that when he had visited heaven, he heard things that he was not allowed to repeat (II Cor. 12:4). Obviously, then, a person cannot visit heaven and then describe whatever he sees and hears there.

Second, the book *Heaven Is for Real* is contrary God’s emphasis on the priority and sufficiency of faith and Scripture. The book contains testimonies of how people have believed in God and Heaven because of Colton’s alleged visitation, **but the Bible says that without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6), and faith comes by hearing God’s Word, not by signs and wonders (Romans 10:17).** In his account of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus taught that if someone does not hear the *Scriptures*, he will not **“be persuaded, though one rose from the**

dead” (Luke 16:31).

All of the signs and revelation we need are found in the completed canon of Scripture (John 20:30-31). The Bible is able to make the man of God **“perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (II Timothy 3:16-17).** God has told us everything He wants us to know about Heaven at this time.

Third, the book *Heaven Is for Real* is contrary to the Bible’s plain teachings. For example -

- ☛ Colton says Jesus’ horse is rainbow-colored (p. 63), whereas the Bible says it is **white** (Rev. 19:11).

- ☛ Colton says the Holy Spirit shoots down power from Heaven (p. 125), whereas the Bible says the Holy Spirit came from Heaven at Pentecost and He is the power (Acts 1:8).

- ☛ Colton says everyone has wings in Heaven except Jesus (p. 72), that the angel Gabriel sits on the left hand of God’s throne (p. 101), that the Holy Spirit is blue and sits in a chair near the throne of God (p. 102), and “for our Catholic friends” the book is happy to report that Mary stands in heaven beside Jesus (p. 152).

Some might ask how Colton could learn secrets about his dead sister who died in the womb and facts about his great grandfather that he had not been told.

The answer is **demons**: Paul warned that Satan transforms himself into an angel of light and his ministers as ministers of righteousness (II Cor. 11:14-15).

- ☛ The book *Heaven Is for Real* also promotes the visions of child progeny Akiane Kramarik, who began “seeing heaven” at age four (pp. 141-144). Colton claims that the “Jesus” that he saw in Heaven is the same “Jesus” that Akiane drew from her visions at age nine. But Akiane’s religious faith is a New Age type faith in a vaguely defined “God.”

It is religious mysticism rather than faith in an infallible Revelation from God and the blood atonement of Christ. Even if we knew what Jesus looked like, we are forbidden by God’s law to make His likeness (Exodus 20:4).

- Evangelist David Cloud

