

How to Defrost Institutionalism

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Intro:

A. Institutions like old soldiers never die; they just mold away.

1. On tombstone says “Died at 30, buried at 72.”
2. People in institutions never become aware of decay until it’s too late.
3. Most organizations fall short of their goal because of internal decay, getting in a rut.

B. I’d like to probe three areas.

I.) The process of becoming institutionalized.

A. Adversity.

1. Most organizations are formed in a storm.
 - a. Little interest is there at first.
 - b. A few forge out a ministry by great commitment against all odds.

B. Organization.

1. If an organization is to survive it must have structure.
2. In the beginning few meet but with growth come numbers.

C. Becoming callous.

1. People may oppose your organization or are skeptical.
2. Most institutions grow out of hopeless situations.
3. Dallas Theological Seminary faced a hopeless situation and prayed that God would sell some of his cattle and give the money to us.
 - a. A cattleman did just that.

b. His check was just enough to pay our bills.

D. Acceptance.

1. We become approved here and it is dangerous.
2. Now it's an honor to be connected with this organization.

E. Popularity.

1. This is the beginning of the end.
2. If an organization loses its objective it can become incompetent.
3. Then God raises someone else up.
 - a. Three things will inhibit the slide to incompetence.
 1. Relevance.
 2. High morale.
 - i. People need to be sold out to this idea.
 - ii. People need to sell the idea.
 3. High standards.
 - i. What are our most serious weaknesses?
 - ii. What are our most serious strengths?
 - iii. Dogma is deadly.
 - b. How do we prevent this slide into incompetence?

II.) Products of institutionalism.

A. Dr. Egge wrote A Quest for Vitality in Religion showing how religions become institutionalized.

1. There are five characteristics of institutionalized religion.
 - a. When people are propositionally related rather than positionally related.

- b. When the church becomes inward focused, more concerned with itself than its mission.
 - i. A church dependent on building programs is institutionalized.
 - ii. A church needs to be people oriented.
- c. When ends be means and means become ends.
- d. When the church is more concerned correctness of belief than the quality of one's life.
 - i. We need orthodoxy.
 - ii. We need to be interested in the quality of life which orthodoxy is to produce.
- f. When the spirit of religion is lose and the form remains.
 - i. People are fed up with playing church.
 - ii. God is interested in more than institutions.
 - iii. We need to realign ourselves with our objectives.

2. Institutionalism is not certain.

III.) Preventatives to institutionalism.

- A. Propitiate the learning experience within the organization.
 - 1. Keep people learning at all expense.
 - 2. People thrive when they learn.
 - 3. Organizations that have life will not die.
 - 4. I cannot understand how a person can live in this generation without becoming excited about Christ.
 - 5. We fear being called fanatic.

6. Intellectual approach to Christianity does not work.

B. Create an atmosphere of acceptance.

1. Church needs an atmosphere of freedom.

2. If we cannot express our feelings with each other we are missing the point of Christian fellowship.

3. A colleague told his co-workers to be free in expressing their opinions, but also told them he has the right to express the opposite opinion.

4. The problem is retaining the creativity of our young people.

5. Some young people are going to bale out before they get a chance because they don't have freedom in the church to try new things.

6. Older folks need to be open to listening to younger voices.

C. We need to be unafraid of making mistakes.

1. If you are not making some mistakes you may be paralyzed.

2. Be willing to experiment on your mission field.

3. When Jesus told the parable of talents the only one he rebuked was the one who hid his talent.

4. It takes faith to move out when people say things are impossible.

D. Sharpen your objective.

1. We are not sand dunes.

2. We need to see our problems clearly in order to solve them.

E. Virility comes when we talk more about the future than the past.

1. In ten years what would you wish you had done today?

2. Do it.

F. Cultivate and stretch the faith of your people.

1. We need to dream dreams and see visions.
2. What is impossible to us is possible to God.
3. A student asked me what Jesus had on his mind in training his disciples.
4. I think Jesus wanted to cultivate their ability to believe him.
5. He stretched their faith.
6. Personification of truth is not more important than developing faith.
7. Jesus did not have the disciples keep notes, but asked them to trust him.
8. Do you trust your national believers?
9. We need to trust God without embarrassment.
10. Don't put God in a box.
11. Your organization conceived in faith will only survive by faith.
12. This is a severe test of your maturity; how do you trust others?
13. If you don't trust God for more than before this message will have failed.
14. I have a point of no return on my drive home where I drop all the concerns of the day.
 - a. From that point on I refuse to let my mind dwell on problems.
 - b. From that point on I relax.
 - c. Let us believe God for what we cannot do.

IV.) Prayer.

- A. Father, we confess that we are dull of hearing.
- B. We are unprofitable servants, just children.
- C. We need to be disciplined.

- D. We thank you for every second of this conference.
- E. Keep speaking to us and loom as large as you really are, almighty and sovereign.
- F. You have all things in control and we thank you for the privilege of letting us be a part of your plan.

We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ.