

Christmas Fellowship

Blog Transcript for Monday, December 7, 2015 | No. 49

Last night we hosted our annual Christmas dinner at Calvary. There were many great dishes provided and several people brought friends, neighbors, and family members. I love the holiday season, beginning with Thanksgiving and continuing all the way through to our Watch Night Service on December 31st.



Again this year we added some Christmas ornaments to our tree (each year we put an ornament on our tree for each new person who starts attending Calvary). We also changed the names on a couple of ornaments from gold to red. A red name indicates the person passed on this year while attending our church. We will miss each one greatly, but we always comfort ourselves with the fact that one day we will see them again.

I've tried to start a new tradition at Calvary of taking an annual photo of our congregation at the close of each Christmas dinner. Unfortunately, some people have to leave before we take the photo, and invariably some are ill and cannot attend. However, this annual photo demonstrates how much a church can change in a year's time. Some leave or move away, some pass on, new ones come, and babies are born—every change can alter the entire dynamic of our church.

Recently, we have been seeing an interest in our church from younger people. We love this, but it also places on us a new dynamic and responsibility. How do we ensure these new people receive what they need from our church and their fellowship with our senior members? On the one hand, love and appreciation are no problem for our older saints, on the other hand, providing new ministries can be problematic.

In the coming year, the leadership of Calvary will sit down to discuss where we are and where we need to be. I am prefacing this gathering with messages on Sunday that will focus us on what we need to become. Even though we want to make sure everyone is ministered to, there are activities that spring to life as younger people begin to be a part of our assembly.

Two definitions that I believe will fit us in the coming years are a church that trains believers and a church that reaches out to our community. Of course, these two definitions propagate each other, but because of them we can reach the overall definition of being a growing church once again. This is another reason our

annual photo means so much. As one generation begins embracing their eternal rewards, the next generation is just beginning to enter into their labors for the Lord.

A few years ago I coined the term *Calvary 2.0* to describe the changing dynamic of our church. In the same way that software serves the same purpose with each internal change, our church will serve the same purpose it was called to many years ago. However, the feature sets change. Just like software, there will be new ministries and opportunities as we embrace the labors and abilities of our new members.

When I was at *ISOM* in Indianapolis this past weekend with Susan, I noticed how many young people were getting involved in the training offered by our district. I completed my coursework back in 2012. So I was amazed at how much has changed in the way they operate our school of ministry now. You might call it *ISOM 2.0*. I am thankful for a district and a church that understands this principle. Because of this, I rest assured that Calvary will be part of the next generation of ministries here in Union City for years to come.

Of course, some things never change. As Calvary embraces change and new people, the eternal principles of God's Word and the truths behind them never change. One of the greatest things about our church is its commitment to truth. Our motto "*STAND for the TRUTH!*" was fashioned almost by accident. It started as an annual theme, but became a war cry in the midst of so much false teachings flowing through the churches of our land today. This will never change. The authority of the Word of God is what we build every ministry, every sermon, and every member's life upon. May we always be a church *committed* and *submitted* to God's Holy Word.

I enjoyed our Christmas dinner very much. I thank everyone for coming and bringing someone with them. I look forward to our remaining fellowship activities this year. Then as the year end activities draw to a close, I look forward to our *National Week of Prayer* giving us a new energy to propel us into the new year with excitement and enthusiasm to believe for greater things. May the words of Jesus be our heart's cry in this coming year:

*"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing.
He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father."*

John 14:12, NIV.

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