

Hey Church! Stop Holding Your Breath!

I've heard stories about children who hold their breath to get what they want. Thankfully none of my kids have ever done this, so I've never seen it happen. But my wife has.

She used to babysit for two boys the youngest of which would cry to get what he wanted. He'd cry so much, that he wouldn't take the time to breathe. So when he decided that what he wanted was more important than air, he would turn blue and pass out for a few seconds then wake having forgotten what he wanted.

As a dad of 4, soon to be 5, the practical side of me doesn't think that's a bad trade off. *Let my kid pass out if it gets him through throwing a fit? Sure!* But then, it's probably not very good for his brain if he's deprived of oxygen. As I think it through, I'm very sure his mother wouldn't believe it's good either.

So I officially advocate for breathing. We must breathe. Glad that's settled.

Believers in Christ are no different. The Church, Christ's body, must breathe. But as rule, it appears America's model for the Church is that it inhales "Christian stuff" but exhales far less items of redemptive value.

Let me tell you what I mean.

Christian retail distribution and online sales are a 4.63 billion dollar a year business.^[1] The majority of these are items are produced so that Christians can purchase and use them to learn more about God, Jesus Christ and His Church. The Church's #2 "thing we do" next to Sunday worship, is Bible Study. These are not bad things right?

However, they are bad if all our consuming leads to nothing. No life-change, no other lives changed as a result.

Jesus' Church is on the earth for one purpose and it isn't to study the Bible in perpetuity, read popular theological books, enjoy Thomas Kinkadee or to feel self-actualized. The Church's purpose is to accurately represent Christ to the world and share the truth of Jesus so the world can be saved.

If all we do as Christians is receive Sunday sermons, study the Bible and buy "Christian stuff", we are in serious danger of turning blue and passing out.

So what should we do? Exhale. And then inhale, and then exhale some more. Feels more healthy already doesn't it?

Pour it out. Pay it forward. Give some back. Deny yourself, pick up your cross, follow Him. However you'd like to say it. Do not become a warehouse for information or stuff. But use all that God has breathed into you to breathe out to others. This doesn't just mean Bible information or theology, but effort, comfort, peace, kindness, joy and gentleness. All of it.

If you've received salvation from God in Christ, then you must return that salvation to the world on behalf of the One who gave it to you. May we hold each other to this standard as we struggle onward.

^[1] Phillip J. Clements and Sharon Nolt, *Christian Retail Industry Research*, (New York, NY: Cathedral Publishing Group, 2008)