

POPCORN KERNELS – Final 7/4/99

This article will conclude a four part series based on a LEADERSHIP Magazine interview of Faith Popcorn. Ms. Popcorn is the Wall Street prophetess with a documented 95% accuracy rate in predicting culture trends. Although we are not interested in being "trendy" nor in changing truth, it is interesting to note the way our culture is leaning and therefore what specific needs the gospel might have an answer for. We will finish this series with two items from Ms. Popcorn's interview and a warning that she mentions. The first interest item we'll address is her statement that, "Control is going to be a big issue in the decade ahead." In the context of the interview she is referring to leadership and financial accountability. Big institutions (the government, courts, and many large churches) have demonstrated a lack of financial accountability to the point that people now are wanting to "see" what they are paying for. Boardroom leadership is on the way out as more talented and educated people in the church desire input and communication on where funding is being put to use.

This attitude may be troublesome to leaders who don't wish to be questioned about their activities and decisions, but for the Lord's church this attitude is great! Leadership in the Lord's churches is not concerned with secret transactions, but is very concerned with maturing more leaders. Growth and maturity are tied to responsibility and they are all tied to open communication and shared decision making. Likewise, the apostle Paul illustrated financial accountability in 2 Cor. 8:19-21 in his careful handling of the Corinthian contribution and his "regard for what is honorable...in the sight of men."

The second area we want to consider in this article has to do with the great need for volunteers in church work. As society has become more technological and people have withdrawn themselves into private cocoons, what will motivate them back toward involvement? What will motivate aging baby boomers? What will motivate people who are busier now than they've ever been in our culture? Popcorn's answer is surprisingly basic. She says, "It's not that people don't have time. People have time to do whatever they want to do. What motivates people today? Being appreciated. That goes a long way."

Wow, once more the relevance of scripture to our society today screams at us. People want to be appreciated. How is that to be done? Phil. 2:3-4 teaches us to look out for others and regard them as important, i.e. be thoughtful of them. 1 Pet. 4:9 says to be hospitable to one another, i.e. open your home and lives to others. 1 Cor. 13 teaches us to love by way of kindness, patience, and manners. It's surprising how far good manners, a please and thank you, or even just a hug can go toward making one feel appreciated. Once again God's children have the edge here in influencing people if they will pay attention and do as God says.

Lastly, we want to mention one danger of the coming years that Popcorn thinks needs to be addressed. She feels that after the past few decades the church now is being given another chance by society to present itself as healthy, vital, and connected. People are looking for spirituality and understanding. One challenge to believers will be in trying to be faithful to the gospel and not accommodating to a sinful culture. For example, believers in Germany generally "accommodated" Nazism. But a greater challenge lies inside the heart of each believer. The larger any organization gets the more tendency there is to delegate everything. People in large organizations say "It's not my job. It's that person's job!" For the Lord's body to be effective as it should be, we're going to have to remember that we won't be judged as a group, but individually. I need to be awake and look around for whatever "I" can do, not watching for jobs for others. 2 Cor. 10:5.

Tracking the trends in our culture is not a cop-out or compromise with the world. It is a way to specifically look at people's needs and say, "Look, Jesus Christ has what you're looking for." Having that knowledge however, does us little good if we're not reaching out. If you lacked it before, I hope the information provided in these articles will give you the confidence to see that our Heavenly Father has given us all that is necessary for a full and satisfied life here and eternal life someday, 2 Pet. 1:3. No matter what culture, no matter what trend, basic human nature remains the same and so does God's word. There is where we'll find our answers. Carl McMurray