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# ***SMALL CHURCH THINKING***

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## **Session Description**

The power of positive thinking may be overrated (or may not be), but there is no arguing that our attitudes have a huge impact on our lives. The same is true for the church. One of the reasons small churches stay small is that their thinking keeps them small. Small church thinking leads to small church attitudes and small church attitudes keep churches small. In this episode, Drs. Bill and Kris expose five Small Church Thinking's that every church (no matter how small or how big) need to expunge.

## **Session Outline**

In some translations, Proverbs 23:7 says that "As you think in your heart, so you are." Small churches often embrace thoughts and attitudes that guarantee they'll remain small. We call that "Small Church Thinking" ... and some have suggested that it's so destructive it should be called "Stinkin' Thinkin'." Here are five attitudes that ensure small churches stay small.

### **1. Everyone Should Know Everyone**

If everyone has to know everyone, then a church guarantees that it cannot grow much beyond 100, and ensures that the church will never tolerate a second service.

Every church of over fifty already has at least two congregations, even though there is only one service. Simply observation on a Sunday morning or at an all-church fellowship event will illustrate this.

### **2. We're Too Small to Make a Big Difference**

We hear this all the time: *We're just a small church. What can we do?* This is such a copout. The law of the powerful few is one of the most common biblical themes. Noah and his family. Moses and his stick. David and Goliath. Jesus and his twelve (and he lost one of them!). Every mega church, every large church, every medium-sized church, and every church that's larger than your church is ... started out as a small church. (The problem with most small churches is that they try to do too much ... "Do one thing and do it well" – attributed to St. Francis.)

### **3. Debt is Evil**

Going in debt to pay the church's bills is more than unwise, it's untenable and yes, perhaps even evil. But to go into debt to invest in the future can be the smartest thing a church does. Small churches often stay small because they won't invest in a worship leader when they near 100 (though they'll hire a youth leader and thus guarantee they'll not break 125 – when did any self-respecting 14-year-old ever willingly bring their parents to anything?!? Or they stay small because their facilities lock them into a museum-style church that doesn't have the ability to offer relevance to younger adults. Debt isn't necessarily evil, but not investing the church's future is.

#### **4. Everyone Needs to Have a Voice**

This is probably the number one reason small churches stay small. In small churches, when a decision needs to be made it's important that everyone have a chance to give their input ... and to have a part in making the decision. In many churches, the size of the church board is roughly the same size as the active membership. This ensures that every church member is more focused on running the church than they are in reaching their neighbors and community for Jesus Christ. Democracy is a great national ideal, but is nowhere found in the New Testament ...

#### **5. Consensus = Unanimity**

This is closely related to the above. In many churches, if even one person is seriously against a decision, the majority will acquiesce and what may be good for the church is scuttled by the few. Small churches are notorious for being safe havens for bullies and terrorists who can and will do whatever they can to keep things like *they* like them ... and these are always – always – a very, very small minority. Small churches that kowtow to the minority are destined to remain small. Besides, not everyone has to agree with every decision ... if they do, nothing will ever change.

#### **Discussion Questions**

1. Which of the identified small church thinking attitudes does your church reflect?
2. How have these attitudes contributed to keeping your church small?
3. Which one of these attitudes will be the most difficult to change? The easiest?
4. How will you implement the change?