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# WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE QUITTING

by Daniel A. Brown, PhD

*This is a short article taken from one of “Daniel’s Travel Journal” entries he made while traveling, sharing relationship and ministry with friends and churches in various parts of our country and overseas*

A few years after we planted The Coastlands, I had a particularly discouraging Sunday. The service simply didn’t work. The message was flat, the worship never went anywhere, and the people didn’t respond to me or to one another. It was a total brick! For the umpteenth time, I told God, “I quit!”

Just for the record, He replied, “What, exactly are you quitting?”

“This,” I said, pointing to the remnants of the service, as the crew was dismantling our weekly setup arrangement of chairs, partitions and equipment.

After a moment of silence, I punctuated my reason for quitting by adding, “It isn’t working?”

“What isn’t working?” God inquired.

“Church,” I shot back. “Didn’t You see what a dud this service was? And where are all the people who usually come? We had so many new people and not enough regulars to even make the newcomers feel welcomed.”

“I think it’s working quite well,” He replied. “You’ve done a good job of training people, and that’s why I’ve sent them elsewhere—and given you a whole new group of people to train just like the last ones!”

“Oh, and by the way, church will always be like this—broken and in need of people to help do the work. That’s the whole point: broken people get healed in the process of helping fix what’s broken in church...”

From that day to this, I have understood two basic truths about pastoring:

1. It's a myth to imagine I'll ever pastor a church that works well. The needs of the church, and finding people to be engaged in the process of serving others, is a perpetual and never-ending reality. That's not because God won't answer our prayers, but because He wants me to use the work/needs of church to help fix people—not the other way around. People are not what I need to have a great church; a broken church is what I need to produce great people.
2. Many, if not most people will be leaving the church at some point in the future. They may leave happy or sad, on good terms or bad—but they are leaving. So, what can I give them before they go? How can I add to their readiness for that inevitable departure? What would I wish some other pastor had put in people who move to Santa Cruz and start attending The Coastlands? My assignment is NOT to make sure everyone stays in my church. My assignment is to fulfill my particular part in getting them better tooled for their ministry future—after they have left me.