

Emailing Update

Cypress Bible Church. December 28, 2006.

By Dave Gibson.

The Tipping Point.

I walked into my home study one morning in July and looked at the large and chaotic mess before me. Something inside me snapped. “Enough is enough!” I said to myself, “I can’t live this way anymore. I am done with the bondage of stuff and disorder.”

On the day that I “snapped” my home study, my work office, and my garage all three resembled a tornado in a paper factory. The three spaces were stacked with books and papers and magazines and pens and trinkets and gear and mail and boxes and stuff, stuff, stuff. The top of my desk at home was invisible. The very desk itself was in danger of being engulfed by paper and stuff. My garage was so full and disorganized that I could barely get through to the garbage cans. My office at work was a disaster. I am not one of those messy people who can reach into a given pile and extract the paper I need. I am one of those people who must rummage through 13 piles in search of something. If I find the thing I am seeking it is a true miracle. In my garage there were 5 old PC’s with their printers, cables, discs, and manuals. I had 15 boxes of magazines, illustrations, and articles that I intended to read and file. I had moved these boxes from Dallas to Alaska (1983) and from Alaska to Idaho (1990) and from Idaho to Houston (2002)—and never once opened one of them. (I actually believed that at some time I was going to read the March 1978 issue of Moody Monthly and file the articles!) I owned about 3,000 books and could not find a specific book to save my proverbial life. My library included duplicates, triplicates, books I had borrowed and never returned, books I had never read, and books I did not know I had.

This “inner snapping” launched me on a mission of “stuff renewal”—a mission that I have sustained for more than 6 months now. I determined to clean up, pare down, store, file, sort, sell, throw away, give away, and ultimately escape the bondage of disorganized stuff. I made a commitment that first day to get rid of 10,000 personal items in the process of getting organized. I am now at 5, 189 items—I’m keeping track. I remain a driven man. I am not yet free. But I have tasted a piece of freedom and I am pressing on in the quest for full freedom.

Escaping the tyranny of this disorganized stuff will free me up to focus on important things—things that really matter. It will also restore to me untold amounts of emotional energy and time that my disorganization has drained from my life. It will buy unimaginable good will with my wife who has lived with this for two plus decades.

Something tipped in me and I began to make new choices. As I made those new choices substantial changes occurred in my life and the small changes that I made led to big changes and all the changes added up to whole new outcomes.

In 2002 Malcolm Gladwell released a book entitled: “The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference.” In the book Gladwell explains the phenomena that a small change in a big system can “tip” the system so that big changes result. He first came across the concept in the science of disease epidemics. Researchers have discovered that small, critical changes, happening at a key time and in a key place, can cause major changes in outcomes—can literally start a major epidemic.

Gladwell then found that this concept of the tipping point also operated outside the field of disease and epidemics. Other systems could also be tipped in major ways by small changes. One of his examples is the history of the Hush Puppy shoe brand. He explains that the Hush Puppy brand, which had a long history of strong sales, was losing ground year by year and was about to be discontinued by the maker of the shoe. Then a tipping point occurred. Two or three of the top fashion designers in New York City began to wear hush puppies themselves. These people had such influence in the fashion world and such exposure in the media that there was an explosion in the demand for the shoes. There was a “Hush Puppy Epidemic.” The small change that spurred the epidemic was just two or three key people wearing the shoe in public. It tipped everything.

Churches also have “tipping points.” Little changes can result in a very big harvest or a very big loss. For example a church could make their last mortgage payment and free up more funds for ministry and see a major change in impact. A key lay leader could throw their support behind someone or something and unleash an epidemic of impact. A fringe attendee could start a rumor and the toxin of that gossip could tear the church apart and cause great harm to a person or to many people. A worship service could come off with unusual energy and result in growing excitement about the church and therefore increased invitations to the church and therefore increased momentum for the church. A key family could take leadership in the small group initiative and attract all kinds of involvement. A key elder could leave and take others with him and set the work back six years. A neighbor could decide that the traffic is too heavy or the worship music is too loud and sue the church for noise pollution. A family could make a financial sacrifice and open up the budget for new ministry. All of these tipping points happen in churches continually.

Based on the tipping point concept, here are the questions I ask you to consider: “Might God use you to be the tipping point that CBC needs to leap up to greater impact?” “Might you be empowered by God to make a key change and cause a massive improvement at CBC?” “Might He motivate you to change one little behavior or little attitude or little pattern of relationship or little habit of speech and or little something and cause a big change for the better at CBC?”

Friends, here is what I believe: Cypress Bible is fighting forward with the help of God and with the energy of many good people. But it is a slow go. I believe we need all of you, our good people, making little changes, to bring us to a tipping point. We need a tipping point where our ministry impact can explode into an epidemic of spiritual births and baptisms and spiritual growth and reconciliations and cross-cultural impact and meeting of physical needs and training for ministry and engaging worship and epidemic levels of joy. At Cypress Bible Church might you be God’s tipping point to change one

little thing and kick off the epidemic of ministry? Might it be that in five years from now we could trace a ministry explosion back to one little thing you changed? Whether you believe it or not you are a high-leverage person, a tipping point person. I am inviting you to “tip” us—kick off the epidemic.