

Transformed leaders minister out of spiritual overflow

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Nancy Ortberg, a church consultant from Menlo Park, Calif., talks to Texas Baptists about spiritual formation for leaders.

Transformed leaders minister out of spiritual overflow

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DALLAS—Before church leaders can guide other people to be transformed by God, they first must submit to the “rhythm of life with God” that leads to their own ongoing transformation, a former teaching pastor at Willow Creek Community Church in suburban Chicago said.

“How you lead is reflective of your life with God,” said Nancy Ortberg, now a church consultant in Menlo Park, Calif.

Spiritual leaders should minister out of the overflow of God’s presence and activity in their lives, Ortberg told participants at Epicenter, a missions and spiritual formation event sponsored by the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

True transformation may take place best when spiritual leaders break out of routines and allow God’s spirit to work in fresh ways, she said.

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Even well-intentioned “prescriptive requirements” such as a daily quiet

time or spiritual journaling can become a hindrance rather than a help if they become an end in themselves.

Paraphrasing the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, Ortberg said, “God’s greatest gripe is when we boil down a relationship into a list of rules.”

Spiritually transformed leaders can guide the gathered church and the dispersed church to fulfill its purpose in God’s plan, she said.

“What do we do as a church when we are gathered? Our worship services ought to be creative, compelling and challenging because that’s who God is,” Ortberg insisted, adding worship services should cause people to be astounded at God’s wonder.

Spiritual leaders should not shy away from calling for commitment in worship services, she stressed.

“Jesus was a walking defining moment,” she said.

Ortberg recalled a worship experience when Shane, a young man who lived and worked among homeless people, said he planned to go downtown after the church service to minister among his homeless friends.

He asked worshippers on the spot to contribute shoes to people who needed them.

The sound of Velcro straps ripping open filled the worship center, Ortberg said, and worshippers came forward to pile their shoes at the altar.

“Who you make heroes is highly transformational,” she said. “Recognize ordinary people doing remarkable things.”

After corporate worship—when the gathered church goes out as the dispersed church—transformed people can become an incarnational presence in society, Ortberg said.

“When we disperse, we can be the gospel in a world that so desperately needs it,” she said.

You can only be salt and light when you go beyond the walls of the church.”

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