

Right or Wrong? Preparing for drought

February 8, 2013

Why don't Christians, and especially pastors, talk more about a strategy for dealing with the obvious water shortage in large portions of Texas and other states?

One reason is our tendency to differentiate between spiritual and material issues. Many ministers mistakenly feel they need to preach only on spiritual matters. Before you finish this column, I hope you realize a shortage of water is as much a moral issue as is violence in our communities.

The Bible stresses the necessity to address people's material needs. Jesus declared the value of his disciples offering a cup of cold water to others (Matthew 10:42). He later explained giving a drink to a thirsty person was one of the actions of the righteous who would inherit the kingdom (Matthew 24:34-35). Jesus recognized the importance of providing water to the thirsty. In the Old Testament, the Hebrews were called to link their worship of God to how they related to other people.

Treating water shortages as a moral issue in sermons is appropriate, but discussion groups might be better. You could invite stakeholders in this issue from various fields to form a panel to lead the conversation. "Experts" could include your pastor for biblical insight, a government official (city, county or even state) with responsibility for water delivery, a landscaper, a property developer and a farmer/rancher. Each of these has some vested interest in how water can and should be used. Don't forget your local television weather anchor.

One underlying reason for our hesitancy to discuss water is we underestimate the extent of the crisis. All my pastorates have been in

Texas. One of our frequent prayer requests is for rain. I continue to pray for rain, but I recognize the current crisis is more complex than simply the lack of adequate rainfall. The crisis is widespread, with the entire land area of seven states experiencing elevated levels of drought. Texas legislative leaders have begun calling for tapping Texas' "rainy day fund" for \$1 billion to \$2 billion.

A growing population has heightened the demand on available resources. More people require more water for health and hygiene. More people need more food, which drives farmers' and ranchers' productions. Increased production requires greater irrigation, thus drying up aquifers that, in the past, were not tapped to capacity. Throw in the amount of water used for landscaping, and the crisis worsens.

I encourage you to check out two websites to get you started in congregational conversation: First, www.droughtmonitor.unl.edu/monitor.html, sponsored by the University of Nebraska, provides vast information on current crisis and historical drought conditions and links to all things drought-related. The second is by the [Texas Commission of Environmental Quality](#). Sites like this vary from state to state, but most have a similar department that addresses these issues. Scanning these may not answer every question you have, but it can steer you in the right direction. Summer, with predicted worsening drought, is just around the corner. Acting now is critical.

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Right or Wrong? is co-sponsored by the Texas Baptist theological education

office and Christian Life Commission. Send your questions about how to apply your faith to bill.tillman@texasbaptists.org.