

PENTECOST SERMON ILLUSTRATION

EXPANDING THE TABLE

The following story, entitled “Knock Out a Little Plaster,” appeared in the *Indianapolis Star* several years ago. It contains some useful applications for our Pentecost theme.

It was our first home, a picture-perfect cottage, complete with rose garden and a white picket fence. We’d taken much care in selecting a few good pieces of furniture, choosing the best quality we could afford. We arranged it all on paper ahead of time, considering floor space, traffic patterns, and seating arrangements. We only neglected one small detail: the area of the stairway. But who would have thought that it would be too narrow and too low to accommodate our queen-size mattress and box spring?

The movers had really tried. They tried to carry the mattress and box spring sideways, diagonally, upside-down. They even tried to hoist them up from the outside, but the little second story windows wouldn’t cooperate. The movers’ efforts were all in vain, and the bed was set up in the middle of the first-floor living room. We slept downstairs that night, and the next morning we faced our problem. The outlook was bleak. Then Grandpa came over. He looked over the situation and asked only one question: “Do you want the bed upstairs?” My husband and I looked at each other, then back at Grandpa. “Yes, but we can’t get it up there.”

He went outside to his car and returned with some drop cloths and a sledge hammer. Before we could ask what he was going to do, he spread the drop cloths out, grabbed hold of the sledge hammer and WHACK! took out the ceiling above the stairwell with one swift blow. We stood in shock as he removed one corner of the inside wall and knocked out the loose plaster. Then he turned to us and said, “Let’s get the bed on up there.” We set up the bed in the bedroom. While I fitted it out with new sheets, Grandpa and my husband replastered the ceiling. That night my husband and I spent the first of many nights in our wonderful bed in our beautiful bedroom in our perfect little house.

Footnote: There are often times in my life when I am faced with a decision. At those times, I always remember Grandpa. The first thing to decide is whether or not you want the bed upstairs. Once you decide that, you may have to knock out a little plaster, but you’ll sleep better than you ever imagined!

IMPLICATIONS FOR PENTECOST OFFERING:

We have a similar challenge when it comes to “Expanding the Table” (offering theme).

1. EXPANDING THE TABLE (I.E., MAKING ROOM FOR MORE CHURCHES IN OUR DOC FAMILY) MAY REQUIRE KNOCKING OUT A LITTLE PLASTER AND MAYBE EVEN A FEW WALLS:

The Wall of Complacency/Indifference

Complacency regarding the Great Commission
Indifference to those who are currently unchurched

The Wall of Prejudice/Exclusiveness

Prejudice against those who are not like us
Exclusiveness as opposed to inclusiveness

The Wall of Pessimism/Negativity

We can't afford it (it costs too much!)
We can't do it (it's too much work!)

The Wall of Rigidity/Inflexibility

We never did it that way before
It can only be done a certain way (i.e., my way)

2. THE FIRST THING WE HAVE TO DECIDE IS: "DO WE WANT TO EXPAND THE TABLE?"

Do we want our Church to grow?

Do we want people of every nation and tongue (see Acts 2:5-11) to be seated at the Table next to us?

Do we want to experience another Pentecost?

3. IF THE ANSWER IS "YES, WE DO WANT TO EXPAND THE TABLE," WE NEED TO GET BUSY AND START KNOCKING OUT A LITTLE PLASTER.