

DOES SIZE MATTER?

by Pat Keady

This is a burning question that musos or anyone for that matter who tries to run something in the Church constantly runs into. How many times have I felt that sinking feeling when the band and I have worked our butt off for a specific event. The songs are hot, the lighting is organised, the PA gear is set up, the staging is great, the doors are open, and... NO-ONE SHOWS UP! Well your grandma and your family do, but it's not quite the target audience you were hoping for! ie You got 30 people instead of 300.

Anyone ever been there? Like, last Sunday? Just change the name of the event and it's the same scenario played out over and over again around the world – a WYD rally, Youth Mass on Sunday night, the rehearsal 'they all said they'd come to', the retreat/camp that you planned all year etc.

Recently I played at two different events where it was tempting to feel like size actually does matter. The first event was a large rally that was planned by a youth leader for the WYD Cross and Icon that had arrived in the diocese. The amount of preparation was enormous, our band had been flown in and was being paid to play, we expected large crowds to come thronging into the stadium and then... a handful of youth and adult supporters turned up to support the night. Everyone who came were quality people and we had an awesome time rocking the night out with these faithful supporters, but the question was silently asked: "What about the other 900?"

The second event was a gig at a secular venue in Brisbane where lots of great bands go to play. Roby Curtis a member of our ministry stepped out in faith to book the venue and run a Catholic gig playing his unique brand of justice-inspired songs. He had hoped to attract 500 people; they flogged posters and fliers and emails all around about the gig, even scoring advertisements in the local gig guides. A good crowd came made up of community and friends, but I know in Roby's head stirred that same question; 'Where are the 300 others I had hoped would come?'

It's a sinking feeling when you're the event organiser and especially challenging if you're a muso playing onstage to 15 people: Woohoo! Believe me, we've been there. Only recently Emmanuelworship played to a glorious crowd of ZERO while all the audience went around the corner to listen to a childrens band who were playing at the same time as us! What a beautiful moment for the ego that was. Praise you Jesus!

It's at glorious self-doubting moments like these that "the thief comes to steal, kill and destroy" (John 10:10).

'You're nothing – this is a waste of time – no-one likes your voice –how embarrassing – after this don't bother ever trying this again'. Ahh, the deceptive

voice of the enemy, trying to ensure that you give up advancing the kingdom of God and especially that you stop worshipping Jesus. That's because you're a threat. If you keep persevering you'll be dangerous, so he comes in at a moment of disappointment to suck the hope and dreams out of you while your spirits are low. That's what a dirty fighter does.

FOR ONLY ONE?

We've all encouraged ourselves after flopped youth masses, outreach events and gigs saying;

“Well Jesus came for only one, so if only one person was touched then it was all worth it”.

But do we really believe it?

We wouldn't be human if we didn't question the effectiveness of projects we attempted which didn't achieve the numbers we were planning for. Let's face it, if no-one comes how can their hearts be touched by all the stuff we've prepared?

In one way *size does matter* because God “desires ALL people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth”. (1 Tim 2:4) Heaven is meant to be crowded! Jesus wasn't excited when he said that “many are called but only few are chosen.” The less that come, the more that miss out on a possible encounter with Jesus. Crowds constantly flocked to Jesus and he was able to heal large numbers of people. Numbers are not bad, they're great! But they're not reliable. It is when we put all our hopes and expectations in numbers that we set ourselves up for disappointment. When people come, excellent, bring more! Look at World Youth Day! But when they don't come, what then? That's the question most of us face on the frontline, week after week.

Even **John the Baptist**, after HUGE numbers coming out to see Him in the desert, was tempted to disillusionment. In jail where he was preparing to be beheaded he sent a question to Jesus; “Are you the one to come or should we expect another?” (Math 11:13) In other words, ‘Was I completely barking up the wrong tree?’

Jesus Himself felt the same way in his own ministry as well. One day he healed 10 lepers from their sickness and a great crowd of, you guessed it - ONE - came back to say thankyou. “*Weren't 10 healed?*” Jesus said with exasperation “*Where are the other nine?*” - Luke 17:17

Was Jesus' ‘gig’ a success? Or a failure? Ask the leper.

If you sometimes feel like Jesus and John the Baptist then I have some wisdom for you.

GOD DOESN'T SEE THINGS THE WAY WE SEE THINGS.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways” - Isaiah 55:8

“The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the

outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” - 1 Sam 16:7
“God has not called us to be successful, He has called us to be faithful” -
Mother Teresa

Memorise these truths; you are going to need to live by them! Truth has a powerful way of disarming those manipulative, destructive words of defeat whispered in our ear when no-one turns up. If you know you are called to worship, to outreach, to minister, to take back ground for the kingdom of God in your school or parish or diocese, then GO FOR IT! Do not be dismayed by temporary setbacks. You are just being tested by God to see if you're really in it for the long haul.

You need to decide now; Am I a worshipper or a performer?

A performer seeks the attention of man. A worshipper seeks the attention of God.

A performer requires the affirmation of a crowd. A worshipper requires the affirmation of One.

Take a look at Jesus on calvary – where were the disciples?? No-one turned up! They all fled, bar one. So going by the ‘fan attendance’ that day, was the crucifixion a success or a failure? I'd say the salvation of the entire world would make that a definite success. (It's worth noting that it didn't necessarily feel successful to Jesus)

So why do we expect better things for ourselves? If the crowds that hailed Jesus on Psalm Sunday were booing Him on Holy Thursday, we need to learn this lesson now. People are fickle! Our success in ministry does not depend on the acceptance of others! True success in ministry depends upon the acceptance of God alone. Jesus said;

“Whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say... The world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me”. - John 12:50, 14:31

Oh that I had the heart to be able to say that! Unfortunately as a worship leader I am often swayed by others expectations and the ‘success’ of appearances, like the wind and the waves that distracted Peter and made him sink.

Let us all commit today NOT to fix our eyes on numbers like the world around us constantly does.

Instead “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning it's shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb 12:2)