



WORLDVIEW MADE PRACTICAL
Volume 19 Number 5
February 7, 2024

Is Your Church a Potted Plant or a Tumbleweed?

By Freddy Davis

The Iran–Contra affair was a political scandal that occurred during the Ronald Reagan administration. Between 1981 and 1986, government officials illegally sold arms to Iran, hoping to use the proceeds to fund the Contras in Nicaragua who were fighting the communist led Sandinista government. Colonel Oliver North was caught up in the middle of it, and when the plan was discovered, North was brought before congress to testify. As he was, himself, facing possible criminal charges, he brought with him his lawyer, Brendan Sullivan, to help him navigate the questioning.

At one point in the hearing, Senator Daniel Inouye was questioning Colonel North and began asking hypothetical questions concerning possible commands and motives of various government officials. Each time a hypothetical question was asked, Mr. Sullivan objected to the questioning, as his client had no way of definitively knowing that kind of information.

Finally, senator Inouye became annoyed with Sullivan's many objections, and suggested that the lawyer quit speaking and allow North to answer the questions ... to which Sullivan famously replied, "I am not a potted plant" (meaning, of course, that his job, as North's lawyer, was to advise and protect his client, not merely sit at the desk as an ornamental fixture).

Basically, a potted plant is an ornament that is generally used to enhance the environment of the room it occupies. It is nice to look at, but doesn't do much. There is a lot of variety when it comes to potted plants. Some are quite beauti-

ful. Some can grow to be very large, and sometimes even need to be transplanted into larger pots because of their size.

But regardless of their beauty or size, they don't really do anything. They just sit there.

Tumbleweeds, over the years, have been a prominent part of many old western TV shows and movies. The truth is, there are quite a number of different plant species that are considered to be tumbleweeds. Tumbleweeds are plants that grow in one spot until maturity, then break off from their roots and are blown around by the wind – sometimes for as much as tens of miles in a single year. And over time, some have traveled literally hundreds of miles. As they travel, they spread their seeds all over the countryside. As a result of so widely spreading their seeds, these plants have become prominent in many places all around the world, not just in the western United States. While tumbleweeds are an invasive species, and usually considered a nuisance plant, there can be no doubt about how effective they are in spreading their seeds to new locations.

Potted Plant and Tumbleweed Churches

While it is impossible to make a one-to-one comparison, in some ways it is possible to compare churches to potted plants and tumbleweeds.

Some churches are potted plants. They basically just sit there and occupy space. Some of these are beautiful to observe and full of very good people. Some have grown very large and have lots of dynamic programs. Some even do good social service work for the community. But they don't really have much of a spiritual

Permission to Reprint

If you wish to reprint this article in your own print or electronic newsletter, please include the following text:

*Reprinted from **Worldview Made Practical**; a free e-zine produced by **MarketFaith Ministries** featuring practical teaching and life tools to help Christians become more effective in their faith life. Discover **MarketFaith Ministries** at www.marketfaith.org.*

Speaking Schedule

If you are interested in having Freddy Davis or Tal Davis present one of our **Worldview Seminars** or to share about worldview and its practical implications at your church or organization, please contact **MarketFaith Ministries** to schedule your event. All contact information is at the bottom of this e-zine.

Worldview Resources

It is one of the primary purposes of **MarketFaith Ministries** to provide resources to help Christians understand the practical implications of worldview. You can find many free resources that will help you in your quest at <http://www.marketfaith.org>.

impact. Not many people have their eternal destiny affected by their presence.

It generally doesn't take a lot of people to sufficiently care for a potted plant church. This kind of church can often be maintained by only the pastor and church staff, and maybe just a few dedicated members.

And sadly, many church members are actually quite content to participate in a potted plant church. They find themselves a place within the local church community where they can worship and fellowship with fellow believers, and since they participate in this local community, most don't really sense a need to reach out any further. They are primarily interested in their own sense of spiritual fulfillment, and are content to pay others to take on the burden of outreach, rather than feeling a need to do it themselves. Many are very happy, of course, to see people come to Christ and join their church, but they, themselves, don't feel a need to be actively involved in the process.

Tumbleweed churches have a different focus. They certainly exist in a spot like potted plants, and many have a nice look and various ministries and programs, both for their own membership and for the community. But there is a fundamental difference in the way they operate. Rather than merely hiring a pastor and staff that are able to effectively maintain the organization, they also put a **STRONG** focus on growing their members to maturity (equip the saints) in a way that gives them the knowledge, skills, and resources to go out into the world and affect the eternal destiny of those they encounter. These churches then turn their people loose to effectively spread the seeds of the gospel everywhere they go.

On the outside, a tumbleweed church may look much like a potted plant church. But the effect they have in the lives of their members, and on the world, is profoundly different. Members not only want to participate in the church organization, but also to take a step beyond that and make a spiritual impact on the world around them.

How to Create a Tumbleweed Church

There are several things that go into turning a body of believers into a tumbleweed church.

1. **Solid Pastoral Leadership**

It is almost impossible for a church (or any organization, for that matter) to move beyond the vision of its leadership. Creating an infrastructure capable of equipping a church's members requires a pastor who has a strong vision to pull it off, and cares enough about it to be persistent in making it happen.

It is no easy task to lead a church – any church. There are many different things that must be managed. A pastor is responsible for feeding the flock with the word – often having to prepare and deliver multiple messages every week. He has to make sure the organization runs smoothly by overseeing all the church's administrative functions – budget, committees, property, church programs, etc. Additionally, he has responsibilities related to caring for the needs of the membership – hospital visitation, spiritual counseling, and the like. Beyond that, he ends up bearing the most responsibility for the numerical growth of the church. And while he feels a particular calling and sense of responsibility for dealing with all these things, he must also bear the weight of the pressure put on him by the church membership to carry out all these things (and yes, that is a massive weight for most pastors). Then, on top of all that, if he wants to have a tumbleweed church, he must have a vision for how to add that equipping element,

Subscription Information SUBSCRIPTION NOTICE:

A subscription to *Worldview Made Practical* is complementary for anyone interested in receiving it. If you received this email as a forward from a family member or a friend and wish to subscribe for yourself, you may do so at www.marketfaith.org. If you wish to unsubscribe from this newsletter, simply follow the instructions found at the bottom of each edition.

Contact Information

If you wish to contact us directly, you may do so by the following methods:

321 Anton Dr., Tallahassee, FL 32312

E-mail:
info@marketfaith.org
Phone: 850-383-9756

You can order our products and examine our services at
<http://www.marketfaith.org>.

This issue of *Worldview Made Practical* is a production of *MarketFaith Ministries*, © 2024. All rights reserved.

and be able to inspire people to follow him down that path. This last one may actually be the most difficult of all because it requires the church members themselves to become self-motivated to be equipped for the work of ministry.

2. An Understanding of One's Calling

Way too many Christians believe that a calling into Christian ministry is only directed toward certain special people, and not others. As a result, they don't even consider the possibility that they, themselves, need to become equipped, and be ministers of the gospel out in the world. God certainly does call some people specifically into vocational Christian ministry, and these are the ones who become pastors, missionaries, church staff members, evangelists, and the like. But the truth is, EVERY believer is called into full-time Christian ministry. It is just that most are called to do their ministry in non-church vocations.

Ephesians 4:11-13 tells us that the role of church leaders is to equip the saints (everyday believers) for the work of ministry. The church's primary ministers are the "saints." The church leaders are the equippers. Those primary ministers are to go out into their world and express Christ there, based on what God opens up before them. They are the ones who are the tumbleweeds – the ones carrying the seeds of the gospel that need to be deposited all over the world. When every believer grasps and implements this model, we see the kind of gospel expansion that happened in the early church. When a church is a potted plant, that simply doesn't happen.

3. Comprehensive Equipping

Since a tumbleweed church is one in which the church members become the primary outreach arm of the church, the members must be trained

to be that kind of minister. Pastors, and others who are called into vocational Christian ministry, typically go to a school of some type to be trained. Regular church members don't have that luxury. Thus, the church becomes their seminary. That is the only place most of them will ever have the possibility of learning the knowledge and skills necessary to take Christ to the world.

Pulling off this kind of comprehensive equipping requires more than just a discipleship training class here and there. It requires providing opportunities for every church member to gain knowledge and skills related to Christian ministry. Since the pastor, and perhaps church staff, are the ones who have this kind of knowledge, they are typically the ones who must lead out in this training.

This, typically, is very difficult. It is difficult because it puts a lot of extra pressure on the church leadership to prepare for and implement this level of training. It is also difficult because it tends to be the church ministry that is least supported by the majority of church members. But, if a church is going to be a tumbleweed church, the membership has to buy into it, and willingly get themselves equipped.

4. A Plan

A plan for cutting church members loose to minister in the community is not necessarily another church program. It could involve that, but Christians do not need to be engaged in an organized program to accomplish the work of God in the world. The genius of the tumbleweed strategy is that wherever everyday Christians go in their everyday lives, they are equipped and prepared to share their faith. The "plan" is the outworking of God's spirit in the lives of those who are committed to the ministry God has called them to out in the world.

Can it Really Happen?

So is it really possible for a church to become a tumbleweed church, where the majority of church members are confidently and actively engaged in expressing the gospel wherever they go out in the world? The simple answer is, "Yes, it is possible." But the more common answer is that it rarely happens because it takes more work than most churches, and church members, are willing to put forth.

It is our hope and prayer that your church is the exception rather than the rule. If it is, then we are excited for you beyond imagination. If not though, you are not without hope. If your church and church leadership catch the vision, things can be turned around.

We're Here to Help: MarketFaith Ministries is a worldview discipleship ministry dedicated to helping churches become ever more effective in expressing a biblical worldview in our increasingly anti-Christian society. Contact us at info@marketfaith.org to explore how we can help you in that process.

Would You Consider Supporting Us?

Would you consider financial support for **MarketFaith Ministries**? I feel confident that what we are doing is consistent with your beliefs about spreading the gospel and equipping the saints for ministry. Would you let us be one element of your hands and feet in this process? **MarketFaith Ministries** is a 501 (c) (3) not for profit corporation, so your contributions are tax deductible. If you would consider this we would be very grateful. Also, if you would like to know more about the ministry, it would be my pleasure to share with you personally what we are working on and how you can plug in. I can be reached at 850-383-9756 or by e-mail at Freddy@marketfaith.org. As for any donations, they may be sent directly to **MarketFaith Ministries** at 321 Anton Dr., Tallahassee, FL 32312, or you can contribute through our secure website at www.marketfaith.org. Simply click on the "Donate" button at the bottom of the homepage. We are deeply grateful for your support of this ministry.

And, as always, if you have any thoughts, opinions or suggestions about how **MarketFaith Ministries** can help you, please feel free, at any time, to call (850-383-9756) or e-mail (info@marketfaith.org). We are here to serve you.