

## **Is Your Church Characterized by an Atmosphere of Faith?**

**By Bob Young**

Cultivating an atmosphere of faith is an important factor in growing a healthy church that constantly brings more people to Jesus. Research shows that churches that know what they believe grow more rapidly.

The basic question of faith is, “What do you believe?” Everyone, including Christians, is subject to discouragement. It is easy to begin to believe the enemy’s lies.

So, what do we believe? First, we believe the things we know. Knowledge comes through authority, reason, and experience/observation. Because I am writing about what we believe in the realm of spiritual knowledge, I would add that knowledge comes through spiritual discernment, a concept that goes beyond pure reason. Second, we believe things we hope for and things that we have not seen, based on God’s nature and his promises. This is the belief or faith that is described in Hebrews 11. This belief is described as confidence and conviction. One can say this type of belief or knowledge also comes through authority. God is faithful! God will fulfill his promises!

A church that is characterized by an atmosphere of faith is not guessing about what is real! A church that is characterized by an atmosphere of faith knows the difference between truth and falsehood. Consider these three truths about a church that is characterized by biblical faith.

A church that is characterized by biblical faith carefully lays a foundation of knowledge. The foundation includes Bible knowledge, reasoning together, and sharing experiences. This foundation looks backward to the experiences of others, including church history and traditions. This foundation is made firm in celebrations and preaching that develop shared belief systems, classes that sharpen belief, and small groups that personalize belief.

A church that is characterized by biblical faith focuses on God’s nature, God’s Word and God’s promises. When the promises of God’s Word are well-known and are claimed by believers, all of life is changed. In churches where biblical faith is developed, the importance of God’s Word is continually emphasized; the Word is read, studied, and well-known. The Word is reflected in prayers, conversations, and fellowship. Spiritual leaders are chosen for their spirituality and their commitment and ability to study, understand, and apply the Word. Such leaders lead by sharing wisdom and giving spiritual counsel. Such leaders lead by modeling spiritual discernment.

A church that is characterized by biblical faith acts in ways that are consistent with that faith. “It is written: “I believed; therefore, I have spoken” (2 Cor. 4:13). A church with the same spirit of faith believes and speaks. Evangelism occurs continuously. New believers come to Christ and are disciplined in the ways of faith. Leaders are chosen because they model a life of belief that embraces others—both believers and unbelievers.

I ask again, is your church characterized by an atmosphere of faith?

Is knowledge, including experiential knowledge, celebrated, affirmed, and encouraged so that members constantly develop more faith?

Is God’s Word central in every activity?

Is God’s Word shared as members go forth speaking that which they know and believe, sharing the Good News, following the example of the leaders?