



People Spot Missile: Momentum

Momentum is a word usually used in sports. It means that one team is on a roll. Everything is going their way. Sometimes the other team even looks a bit punchy. But momentum can shift. The announcer will say that Mr. Mo has moved to the other team. Sometimes it is a fumble or interception at a very inopportune moment. Sometimes a leader on the team being pushed about takes charge and rallies the troops and reverses the direction of the momentum.

Speaking of troops, momentum is a word frequently used to describe the ebb and flow of a war or a specific battle. The Battle of Midway changed forever the momentum of the war in the Pacific. The Battle of Gettysburg interrupted the string of victories of Robert E. Lee's army of Northern Virginia.

Does momentum apply in the work of the Church? Absolutely! A church in decline with momentum going in the wrong direction frequently makes critical mistakes that forces even further decline. Let's close this service. Let end this ministry. Churches with momentum moving the wrong way view their solution to moving in reverse is to contract or reduce ministry. Most of the time that adds fuel to the fire. Gradually people with leadership ability recognize the ship is sinking and begin one by one to leave. The only hope for a change in direction is for God to intervene and anoint a leader to gently and lovingly lead in a new direction. Can that happen? YES! On occasion in certain situations where a Godly leader responds and the people follow. But sometimes the ministry in that spot simply ends because no leader arises or the people are unwilling to follow.

A growing church has momentum. Lyle Schaller writes, “*Momentum is one reason that the numerically growing congregation tends to be more receptive to innovation, less bound by tradition, more open to maverick leaders, and more attractive to upwardly mobile persons.*” Positively, however, momentum can stall. A church that has many years of growth can hit a wall. Either they have run into the barriers described in People Spots: space in the sanctuary, small group base, number of people attending, or parking. Or they sometimes back away from what was working for them.

On many occasions, when I interviewed a pastor of a church that has stalled, it became apparent that they had pulled back from what got them there. I'm talking real basic stuff: like appropriate absentee care, tracking and caring for visitors, and working to walk people through the door.

The change in momentum is almost imperceptible at first. The church plateaus for 3-5 years. The attitudes are that everything is absolutely fine. Then the decline sets in and the snowball begins to roll.

A second factor is that contentment sets in. The leadership team is quite satisfied with the current status of the situation and they settle in to just care for what they have. Sometimes without realizing they have done so. For others, more people will mean more work. Forget that. The hazard in this is that normal attrition will kill the church. Remember, normal attrition is a loss of 10-15 percent of the worshipping congregation every year. For a church averaging 100, the normal attrition will be 10-15 people apart from any conflict.

A third factor may be that the leadership team has reached the full potential of their capacity to generate growth.

Positive momentum is fostered by an upbeat and affirming spirit. It is nurtured by a caring leader. It is encouraged by keeping your eyes on the harvest. It is strengthened by never being satisfied with the status quo. Remember it is easier to keep momentum moving in the right direction than it is to restart it.

Keep in mind that the Church is not an organization. It is an organism. It is very complex. That is why keeping positive momentum moving in the right direction is always a challenge.

Most of the People Spot Missiles may be viewed at www.newlifeministries-nlm.org Click on People Spots

My newest book is now available. A little different than anything I have done before. It is A History of the Civil War as Presented by the Church Advocate. It is volume 1. It covers from May of 1859 to May of 1862. It is what was printed at the time. It is 400 pages The cost is \$40.00 plus shipping. I am also available to make a 1 hour presentation on the material.

I am now available to present "Starting a New Service", "Churches Have Personalities", "People Spots", "Does Your Church Really Care About People?" and "A Christian Perspective on Leadership Skills." "Stewardship and Managing Debt" jm

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