

POPCORN KERNELS – Part 3 6/3/99

This is the third in a series examining some kernels of wisdom from Faith Popcorn, that Wall Street wonder with a 95% accuracy rate in predicting future trends in American culture. These kernels are a result of an interview with LEADERSHIP Magazine with a focus on future trends that may affect “the church” (note that “church” is used here in the sense of the whole group of believers, not the N.T. church we preach from scripture).

One question that was asked Ms. Popcorn was, “What about the women?” Her response was to point to the business world and two lessons to be learned. Number One was that female-run businesses are employing more people globally than the Fortune 500. Their business in many cases are one of the few parts of the business community that’s growing. We’re speaking of small companies employing from 3 to 30 people.

Secondly, Popcorn points out that women run their companies differently than men. Men tend to run companies like they learned in the Army with a chain of command, in a hierarchical manner. Women run companies more like a family, in a straight across fashion, sometimes even bringing their kids to work.

What does this mean to us? Well, essentially it says that in the American culture women are working. Harriet has joined Ozzie at work with her brief case and business suit and she has become quite efficient at her job. Even though many more women are dropping out of the corporate rat race to stay home with children, they are still working part time and home based businesses are surging. The ladies are working and they’re working hard.

From this trend I see an upside, a downside, and a warning for us all. The upside I see is that with better transportation and communication the Lord’s church has even more workers available. Although women in many cultures may hang back, in America they are wanting to step forward. This is great news in light of the fact that more teachers are always needed. With skills learned in the school system and on the job, our ladies today are more efficient and talented than ever before in communicating the message of God’s grace, and not just in teaching children (although that is a vitally important position). We have room (and possibly more interest) for more women’s home studies, ladies classes at the building, teacher’s training, and invitation and outreach into the community. What a great time and trend this is for the Lord’s body.

The downside of this is that although women are developing more talent and abilities outside the home, often they are too stressed and tired to put these to use for the Lord. It is going to be more important than ever for families to schedule their time, their responsibilities, and their efforts to aid one another in finishing tasks, dealing with stress, and encouraging each other to keep the Lord at the top of their list of priorities (Matt. 6:33). Children who desire to be chauffeured between ball field and gym may have to earn that privilege by jumping into chores at home so that time can be freed up. Husbands who desire attention from their wives or “play time” themselves may have to chip in at home once again, to free up some time and energy from the “home keeper” (1 Pet. 3:7). Considering one another’s interests and needs (Phil. 2:3-4) has just come home to roost in the homes of American Christians. Where in times past we might have used

this philosophy to teach consideration toward brothers and sisters in the Lord, today, more than ever, we need to “consider” the members of our own home.

And lastly, a danger from this trend looms darkly on the horizon. Statistics said that when women began smoking and intruding into that formerly male “habit,” emphysema and heart disease rose to compete also with the men. When women began entering the work force in increasing numbers during the last generation, then likewise stress related ailments and heart attacks also increased. You see, if you actually enter the snake pit, then your chances of snake bite go way up over the person who stands nearby and watches.

As our ladies have entered the workplace, then the same dangers that we have been preaching about to the men suddenly rise up with fangs bared, very close. The danger of materialism and losing our focus on spiritual things in the greenish glow of a paycheck and more money. The danger of neglecting our children and spouse because we’re “at work,” as if work holds a higher priority than our responsibilities at home. And lastly, the danger of coasting on our past spirituality, letting our spiritual growth go by the wayside along with our involvement, fellowship, hospitality, encouragement, etc., because we’re “just too busy right now.” These are some of the things that men fall prey to as bread-winners and when women accept that role they are liable to the same dangers.

Once again, we must come to the conclusion that the place our culture is in presents many opportunities for the church, but there are many pitfalls also. Let’s keep our eyes open as we tread this vale below seeking to do the will of our Lord in as efficient and zealous manner as possible.

Carl McMurray