

## POPCORN KERNELS

by Carl McMurray

Have you heard of Faith Popcorn? NO, it's not a new product that churches are using to raise money. Faith Popcorn is the name of the founder and president of BrainReserve and from her 28th floor Manhattan office she makes a living peering into the future, determining market trends, and positioning companies according to the ebb and flow of pop culture. She sells her best judgments to Fortune 500 companies like American Express, Eastman Kodak, IBM, and Procter & Gamble, and she has an astonishing documented success rate of 95% accuracy. She predicted the trend (and coined the word) of American's "cocooning" in the nineties, as well as the failure of New Coke and the popularity of SUV's. Although her expertise is in marketing, not religion, Leadership Magazine interviewed this prophetess of trends in order to consider some of the directions that our culture was pointing in and how they might affect churches. Some of the things that Popcorn noted are quite interesting.

One thing she noted, for example, that goes out in a number of areas is a general attitude of disillusionment growing in our society. People are disappointed. They're disappointed...

in their careers (finding it harder to reach that "American dream" nowadays),  
in their mates (illustrated in the divorce rate, not measuring up to media images of "love" and sexuality),  
in their government (they don't even expect moral behavior anymore),  
in their churches (spiritually hollow social clubs focused on the next money raising program),  
and in each other (lying, cheating, and false advertising are being accepted as status quo).

Yet in their unhappy disillusionment, Popcorn said people are still looking for something better. She believed the next 10 years will be a turning point for American churches. Medium-sized and smaller churches heavily dependant on tradition are going to continue to close doors due to a perceived lack of relevance to the culture. Small congregations that address a specific needful area or large groups with much to offer are going to have the drawing power in the next decade. Just like the business arena, folks are looking for intimate "boutique" shops or mega-markets. The middle-sized area is being squeezed out.

I found her predictions extremely interesting. And here's the kicker. These predictions were made in 1999. This interview is a decade old, as of last month. Try and tell me that what Popcorn saw happening, isn't exactly where we are today?

What does this mean for us? Everything! Brethren, we've got what people are looking for. We have the hope that anchors souls (Hebrews 6:19) who are being tossed about in the storms of life. We are holding the light that is at the end of the tunnel in many people's marriages, friendships, and life problems. Let your light so shine that people may see your good works (Matthew 5:16) and glorify (find their way to...) God. Now is the time that downtrodden and sin sick souls need a helping hand. If you can't believe Faith Popcorn (one 100% Jew, BTW) when she says NOW is the time for American churches to wake up and touch lives, then listen to Jesus when He says "look to the fields, they are white unto harvest."

God has blessed us richly here, individually and as a congregation. When we get off our knees from saying thank you, let's look around for something to do that will help someone else, or glorify our Savior. God bless your efforts.