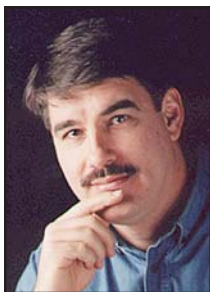


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## Body, Mind and Spirit The dumpster

By Todd Outcalt  
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A few months ago, Calvary United Methodist Church in Brownsburg, where I serve, ordered a paper recycling dumpster. Perhaps you’ve seen them? They are those large steel dumpsters that sit in school yards, in alleys and in public thoroughfares advertising to take our trash off our hands . for free. Just dump and go!

Now, there’s nothing overtly theological about a dumpster - the steel bin hunkers there on the edge of our parking lot taking up a perfectly useful space. It doesn’t look like Karl Barth or Paul Tillich and no one has yet spray painted “John 3:16” or “Jesus Saves” across the façade. I never noted anything of God in it - and least not until I received an e-mail recently from a father in the congregation.

It seems that, on the first Sunday we included an announcement about the recycling bin in our welcome slides, one of the children in the family pointed out the obvious: “Dad, look! We can start bringing our trash to church!”

The dad, being the old stalwart that he is, quickly corrected them: “I’m not sure we would want to do that. Sunday morning worship just isn’t the best time to bring our trash to church. We’ll bring it over and dump it - but not on Sunday.”

But during the worship that morning the father had a revelation. That dumpster was a perfect symbol of what true worship, true repentance and devotion to God, is all about. “Kids,” he told them on the drive home, “let’s make a practice of cleaning the trash out of the house every week. We’ll bring it to church and dump it. We’ll do the same thing when we go to worship!”

Hey, I can’t do theology that well! But it’s the truth.

Sometimes people encounter God in the smallest of things - even Sunday morning announcements - and it’s nothing we orchestrate through a sermon or an anthem. Sometimes people have powerful encounters with God while they are drinking coffee during the fellowship hour and someone asks, “How is the family?” Others might receive the touch of God when someone greets them with a firm handshake and a warm hello. Some might find God’s welcome in a parking space dedicated for guests or handicapped. Others find God’s grace when a worker in the nursery receives their child.

God help me, I’m learning. Worship is so much more than a sermon or a song. It’s what happens when people encounter the Gospel and decide to carry it with them.

*Todd Outcalt serves as senior pastor of Calvary UMC in Brownsburg, Ind. His blog is [toddoutcalt.blogspot.com](http://toddoutcalt.blogspot.com) and some of his latest writing can be found in digital form on [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com).*

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