

Titanic Warning

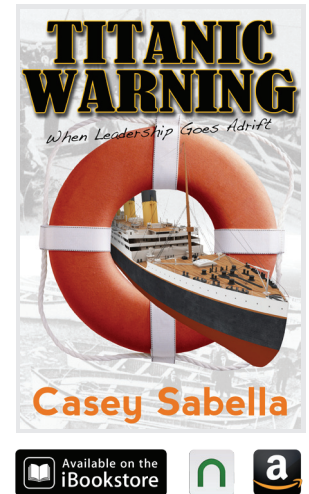
CaseySabella.com

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Why does Titanic continue to fascinate us 100 years after it sank? No other human tragedy has so captivated our thoughts as the story of Titanic. Why? Titanic was not merely a ship, it was also a critical event in history at a time of great innovation and what seemed to be man's proud mastery of nature. More importantly, Titanic was a message from God to His greatest love, the Church. Four ships played pivotal roles in the destiny of over 2300 passengers that fateful night. Each ship was led by someone who made decisions based upon information and a philosophy which caused them to act as they did. In their stories, we can see ourselves. Titanic is not just a story of a ship that sank 100 years ago...it's the story of the many tragic possibilities for an alternate outcome that were lost.

Many churches are failing to fulfill God's expressed mandate: go and make disciples of all nations. Part of the reason is the philosophies of leadership and ministry they accept and practice. Each ship in the Titanic story not only reflects one of these leadership philosophies, but also reveals many spiritual truths designed to help us today.



The Titanic was built with few lifeboats aboard. No lifeboat drills were ever conducted. Why? The leadership of the Titanic believed the ship was unsinkable. Faith in their own strength blinded their minds to the dangers which confronted them hours later. How many churches are absolutely committed to their programs, their music traditions or their heritage at the expense of reaching lost people?

The Californian saw the distress rockets from the Titanic, but took no action. They were frightened by the reality of icebergs and chose instead to sleep through the tragedy of over a thousand people dying in the frigid waters of the Atlantic. Many churches exist primarily to escape all the bad things of the world. They go to church to identify themselves as people who are separate from society, so much so that no one is ever won to Christ! They are paralyzed with fear to interact with a culture different from their likes and dislikes.

The Samson was closest to Titanic, but headed in the exact opposite direction upon seeing the distress rockets. Why? What were they doing that night which caused them to turn and run? Are there churches today which have compromised with sin so much that no one lives any differently than the society they are called to reach? What makes a Christian church compromise with the world?

The Carpathia was 58 miles away when they heard of Titanic's distress. Immediately, they dropped their plans, re-outfitted the ship to receive the wounded and moved at full speed into the same iceberg field which had doomed Titanic. What are the important dynamics which distinguish effective, soul-winning churches from those who never fulfill Christ's mission? Can our churches change and become effective once again?

Our calling is to make disciples, but how can we do that if we never discuss what we believe? Reflect on the following questions as you assess your role in winning souls to Christ. Bless you!

Chapter One: Nothing Can Go Wrong...

How many warnings did the Titanic receive before the tragedy occurred? Does God still send warnings to His people? Prior to the ship sailing and during the voyage, there were no lifeboat drills? Why not? What might be some of the spiritual applications for this today?

What are some ways that a leader's philosophy affects the lives of followers?

Chapter Two: Iceberg - 1, Titanic - 0

The builders of Titanic wanted her to appear to be the best ship in the world. How does this parallel today's church? The amount of lifeboats was reduced from 48 to 16 to keep costs down. How does this attitude apply to Christians today? What might be one reason the Titanic failed to listen to warnings from other ships? Why do Titanic churches ignore the counsel of other church leaders oftentimes?

Chapter Three: Escape From the Titanic!

Why do you think the crewmen of the Titanic were so incompetent in deploying and navigating the lifeboats? Even after the disaster, many passengers failed to discern the danger ahead. Why? How did leadership help to keep denial alive?

Some of the officers remained at the wheel long after the ship had stopped. Can you think of instances where leadership insists on keeping the appearance that all is well?

Chapter Four: The Plumb Line

The validity of any philosophy or ministry is proven by what measure? Is your church bringing the lost to Christ? Why or why not?

Passengers viewed the Titanic as invincible. Does this worldview reflect the condition in many churches and what is the unintended result?

What does this statement mean: *"A success without a successor is a failure?"*

Chapter Five: Playing It Safe

What was the philosophy for operation aboard the Californian and how did this worldview affect their destiny? How does apathy develop?

Why is team ministry essential to advancing the Kingdom?

Chapter Six: The Samson

The Samson was given the best chance to save the Titanic passengers. What does this tell us about God? Can wayward churches be turned around? What are hirelings?

Chapter Seven: The Carpathia

How did Carpathia's passengers prepare for the wounded? Why were they ready while Californian's crew did nothing? What does this tell us about the importance of a leader's philosophy?

Whom did Captain Rostron credit with the saving of the remaining passengers of the Titanic?

Samson escaped justice by slipping away in the night. What are ways seemingly unknown acts are brought to light in our spiritual lives?

Chapter Eight: The Church Jesus is Building

The Titanic was built by the competition, but this did not affect Rostron's decisions. What does this tell us about true Christian leadership?

What would you say are the key elements in training disciples?

What is inevitable when church leaders determine to reach out and bless others?

Chapter Nine: We Can Rebuild Her!

Contemplate the irony of the Britannic serving as a hospital ship, and the application to church life.

What have you learned about the true nature of the Church by studying these five ships?

As individual passengers on the ship of life, how can we make sure we have booked passage on the right vessel?

Closing thoughts:

If any of these ships, with the exception of Carpathia, had done something different, the Titanic might have become a forgotten footnote of history. Imagine never hearing this story, or the history being only about the loss of an amazing ship but everyone survived.

Is your church actively seeking the lost?

Are you reaching out to others with the truth of Christ?

Are you in a lifeboat of salvation turning your back on those drowning in sin and despair?

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