

## Turning our Church Inside Out – Part One – Is there a Problem?

### 1. Joke/Story/Multiple choice question (powerpoint)

- a. I would like you to raise your hand if you think this is the primary purpose of our church. You can vote more than once.
  - i. Our church's purpose is conduct worship services that help our people experience God.
  - ii. Our church's purpose is to teach and take care of our members.
  - iii. Our church's purpose is to attract the lost so that they can get saved and become active church members.
  - iv. Our church's purpose is to make such difference in our community.
- b. **All** of these are legitimate purposes for the church, just so long as they are not by themselves the **ONLY** purpose for the church. **But, that IS the problem.**

### 2. Introduction – “Turning our church inside out.”

- a. Over the past few months, God has been speaking to my heart about the way I view church.
- b. It all started when Bill Hill came to the deacons and told us that he felt the Lord's leading that we should try to minister to folks in the poorer areas of our community.
- c. I began to wonder...*who does our church exist for?*
  - i. For its members?
  - ii. Or for its own sake and survival?
    1. Are the church's activities designed to “keep the church in business” by trying to attract more people so that we can pay our budget to attract more people to pay our budget so that we can attract more people to pay our budget?
- d. We certainly aren't doing a very good job at surviving, much less thriving!
  - i. **I read a statistic this week that said in the last 15 years, the church in America has spent 500 billion dollars on programming, buildings and salaries without any statistical influence in church attendance or conversions.**
  - ii. **In America it takes the combined effort of 85 Christians working an entire year to produce on believer for Christ.**
  - iii. **Over the next year in the US, 1300 churches will be started and 3750 churches will close.**
- e. **Another question began gnawing at me. “If our church vanished tomorrow, would our community notice...or even care?”**
  - i. Very frankly, I had to answer this second question with, “I doubt it.”
    1. The only people who might miss this church are the people who come here.
  - ii. Do you know why?
    1. Because we have not made a significant difference in our community.
    2. Yes, we have done some outreach activities and camps.
    3. But we have not given our lives as a church family to the point that the community would care, much less notice if we ceased to exist.
    4. Oh, sure, some of you make a difference in your private lives through volunteering and personal ministry through your workplace.
    5. But on the average, on the whole, the focal point of our church's ministry and attention has been on us and our needs.
    6. Even our outreach has been “about us,” and about how to grow “our church.”
  - iii. Sadly, for many churches in America, the story is the same.
    1. I know of churches who are nationally recognized among Christians but are literally strangers in their own community.
    2. Every statistic that studies have done have demonstrated that the church in America today is becoming less and less influential and relevant.

- iv. This week a pastor complained to me that he had presented an opportunity to his church leaders to minister to a needy area of a local town and to make a difference in the lives of people there. His board of deacons replied, “But pastor, that is a waste of time and money, we’ll never get anything out of it. They’ll never come to our church.”

- 1. Do you see it? “What’s in it for us?” That is the sin of the church.

### 3. **Attractional versus Missional.**

- a. Ephesians 2:8-10 *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.*
- b. Most renderings of this reading group verses 8 and 9 together but leave verse ten off, as if it were “disconnected” from the rest.
  - i. Verses 8 and 9 deal with the inner life of the Christian, with the inner change that God has done in our lives through grace.
    - 1. This can even be applied to the inner work that the church must do to and for its members...teaching and leading them to understand the work of grace that God has done in their lives.
  - ii. Verse 10, however, deals with the WHY we were saved. Do you see it?
    - 1. *“for good works which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”*
    - 2. God has recreated you and I in Christ so that we would walk in the actions that God had prepared ahead of time for us
    - 3. Too often we plan something and ask God to bless it.
    - 4. This passage tells us that **God has plans and will bless us when we walk in them.**
    - 5. We don’t tell Him what we want to do, we find out what He has made us to do and then do it.
  - iii. IN fact, God wants to use you to make a difference in this world and in someone’s life.
    - 1. (Make it personal): God gives you passions and abilities – He wants to use you to nurture someone, to love an unloved child, to visit a shut-in, to play a guitar that blesses someone. God wants to use you! And in so doing, He will be using the church!

### 4. I am giving you this background and information to try to uncover how we do church and how we SHOULD be doing church.

- a. There are two models for doing church.
- b. The first one is called **the Attractional Model** – which is the American 20<sup>th</sup> century model of church.
  - i. This model is responsible for a horrible phenomenon called “Christian Consumerism.”
    - 1. Consumerism plays to the fact that we all like choices.
      - a. For example, there was a time not too long ago when ordering a cup of coffee was pretty simple. The waitress would ask you, “Regular or decaf?”. That’s it! Now if you go to “Starbucks” you’re provided with 20,000 ways to have your coffee!
      - b. How many of you have I-Pods? Now you have instant access to millions of songs that you can download to make your own individually personalized ‘playlist’ of thousands of songs.
    - 2. This drive for ‘personal choices’ has infected the church.
      - a. “Welcome to iChurch”! Where the goal is to provide ‘religious consumers’ with as many individualized choices as possible.

- b. Now, at many churches, you can choose the worship setting that fits your personal taste...(traditional, contemporary, country, or gothic).
      - c. Simultaneously, Grandma can sing her hymns, Mom and Dad can enjoy coffee and bagels in the worship café... while the teens lose their hearing at a guitar bashing praise gathering.
    - 3. In consumer Christianity, the Pastor passes out spiritual goods for people to choose from based on their preferences. “You don’t like this message? Well, maybe you can skip a few weeks until you find one that fits your needs!”
  - ii. In an attractional, consumer oriented, internally focused church, the leadership is not as concerned with whether people growing or not, just as long as they’re satisfied!
    - 1. We got to keep the “customer” happy!
    - 2. If they are coming to church and if they are giving to the budget...then your product is selling! You’re successful!
    - 3. After-all “the customer is king”, right?
    - 4. Every pastor knows that an ‘unhappy customer’ will go to another church if they don’t get what they want.
  - iii. At Here’s Hope, we haven’t gone that far, but...
    - 1. ...we do design our church activities, programs and ministries so that they will be attractive to the outside world and to the person who is in search of a church.
    - 2. ...we do make our church user friendly, we build family friendly bible studies, we use language that is easily understood by our community, we pave our parking lot and plant flowers so that our church is attractive.
    - 3. ...we even have events where the children and youth of our church participate so that their parents will come into our church and see and experience the wonderful things that we have for them.
  - iv. These actually are good things, unless we are RELYING UPON THEM ALONE to reach our community and to make a difference in our world.
    - 1. This model of church is what I was raised on as a Christian. It may have been what you were raised up on as well.
    - 2. It was what I learned and was a part of in my previous two ministries. These two churches were successful, growing churches. They had great worship, great children’s ministries, great VBS, outstanding youth programs and youth pastors. If you were shopping for the best church to go to, both of these two churches I was a part of would be at the top of your list!
    - 3. I would dare to say that many of the churches in our community and in America are designed around this model.
    - 4. **Its focus is upon taking care of its members and attracting more.**
      - a. Most of **the emphasis in the attractional church is upon acts of serving are about church itself.**
      - b. Consumerism, “entitlement mentality” – a mark of a church turned inward. “I want more praise songs” “I want more hymns” “I want more bible studies.”
        - i. We complain about a nation that is “entitled” but we are too!
        - ii. Church exists for ME!
      - c. **The Attractional Church cares primarily about what works for us and does what benefits us.**
        - i. A church that does so will only grow smaller.
      - d. Self centered churches and people are self-protective.

- e. They avoid pain. They seek comfort and security, they do not make a difference in their world and their community would not even notice if they vanished tomorrow.
5. Here is some of the rationale for this inward centered, attractional mentality of the church:
- a. Outside of the church for the past half century, we have seen the polluted river of the world flow outside the doors of our church.
    - i. It stinks of death, immorality, misplaced priorities, of hell itself.
  - b. So what the church has done is to try to make their own pond out back on the church property.
    - i. We build Christian schools for our children, we sing our own music, we develop our own culture.
    - ii. We even put a shower inside the front door of our church so that anyone who wants to come in can get cleaned up so that they don't get the rest of the members dirty when they join us.
  - c. What we have done, however, is to erect a fortress that **KEEPS OUT** the culture of the world to protect our own counter culture that we have created to make us safe.
    - i. It is easy for us to criticize the Amish for separating themselves from the rest of the world through the non-use of technology, but the sad truth is that most American churches are doing that behind the walls of the church building.
    - ii. We have taken the Christian out of the world and created a parallel culture to our world, a safe one in which to live and be entertained, our own music, our own tv stations, our own schools, even our own language!
  - d. Buts as the soul is to the body, the Christian is to the world.
    - i. If you take the soul out of the body all you are left with is a corpse.
    - ii. If you remove the Christian from the world all you will be left with a corpse.
    - iii. Our world is rotting and we are saying, "go to hell!"
6. This brings me to the second model of church: **The Missional church: cares about what God cares about and does what God is doing.**
- i. God is on mission. He is incarnational. Jesus left his home in glory, with the Father, and became flesh, came literally to our hell-hole, our dirty, sinful, wicked place, and walked among us. He didn't point fingers, he spoke the truth and he offered grace. He came to seek and to save the lost. He didn't stay where it was comfortable, but went where the need was greatest.
  - ii. Luke 9:10 says, "*For the Son of Man has come to **seek** and to **save** that which was lost.*"
  - iii. Without neglecting the other things like excellence, worship, good programming, etc., this Missional model sees the church's role in the world is to **ENGAGE** the culture and develop relationships with the lost.
  - iv. We "go on mission" every day, in intentional ways to engage our community in the places where they are in need.
- b. Why do we do it?
- i. **We have the ultimate goal of seeing people led to Christ, but it is not our ulterior motive.**
    - 1. Explain difference. (ulterior says I will minister to you, bless you, care about you **SO THAT** you will come to Christ, and if you don't, I'm going to try someone else. Ultimate says I will love you whether you come to Christ or not, but it is my hope and desire that you do!)
    - 2. Our goal is to love them as Christ did, not just to proclaim the kingdom but to demonstrate the love of God toward them.

3. In Luke 9:11, it says that when the crowds were following Jesus, he “*welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God (good news), and healed those who needed healing* (i.e. good deeds).”
4. When Jesus sent the 12 disciples out, “*he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God (good news) and to heal the sick (good deeds).*” –Luke 9:2
- ii. At a conference I was at this week, a speaker told the pastors in the conference to tell their congregations to “go to hell.”
- iii. I think you understand what I mean.
  1. Jesus left heaven to go to hell. Not only that, but he led captives out of hades. He also assured us that the gates of hell will not prevail against the church!
  2. What are we afraid of?
  3. Our world is a living hell for folks without Jesus.
  4. That is the definition of hell...outside the presence of God.
  5. Yet, even the sinner has some experience of God’s presence here, because judgment has not yet occurred.
  6. But one day it will.
  7. And you and I must go to hell to rescue as many as possible.
  8. We must go where people are suffering without God’s presence.
  9. Where they are suffering because of poverty and pain.
- iv. I believe that our trailer park ministry is a step from God’s in touching and reaching out to people who are suffering. Many don’t have a good income, most don’t eat nearly as well as you and I do. Some have alcohol and drug problems. And their children suffer because their parents are suffering.
- v. You can make a difference. Most of the 25 some children who have attended or are attending the Tuesday night “Sunday School” will never darken the doors of our church BUILDING. (note emphasis).
- vi. But they will come to something on site, where THEY LIVE.
  1. .
  2. Some have never before experienced the patience of a grandparent or parent doing a craft with them.
  3. Others have never before heard the bible taught on their level.
  4. They NOW are experiencing the love of God at the hands of 6 or 7 adults from our church each week
  5. Their parents come to watch.
  6. Their parents are open to the love of God.
- vii. We invite you instead to consider being a part of a child’s or a teen’s or an adult’s life that will impact them because you were willing to let God love through you.
  - a. It will be through something you have a heart and passion for.
    - i. You might want to tutor kids after school.
    - ii. You might want to make a meal that the kids can have b/c they don’t have a solid meal to eat.
    - iii. You might want to help ladies learn job skills
    - iv. You might want to show folks how to overcome debt.
    - v. You might want to fix someone’s car.
    - vi. You might like playing sports with kids.
    - vii. You might be able to help with medical needs.
  - b. It is not just the task you do that will make the difference, but your presence that will touch someone’s life.
7. One pastor wrote, “*As pastors, we are tempted to build the church, so we send out postcards to targeted Zip codes and we promote church programs. But that misses the point. Our job isn’t to build the church.*”

*We're supposed to BE the church, and build the kingdom. The best expression of the church is NOT what happens on Sunday morning. It's what happens in the world during the week. And that's not something you can market."*

- a. That's what it means to be an externally focused church.
- b. We must become externally focused people, turned inside out...for our church to become externally focused and turned inside out.
- c. Will you commit to letting God turn you inside out this summer?
- d. Will you commit to letting God make our church something our community would miss if we vanished?
- e. Let's pray.