

The World in Need - The Church in Need!

Introduction:

1. Here are some rather startling statistics:
 - Over 3,700 churches a year are closing their doors in America.
 - Over 50% of all Protestant churches will have fewer than 75 people in worship on Sunday.
 - We live in the era of the mega-church, yet statistically fewer people are attending church in America.
2. As we look at this landscape, we have to ask the question, “What is the problem?” While I certainly don't want to over-simplify, one of the major issues is that the church has become far too inwardly focused and has lost sight of the world outside its walls.
3. I'm afraid that many times, we have built churches that are like spiritual cocoons. Those on the inside feel warm and comfortable, but nobody from the outside can seem to get in.
4. But what was the attitude of our Savior, Jesus Christ? He is our heavenly Head and we, the church, are His body. What was His heart? Matthew 9:35-36
 - He was “*moved with compassion.*” This means “to yearn, to feel sympathy.”
 - Do we yearn for others in our community? Are we moved with compassion like Christ? Do we care that those outside of our community of faith are perishing?
 - Or are we quite content with our church family the way it is now? I mean after all, if too many others come into our church they may mess up a good thing we've got going.
5. Is the world in need, today? Absolutely, it is. But I believe the church is in **greater** need. We have the answer, we have the solution, **but the church has to care!** We have to be moved with compassion like our Savior.
6. What does a healthy church look like? Acts 9:31 is insightful.
 - The believers in these churches were growing spiritually (edified). Their walk in their communities was distinctively different. They were walking in the fear of the Lord.
 - But then notice the last two words, “*were multiplied.*”
 - These churches were not glorified social clubs or exclusive groups. “Others” were being added and welcomed continually.
7. You have heard me say this many times before; a healthy church is a church for others.
8. Members off CrossRoads, we must be aware of those around us who are in need; that are searching for answers. We must exhibit a Philippians 2:4 attitude. “*Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*”
9. The key to reaching our communities with the gospel is for God's people to become focused on the needs of others outside the walls of the church, outside of our cliques, and outside of our spiritual cocoons. When we become focused on the needs of others:

It is a mark of godly maturity.

1. When Jesus walked this earth, He shared a very insightful principle with the nation of Israel that has great application for us today. Matthew 5:44-47
2. Now let's see how Jesus ended this teaching in verse 48.
 - The word "*perfect*" here does not mean "sinless." The word "*perfect*" implies full development and growth into a maturity of godliness.
 - If we say about a baseball player, "He has really perfected the art of hitting," we are not implying that he never makes an out or never strikes out. We mean that he has matured as a hitter and developed the art of hitting.
3. Notice Jesus said, "*Even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*"
 - Jesus is saying, "When you live by this principle you are acting like God would act. You are demonstrating God-like maturity and growth.
4. Our God is a God for others! Does God only love those that love Him? Does God only do good to those who are part of His family? No! Notice verse 45.
 - Every day that the sun comes up, and life is sustained another day on this planet, God shows His love to the people of this world.
 - Every time rain falls from heaven to water the fields and crops so that we can have food, God shows His love for people. What does John 3:16 state? He is a God for others.
 - 1 Timothy 2:4 proclaims that God "*will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*" He is a God for others!
5. How do we naturally tend to relate to others? We tend to love those who are like us. If God loved this way, who would God love? Is there anybody in here on the same plateau as God? Aren't you thankful He is a God for others? Otherwise we wouldn't know His love.
 - But many times we only love those who are like us; people we are comfortable with, and there is nothing extraordinary about that. verse 47
6. All throughout the Bible, we see that God is a God for others. Even in the Old Testament when God was working through the nation of Israel, He gave instructions to His people regarding "*strangers.*"
 - In Leviticus 19:10 God taught Israel not to glean all the harvest of their lands, but to leave some for the poor and stranger. God cared for the "others." We can certainly apply this. Churches today are gleaning the entire harvest and spending it all on themselves.
 - In Leviticus 19:33-34 God told Israel to love the stranger as yourself. Why? Because you were strangers once. We can certainly apply this. Remember when you were a stranger in church? Remember when you were a first-time guest?
7. We are acting like God when we reach beyond ourselves (our desires, our self-fulfillment, our preferences, our cliques, our pet peeves, our self-interest, our self-preoccupation) and see the needs of others.
8. Many times churches fail to be churches for others, and it is not because they are bad people. They are simply preoccupied.

- We get preoccupied with getting to our L.I.F.E. Groups, doing our ministries, getting our parking places, sitting in our favorite seats, getting our kids to their classes, and we get tunnel vision.
 - But when you begin to look to the needs of others and befriend others, you know that you are maturing spiritually. When all we do is care for ourselves and welcome our friends, Jesus said that we are simply doing what even a lost person would do.
 - We as believers desperately need an attitude adjustment. Instead of our attitude being, “Who didn't shake my hand”, our thoughts are, “Whose hand did I miss, who needed a friendly greeting that I missed?” We begin to think things like, “I went to church today and I didn't get to be a blessing to anyone. I wonder who I missed.”
 - Instead of saying, “I don't need the fellowship of a L.I.F.E. Group”, we begin to think, “I wonder who might need my fellowship in a L.I.F.E. Group?”
9. As we begin to grow spiritually, we begin to realize that it is not all about us. It is not about what I got out of church today. The question becomes, “Who did I impact? Who did I give to? What need did I meet?”
 10. By the way, these attitudes should begin at church but then should extend to our home lives, our work lives, and in every other area of life. We are looking to meet the needs of others.
 11. Let's look one more time at Philippians 2:4, “*Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*” This is the mind of Christ.

In Conclusion:

1. Our God is a missionary God. God moves out in love towards the lost and the outcast, the poor, oppressed, and lonely.
2. God is a missionary God and the church of Jesus Christ must be a missionary church. It starts right here.
3. Why do we exist? We exist to participate in God's mission. God is trying to reach out and seek and save the lost, and we are His ambassadors to help and participate in what He is doing.
 - Without a mission, there is no church.
4. What are you doing to help us become a church for others?