



When Church Becomes About Us

I. **Confronting a Wrong Paradigm:**

I don't know how many churches that I've ministered in or that I have had relationship with the leadership of over the years where the church has become stagnant and self focused. For these many churches that I am thinking about it would be a fair assessment to say that for most of the congregation church had become all about them, their needs and their comforts. I don't mean a genuine concern for the collective need of the community I mean that for the majority of those attending church had become all about what are they going to get from church that week.

A. An Unhealthy Mentality:

I don't know how many people I have talked to over the years that have become hardened into this line of thinking, to where it has become so ingrained in them that there is no undoing it with a conversation or a sermon series. They become ridged and entitled; they have long lost that fire within them that drove them to radical costly things for Jesus in their youth. They are now mere shadows of who they used to be in Christ all because somewhere along the journey they allowed themselves to start thinking it was all about them.

B. The Carry Over into Our Approach to Church:

When we see this type of self focus become the primary line of our thinking related to what we expect in our church experience its poison in the water. This mentality slowly turns a local church into a toxic place to be, with right messages perhaps being preached but a totally wrong perspective about what Church is all about.

C. A Line of Thinking with a Zero Survival Rate:

What relationship could survive with this mentality driving it? What job could you stay employed at? What business could stay in business if it operated this way? How then could we ever think this could be an acceptable perspective to have when talking about our church Body?

D. The Unfortunate Byproduct:

The problem is that if we give into this unbiblical perspective out our lives there are many unfortunate and unintended byproducts that really negatively impact a community.

1. We stop pouring out.
2. Attendance is a chore when our needs aren't met.

3. Visitors don't feel welcome.
4. Things become stale in the spiritual community.
5. The Kingdom is about God, it was never about you.

E. The Questions that Get Asked:

When this is the mentality here are the types of questions that get asked, at first these questions are only internal not voiced aloud, but in time the unhealth grows bolder and these ill-founded questions begin to come. As believers these are warning signs that we are headed toward a selfish, inward focus. Check your self as I read them to search for hints of these in your inward processing.

1. What are you going to do for me?
2. Did you do my favorite worship song?
3. Did the message really hit home?
4. We're my needs met today?
5. Did people care about me?
6. When is this going to be over?

F. The Sign of Change:

Here is another great indicator. When change is presented is your first thought "How is this going to impact my life?" or "How is this going to impact our community?" If the first line of thought is self-preservation instead of the good of others I want to warn you that a selfish approach to church, an approach that kills churches and hardens once soft hearts is lurking in the shadows.

"I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but not everything is constructive. No one should seek their own good, but the good of others (1Co. 10:23-24)."

"do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased (He. 13:16)."

II. What a Healthy Church Should Look Like:

There is a clear pattern in the New Testament that tells us what a healthy church should look like, the kind of attitude that should be preeminent in our midst and what our interactions should look like. I want to say that I think our small groups reflect this attitude to a good measure, but for some reason it doesn't translate as well into our services. I want us to think about the following verses in the context of our weekly Sunday morning gathering here together. It's really about returning to the simple truths of what being in a family is all about.

A. We are to Serve One Another:

When we come together we are supposed to find ways to serve each other, church isn't a place, it's an experience, it's an opportunity to be the body and to serve one another. Too often we operate independently; where we use our life, our time and our freedoms for ourselves instead of using our time together to serve others.

"You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love (Ga. 5:13)."

B. We are to Look to the Interests of One Another:
to be looking for ways to serve the interests and needs of others. We are trying to find ways to benefit those who came to the building Sunday morning. This is an important shift in mentality.

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others (Php. 2:3-4)."

C. We are to Give to One Another:
It's supposed to be a super normal thing that we bless people with our money. We want to identify needs in our church and then find ways to meet them.

"All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need (Ac. 2:44-45)."

D. We are to Give Ourselves Away to One Another:
We are supposed to be inventing ways to give ourselves away, to share our self with those around us. It's not just a service thing; it's a friendship thing, a family thing. We are supposed to be becoming family with those that are part of our church body.

"Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well (1Th. 2:7-8)."

E. We are to Rejoice and Suffer with One Another:
We are to know each other well enough that we can suffer with and rejoice with one another through what life throws us. Corporate gatherings aren't excluded for this part of the call.

"there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it (1Co. 12:25-26)."

F. We are to Keep Doing Good to One Another:
Through it all the perspective that we are to carry related to our interactions with one another is that we continually do good to those around us.

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up (Ga. 6:9)."

III. When Church is About What We can Give:

So now having looked a little bit at what the New Testament says about how the Church is supposed to act, live and love lets spend some time talking about what happens in a congregation when coming to church every week is about

giving instead of receiving. Doesn't this just sound like the right way to live? Yet somehow if we aren't careful we find ourselves giving into and justifying a very consumer driven version of Christianity.

A. A Shift of Thinking:

We all know the give and it will be given to you verse. Well, this verse is actually right in the middle of Jesus talking about how we are to give ourselves to others, even to our enemies as a lifestyle. We use it as a financial verse, and it certainly can be applied that way but the principle message Jesus was trying to convey was actually how important it is that we learn to give ourselves away and that when we do He is faithful to come and give us increase in every way.

"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you (Lk. 6:38)."

B. Byproducts of this Approach:

When everyone is ministering a whole lot of good things begin to transpire.

1. People come to church with expectation.
2. Everyone gets to be used of the Lord every week.
3. Everyone consequently gets ministered to.
4. Church is no longer all about the worship leader and the preacher.
5. The weekly service becomes a corporate reality.
6. Things for that congregation are always moving forward.

C. A Proposal for Us:

What if every Sunday moving forward each of us did just one of the following things every week when we came to church? In no time we'll have a church that everyone wants to be part of. What if we doubled it and aimed for two of the things on this list every week? I believe that making this one small shift in our church culture will completely revitalize FF and it will fill our church with expectation every time we come through these doors. Let's shift our perspective because it's right and then lets reap the benefits of what this will do around here.

IV. Shifting the Questions We Ask:

Let's change the questions we are asking. What if instead of thinking about what we are going to get out of church this week we came with a different perspective and a different way to measure how "good" church was? I have developed several lists of questions that I believe capture the heart of what this new perspective could look like directly in our context here at FF. I think it's time for a shift in the way that we approach our times together on Sundays.

A. Simple Acts of Service:

1. Whose kid can I pick up?
2. Who can I pray for?
3. Who can I prophesy over?
4. How can I just listen to?
5. Who can I take out to lunch?
6. Who can I go sit by?

B. Momentary Acts of Love:

1. Who needs a hug?
2. Who needs a laugh?
3. Who needs to be reminded that they are liked?
4. Who can I have my kid tackle?
5. Who can I help with something practical?
6. What visitor needs to feel the love today?

C. In Preparation for Church:

1. Whose day can I make this Sunday?
2. What could I do to get ready for church, to see my friends?
3. Who could I write an encouraging note to and give it at church?
4. Who needs a \$5 gift card that I could show appreciation to this week?

D. Ask Yourself as You Walk in the Door:

1. What can I do to make things better today?
2. What can I do today to be a blessing while I'm here?
3. What good can I get done in 3 minutes?
4. How can I be a positive impact in this family this morning?

E. Our General Attitude Overall:

1. Who do I know that this community would be good for?
2. Who is having a hard week that I could encourage?
3. Who needs a phone call this week?
4. Who could I have over for dinner?
5. What is something that can I take off someone else's plate?



Shifting the Questions We Ask

Let's change the default questions that we are asking. Instead of thinking about what we are going to get out of church this week let's come with a different perspective and a different way to measure how "good" church was Sunday. Below are several lists of questions that I believe capture the heart of what the New Testament calls us to and give direction to how this new perspective could look here in our context. It's time for a shift in the way that we approach our times together and I would like to challenge all of us to start thinking this way on Sundays. Let's make this our new normal. Who wouldn't want to be part of this church?

A. Simple Acts of Service:

1. Whose kid can I pick up?
2. Who can I pray for?
3. Who can I prophesy over?
4. Who can I just listen to?
5. Who can I take out to lunch?
6. Who can I go sit by?

B. Momentary Acts of Love:

1. Who needs a hug?
2. Who needs a laugh?
3. Who needs to be reminded that they are liked?
4. Who can I have my kid tackle?
5. Who can I help with something practical?
6. What visitor needs to feel the love today?

C. In Preparation for Church:

1. Whose day can I make this Sunday?
2. What could I do to get ready for church, to see my friends?
3. Who could I write an encouraging note to and give it at church?
4. Who needs a \$5 gift card that I could show appreciation to this week?

D. Ask Yourself as You Walk in the Door:

1. What can I do to make things better today?
2. What can I do today to be a blessing while I'm here?
3. What good can I get done in 3 minutes?
4. How can I be a positive impact in this family this morning?

E. Our General Attitude Overall:

1. Who do I know that this community would be good for?
2. Who is having a hard week that I could encourage?

3. Who needs a phone call this week?
4. Who could I have over for dinner?
5. What is something that can I take off someone else's plate?