

Christ Community Covenant Church
Stone 2: The Multiplying Church
Pastor Dave Scherrer - August 5, 2012

Mission?

Love God, Love Others and Advance the Kingdom Together

Stones?

1. Family Church
2. Celebrating Church
3. Teaching Church
4. Community Minded Church
5. Multiplying Church

We are now down to this last value, the idea of being a ***Multiplying Church***.

What exactly is a *Multiplying Church*?

I guess you could use any number of words to describe this value. Some call this the 'evangelism' value or the 'winning lost souls' value. These work for me to some extent. Some call this value the 'Win' value. I'm ok with this description too. Our church cares to extend the Kingdom of God by seeing the spiritually lost find their hope and their life in Christ. We want to see many go from being at war with God to having peace with God.

I take this value personally. Many of you know that for many years I worked for a ministry called Youth for Christ and our mission was to present the message of Jesus Christ to youth that had never heard a compelling personal presentation of how much God loves them. In my ministry over the 30 years with both YFC and with another ministry I was involved in, Worth Waiting For, I shared the Gospel of the Kingdom with tens of thousands of teens, one on one at Burger Kings, in over a year of camps and retreats, at assembly programs in public schools, and at large events with several thousand attending. I have shared the Gospel in Taiwan, Kenya, South Africa, Hong Kong, Namibia, and Mexico. I have chatted with teens across the USA from Alaska to Hawaii to Florida, and New Jersey and 22 other states in between. I have shared the Gospel to teens at the Federal Jail on Rikers Island in New York City and with gangs in the 'hood' of East Harlem and Chinatown. I have shared the Gospel professionally to any who would listen for much of my adult life. My passion to share the Gospel to those who have never heard a loving and compelling presentation comes out of a moment in my life where I heard the Gospel for the first time in the language of my heart and everything in my life changed. I was radically saved if that makes sense. And I had a problem keeping quiet. In high school I shared the Gospel with my cross country and track friends, in college I shared the Gospel with my college roommates. And through the years, thousands responded to my question "Do you want to receive Christ right now?" I am blessed by God to have had these kinds of opportunities. I feel very fortunate and blessed and it is all kind of surreal when I think about it like this.

Over the years I have come to understand a few things about the concept of 'sharing' the Gospel:

- For one thing I fully understand that my career experience of evangelism is extremely rare. For most of us, we will have the opportunity to share the Gospel verbally to only a handful of people in our lifetime and maybe just a few or even none at all will then pray with us. In fact in the last ten years my opportunities to pray with others to accept Christ has been much rarer.
- And secondly, not all Kingdom Gospel 'sharing' is verbal. Sometimes the best sharing is done without words at all. Courageous acts of kindness and sacrifice have won tens of millions to Christ without a word ever having been spoken. Missionaries have died terrible, tortured

deaths and have won with their blood what their words could not win in a lifetime. The common denominator of all these is . . .

Having a passion to introduce the lost to Christ

Our church longs to see the church grow. Did you hear how carefully I phrased that last sentence? While we want *our church* to grow in numbers, our greatest passion is to see *the church eterna* multiplied in numbers. At 4Cs, we want that.

Do you remember how it was told in the book of Acts that when the Spirit came upon the world for the first time just as Christ promised He would, that “the Lord added to their number daily”? At 4Cs, we want that.

But the word we chose to represent this ideal was *multiply*. That we are *a Multiplying Church*. It is a statement about the kinds of ministry we will be involved in. The kind of sharing that is important to us.

We know that we cannot do this ministry of reaching the world for Christ alone. We must pray for, send out, write checks and provide supplies for thousands of others if the world is to be reached. Many of those will not be ministries under the mantle Evangelical Covenant ministries. We see the ministry of multiplying as one of *collaborating and partnering* . . .

Collaborating and Partnering Planting Churches and Initiating Ministries

. . . with others who share a similar passion and hope but with skills and gifts that our little fellowship does not have. And we see the logic and strategic nature of planting churches and initiating ministries. Today in our country most of the new believers are not coming from the mega churches of 2000 or more, but from the new churches, the recent start ups. We want to participate in the planting of these engines of evangelism that many would come to Christ. We believe that we can be a church of 500, 600, 700 people who worship here on Sunday morning but we can have a 100-fold impact for Christ reaching tens of thousands every week by planting and partnering all over the world.

Conversation: Let me stop here for a moment and chat with you for a second. I have heard it said that for most Christians who find Christ as a teen or adult, the longer they are a Christian the less they shared their faith verbally. Now that seems counter intuitive to me. It seems to me that the longer we know Jesus and the deeper we love him, the more passionate we would be about sharing with others about our love for him. But polls tell us that is not the case but in fact the opposite is true. Why do you think it would be that over time we talk about Jesus less rather than more?

I agree with these thoughts. I think the things that we face in keeping current with the lost and keeping compassionate and not becoming indifferent to their dangerous condition are not new to us or limited to our culture. Jesus faced these same circumstances.

Remember when there were thousands who had been listening to Jesus all day with nothing to eat? The disciples came to Jesus and said, “Send these people home so that they can get something to eat.” I think you might be able to interpret this as the disciples actually saying, “Jesus we’re hungry and tired. Send these people home so we can eat.”

But when his followers lack passion Jesus is just getting started. He feeds the thousands

Matthew 9:35-38 (ESV)

And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

The Great Need: Distressed and Dispirited

This text describes a situation similar to ours here at 4Cs and the community we live in. And it also tells us how Jesus responds to that situation. All I want to do is lead you this week in obeying the command of our Master given in the text.

First of all, there is a need which Jesus finds, a privation among the people. Verse 36: "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." People without Christ are like sheep without a shepherd. They will soon run out of pasture and starve, or they will get lost or caught in some thicket and die. And in the meantime they are harassed, wearied, and helpless. Now the unbelievers you know may not seem to fit that description. But if you see them with the eyes of Christ and are not misled by the shell of self-assurance, you will recognize sheep who desperately need a shepherd.

In Colorado, only about 45% of the population claims affiliation with a church. We are the fourth lowest in church attendance, only Oregon, Washington and Alaska have fewer. Even if we assume that this entire population who claim church affiliation are committed to Christ (which is a very unwarranted assumption), a full 55% of our fellow citizens make no pretense of affiliation with a church. Now we have to be careful here.

We know that Church attendance is not the determiner of a love for Christ, and many who attend church do so for reasons other than their love for Christ. Still we can tell there is the need. Millions of our neighbors no matter how good or bad, are not saved. They cannot know ultimate meaning in life, they do not have a purified, clean conscience before God, and without Christ they have no hope of eternal life. "He looked on the people, and they were like sheep without a shepherd."

Also notice in verse 36 that Jesus had compassion on them:

Having Compassion: "... like sheep without a shepherd"

The word means, literally, to be moved in one's stomach with pity. Do you remember the last time you felt real strong pity? This is a test for us, to feel compassion deeply for our fellow neighbor. And I have asked myself and tested myself: do I hurt for my friends and loved ones, much less the strangers in my life for their lost spiritual condition? Ah, there's our need. *Our* need is to feel compassion because of *their* need. Our need is to care and love like Jesus did. He was so much a man for others! We need to be honest and admit that compassion does not come natural to us. It is a work of grace in our hearts and, for that reason, the product not of works, but of prayer. "He saw the crowds and had compassion for them."

Our compassion needs to come from the fact that without Christ we are lost, destined to die spiritually.

Hebrews 9:27-28 (ESV)

And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

And the sense of having lots of time is a false comfort.

1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 (Living Bible)

For you know quite well that the day of the Lord's return will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night. When people are saying, "Everything is peaceful and secure," then disaster will fall on them as suddenly as a pregnant woman's labor pains begin. And there will be no escape.

Seeing the Potential: the Harvest is Plentiful!

But also see that Jesus saw an amazing potential. "Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful.'" The metaphor changes. Unbelievers are not only like sheep who are in trouble. They are also like wheat that can be harvested. If we need the eyes of Christ to see the lostness of people and the compassion of Christ to feel pity for people, then we need just as much the expectancy and hopefulness of Christ that anticipates harvest time.

Do you look upon your neighbors and colleagues and classmates and associates with the lively sense that here is a potential saint? It has probably been so long since the Lord has used most of us to lead a person from unbelief to faith that we really tend to lose hope.

When Jesus said that it is hard for rich people to enter the kingdom, the disciples responded, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus seemed to take away all potential for harvest. But actually, what he was doing was laying a new basis for potential. He answers, "What is impossible with men is possible with God" (Luke 18:24-27). If there is going to be harvest time in our neighborhood, it will not be because there are so many competent communicators. The harvest we want is impossible with men. New birth is a miracle. Our goal isn't to have a big church or to hit the top of some fancy statistical charts. Our goal is to see God do the impossible through broken people like us. That is the way it has happened in history, and that is how it will happen again. In God's time, he will perform the miracle of harvest, and it will be marvelous in our eyes. "You shall receive power *when the Holy Spirit has come upon you*, and (then!) you shall be my witnesses (harvesters)!"

Praying workers into the Harvest: An Inviting Church

That leads us to my last observation this morning. God has willed that his miraculous work of harvesting be preceded by prayer. He loves to bless the world. But even more, he loves to bless the world in answer to prayer. It is God's way before he does a great work to pour a Spirit of supplication upon his people so that they plead for the work. Therefore, the sign that God is going to bring in the harvest at 4Cs will be a widespread movement of prayer among us.

Illustration: In the twelve years before the Third Great Awakening (also known as: The Revival/Awakening of 1857-1858; The Prayer Revival; and The Businessmen's Revival), the religious life in America was on a decline. It was a time of prosperity, and people were seeking riches rather than God. The churches were losing people, and worldliness was creeping in.

A number of Christians who had become concerned over the materialism that pervaded the land, and the fact that the young were growing up without God, began to pray that God would break the love of money over people's lives and send another revival to the nation. "Concerts of Prayer" began to spring up throughout the United States of America and Canada.

This materialism was broken in many lives by the Bank Panic of October 1857.

Due to the long, hard winter of 1856-1857, transportation and trade transactions were delayed. The spring brought some relief, but by the end of summer, businesses had begun to collapse.

Before September, the Ohio Life Insurance and Trust Company of Cincinnati, with a branch in New York City, failed, causing "a shock to public confidence."

"On the 14th of October, 1857, the extensive banking system of the United States collapsed, a far-reaching disaster bringing ruin to hundreds of thousands of people in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and the industrial centers of the nation." The Panic caused rich men to go broke literally overnight. Suicide and murder increased, as well as "the number of unfortunate women who roamed the streets in the cities."

In the middle of September, 1857, in New York City, a tall man "with a pleasant face, and affectionate manner . . . shrewd and endowed with much tact and common sense" began passing out handbills that read:

Jeremiah Lanphier's Handbill, 1857
HOW OFTEN SHALL I PRAY?

As often as the language of prayer is in my heart; as often as I see my need of help; as often as I feel the power of temptation; as often as I am made sensible of any spiritual declension or feel the aggression of a worldly spirit.

In prayer we leave the business of time for that of eternity, and intercourse with men for intercourse with God.

A day Prayer Meeting is held every Wednesday, from 12 to 1 o'clock, in the Consistory building in the rear of the North Dutch Church, corner of Fulton and William Streets (entrance from Fulton and Ann Streets). The first will be September 23, 1857.

This meeting is intended to give merchants, mechanics, clerks, strangers, and business men generally an opportunity to stop and call upon God amid the perplexities incident to their respective avocations. It will continue for one hour; but it is also designed for those who may find it inconvenient to remain more than five or ten minutes, as well as for those who can spare the whole hour.

At 12:30 on that first day, he heard the footsteps of one man climbing the stairs. Within a few minutes, a total of six men had joined Lanphier to pray. The next Wednesday brought 20; the third week was attended by between 30 and 40 men.

The meetings were so encouraging that it was decided that they should meet daily. The next day, the crowds had again increased. By the following Wednesday, October 14, the day of the crash, "over 100, many of them not professors of religion but under conviction of sin and seeking an interest in Christ" were attending.

By mid-November, the two lecture rooms had to be used, and both were filled. Within six months time, these noon-time prayer-meetings were attracting over 10,000 businessmen who were "confessing sin, getting saved, [and] praying for revival."

This Communion Table reminds us of God's love for the lost in that "While we were yet sinners Christ Died for us."