

## Outreach Blog – March 2016

### Ministry Style...

What is it that makes some ministries sticky or magnetic attracting hundreds and even thousands of followers to attend on a weekend? Many ask and even more wonder, “why do the non- denominational or “big box,” churches grow so large? Obviously God is at work. Jesus reminds us that “wherever two or more are gathered in my Name there am I also.” Matt 18:20. After studying this phenomenon however, I have come to believe that it’s not about a style of worship, but is more about the intensity of discipleship efforts occurring in every area of ministry and the nimbleness of adapting to reach our culture.

We live in a post Christian culture and the church as a whole is trying to find a way through this new wilderness of what it is like to live without “Christian privilege” that we enjoyed in prior generations. Our map for this wilderness today is similar to that of the early church in biblical times where Christianity was emerging as a new religion among many other religions. How did they gain audience with their society? How was their voice heard? How did Paul and others influence faith and life from Corinth to Ephesus to Galatia, Philippi and on to Rome?

Our congregations today are faced with also finding our way and it seems as though we are struggling and slipping. While we need a map, we have something even better - the Messiah! Jesus told his disciples “fear not...” as He walked out to them on the water. He walked from behind locked doors on Easter evening after rising from the dead and again Jesus told the disciples, “fear not...”

Fear not, even in this wilderness for the Lord is with us. This is Jesus’ church and as His body we have the One who has cheated, defeated and abolished death. Jesus has raw resurrection power and it is in this power, the power of His Name that God is at work in His Church. Fear not!

A helpful hint for this time comes from Jesus and the disciples. They addressed their world using both attractional and incarnational ministry models. They brought the Word of God, teachings and truths to places where large groups of people were attracted, i.e., the feeding of the 5,000 or the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus also became God in the flesh (incarnational) as He ministered to and encountered the woman at the well and ate with Zacchaeus, the tax collector.

So what is your ministry style - attractional or incarnational? Most churches lean towards attractional and most pastors are trained using this style. Attractional and incarnational styles are both necessary, even in today’s culture.

Attractional ministry is centered on holding gatherings and events that “attract,” or bring people to your church or facility. Worship, Bible classes at church, pre-schools and schools, annual fish fries and the like are attractional and still are a way to reach out into your community.

Incarnational ministry is that which occurs in the community when the church and her members live out their faith, blessing the community, especially in daily life. It might be the church taking part in Habitat for Humanity or the local soup kitchen or homeless shelter. Incarnational ministry occurs when the love of Christ is exhibited outside the church walls as an expression of faith on the part of a believer. Many,

if not most of you, reading this are already engaged in doing this kind of ministry daily. You may pray for your waiter or waitress. You may be the kind and courteous driver. You may be the one who helps a neighbor or always has a kind word to say as you greet people. You may be the mom or dad who loves on their kid before they head off to school or who puts a note in the lunch box. I call it, "walking wide throughout daily life with arms outstretched touching as many lives as possible with the love of Jesus." "Walk in love, as Christ has loved us..." Eph 5:2.

Attractional ministry does attract some people who are dechurched, usually people, who in the past were church goers and know the customs and rituals. They can still be reached through the traditional or attractional ministry. They remember the importance of being in church on Christmas, Easter and Mother's Day.

The growing number of unchurched or "nons" in our society are, however, a group who never had the church experience. They don't know the ritual or routines. For this group the incarnational model of ministry is more appealing. The church and more so, her members, who live out their faith in the context of community and daily life incarnationally, being little Christ's in the flesh, show them who Jesus is. James says, "be doers of the Word and not hearers only." James 1:22. This type of ministry and life shows transparent authenticity to our world and is winsome. We are like Paul and Apollos, "one sowed, another watered, but it is the Lord who provides the increase."

Take a look and make a list of all the ministries in which your church and members are engaged. Which are attractional and which are incarnational? It is my recommendation that you be engaged in both! Next take a look at all you do to disciple everyone who walks through your doors or comes in contact with your ministry.

How nimble is your church in addressing the spiritual needs of our culture?

Rev. Doug Kallesen

Executive Director of Outreach FLGA District