

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH?

Matthew 28:18-20 John 3:16

Introduction: The story is told about a little store front church located on a dark, dangerous street, between two bars/taverns. Wooden folding chairs were set up and a small, crude pulpit made from scrap wood pieces. A few devoted members prayed regularly for the salvation of the rough, tough residents of the neighborhood. Taking no thought for their own safety or pleasure, the few members would go visit the places the people called "home" telling them about Jesus Christ. Surprisingly, many were converted but when an especially known gambler was converted and began to attend the services in the little storefront church, Christians from the surrounding areas made their way to that little storefront church, giving their time, money and efforts. New pews were brought in, new pulpit furniture bought and the little storefront church was remodeled inside and out. They even bought the empty store next door and tore down the walls and doubled their space.

Some of the new members were unhappy with the crudeness of the building and furniture and in a business meeting said that "people can better worship God sitting on cushioned pews in an air conditioned building." So, extra fancy pews and pulpit furniture were donated, the windows replaced with stained glass, more education space was added and even a parking lot was made. They hired some young, zealous staff members to do all the "Church" work instead of the Church family having to do it. They brought in a famous revival preacher and during the "revival" several of the rough neighborhood people were saved and all was going well until some of the local high school teenagers attended the services and the deacons complained that they didn't want their sons and daughters to be exposed to such kind of riff-raff. Noticing that some of the smaller children of the neighborhood riding their Church bus didn't have decent clothes or shoes, so the "Women's Union" immediately installed a "clothes closet" so that those attending their Church could have the proper clothes to wear. Still some of the people still criticized the children for they were dirtying up the floors with their muddy shoes.

At the next business meeting it was brought up that the pastor needed to stop preaching so many evangelistic sermons and preach some more "dignified, reverent" sermons and the worship service needed to change the music and order of service to a more "reverent" type of service. There was some heated discussion as some insisted that the primary purpose of the Church was to reach people for Jesus. They were voted down and told to go somewhere else if that was what they thought the Church was supposed to do because they were going to change things. So, the people who were voted down and out left and rented an empty store across the street and began services with only crude folding wooden chairs and a small pulpit made from scraps of wood. They went into the neighborhoods telling people about Jesus. As the years went by, the new "mission" began to experience the very same changes that had occurred in the original mission on that same street. It evolved into another religious club and then another group left that "new mission" to go start another soul winning station across on the back side of the community. History repeated itself over and over and it is said that today if you visit that community you will find a number of very sophisticated churches and very few of the original community members still live there but have moved to the better parts of town. It was determined by checking the membership of the prestigious churches that not a single one of the original community members attended any of the prestigious churches.

So, what is the purpose of the Church?

1. The Church that is faithful to missions will do well in all other church-related areas.
2. Missions is an outreach to others and it is the only reason for Church existence.
 - Any Church that neglects the great commission has aborted their calling.
3. Other Church functions are important, and if they are significant, they are so only in the Church's mission efforts.
4. For centuries Churches have wrestled with missions being first.
 - Churches flourish and grow and missions becomes less important.
 - Churches become bogged down, stagnant, and disoriented.
5. Some Churches accept a vision of missions, others argue, debate and hesitate to get involved in missions.
6. Just what is the Church?
 - It is not a saving institution or an ark of safety nor a political agency.
 - It is not a social reform organization with a complacent audience.
 - The Church is Christ's ideals in action, to seek and to save. It is a dynamic group, servants of humanity, a school of Jesus Christ.
7. **John 3:16** - The reason for missions and God's purpose hasn't changed.
8. Just why do Churches build buildings, have committee meetings, Church memberships, Sunday Schools, Church training?
9. What is it that Church members are asked to dedicate their lives to?
 - Just what does it mean "to be the people of God?"
10. Being good, believing in Jesus Christ, being faithful to one's Church, how is all this going to enable God to carry out His divine plan for mankind?
11. God wants to bless all families on earth:
 - Abraham, Israel, the Apostles, and now the Church
12. The Church has become like Israel - content, satisfied, no interest in sharing God by going out into the world.
 - God turned to the Gentiles with men like Paul and Barnabas.

13. The Church is called to missions. As was Israel, so are countless Churches today.
 - Get all you can from God with not the slightest notion of what God is doing or calling the Church to do.
14. God has called every Christian to missions. Missions rests upon the shoulders of the congregation, the people, NOT just the hired staff.
15. When the Church fails to meet it's budget, Sunday School drops off, baptisms decrease, then it's time to get a new staff for it's their job to do all this.
16. **1 Peter 2:5-9; Romans 12:1** were written to congregations, NOT to the pastors and staff.
17. Churches have been trying to do God's work in the wrong place. God's work is in the world, not in the local church! In the world is where Jesus needs to be made known.
18. Churches have all kinds of meetings throughout the year, a special emphasis here and there, a retreat now and then, a special guest speaker, a singing group.
 - Churches are trying to win the world to Jesus by holding meetings in their own buildings. The world doesn't care about Churches and won't attend.
19. The ministry of the Church is to the world and not to ITSELF.
20. The world is waiting to see a demonstration of our faith outside the confines of the beautiful church buildings. Christ's transforming power is OUT where the lost are.
21. Sunday has become climax of the week with each Sunday being a repeat of the last Sunday where/when nothing really happens. The world is not going to be affected with present Church activities.
22. What is God's basic call to His Church? **MISSIONS!**
 - God's people are to be about God's business and that is bringing the world to Jesus Christ by spreading the Gospel.
23. The major religious expression of the average Christian is to attend Sunday School and morning worship. Unfortunately only a handful (25% more or less) think that that is worth bothering with.
24. The Church simply does not have the spiritual commitment to be an adequate expression of God's people.
 - Too many are half-heartedly committed and that to an institution and NOT to Jesus Christ and His great commission.

25. Face it - the world is non-Christian, multiplied millions of people do not know or care about Jesus.
- A small percent of the world speaks English.
 - 90 percent of the world's Christians come from the small percent that speak English.
 - Over 90 percent of the world's preachers serve the small percent who speak English.
 - Over 95% of the Church's income is spent on the small percent who speak English.
26. Ask just about anybody anywhere in the world:
- Who is Jesus Christ? Few can answer correctly.
 - How does one become a Christian? Very few know how.
 - Would you like to know more about becoming a Christian? It would be surprising how many would.

CONCLUSION:

1. Our country is in it's condition because God's Churches have not been fulfilling their purpose for being here.
2. God's Churches have become complacent, self-serving, blind and deaf to the great commission.
3. When God's people start doing what they are supposed to be doing, the world will change.
4. The purpose of the Church is to reach people for Jesus and then to teach them about Jesus.
5. What is your Church doing?