

A Church Built On Purpose - Part 1

Introduction

- Jesus said ... *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep."* (John 10:11–15, ESV)
- I'll fully acknowledge that I'm about to take Jesus' words out of context, but bear with me. In this story, Jesus is comparing a shepherd with a hired hand. On one hand the shepherd lays down his life for the sheep in the face of great danger, while the hired hand runs away when the wolf comes for them. What's the difference between the two men? It's commitment and investment! The shepherd has committed himself to the safety and wellbeing of the sheep, while the hired hand doesn't care about them at all. The work was the same, watching the sheep, but their investment levels, their purposes and motivations, were very different.
- Here's some questions we all, especially preachers, ask today:
 - *"How do I present the gospel to the lost in a way they'll accept?"*
 - *"How do I encourage a brother or sister to be at services?"*
 - *"How do I present the life of a Christian in a way that will transform people's lives?"*
- These questions might be boiled down to, *"How do we get people to be committed and invested in the work?"* The answer lies in effectively communicating and helping people connect to our purpose, the WHY behind WHAT we do and HOW we do it.

Power in Purpose

- As a general rule, it seems that almost everyone knows WHAT we do, while some know HOW we do it, but very few people know WHY. The hired hand know WHAT to do and generally HOW to do it. The difference between him and the shepherd was in how they understood the PURPOSE of the job.
- We love to focus on the WHAT and the HOW. WHAT do we need to do? HOW do we need it do it? Much of our preaching focusses on these aspects because it seems to be of greatest interest to people. We boil down sometimes complex biblical ideas into an actionable set of steps that anyone can understand, but then we wonder why they seem to fall on deaf ears.
- Results of starting with WHAT and HOW:

- Unconvinced and unchanged
- Outward service (for a time)
- Without root
- While the WHAT and the HOW are important, we most critically need to begin with the WHY as our starting point. Until we understand the motivating reasons WHY we're called to do WHAT we do and HOW we do it, it's simply a mental exercise. Of course, practical application of God's word into our lives is important, but without the heart behind it, it'll never stick!
- Results of starting with WHY:
 - Convicted and changed
 - Committed to the cause
 - Rooted in purpose

Examples of Purpose

- Evangelism: Acts 2
 - WHAT and HOW are not enough:
 - WHAT: Forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38)
 - HOW: repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38)
 - When we take this approach, the WHY seems almost like an afterthought, something that obviously everyone should know ... that God is amazing.
 - Notice, however, this was not how Peter preached! In fact, his sermon never contained a single actionable step, a single "practical application" ... only the WHY.
 - Starting with WHY:
 - WHY: Jesus is amazing (Acts 2:22-23), God raised Him (Acts 2:24; 31-32), Prophecy announced Him (Acts 2:25-28; 34), He is exalted to Glory (Acts 2:33), He is LORD and CHRIST and you killed Him! (Acts 2:36)
 - Once Peter's audience internalized the message, they were convicted by it, and pierced to the heart. They were emotionally driven to ask what to do next, after which Peter explained the WHAT and HOW.
- Attendance: Hebrews 10

- WHAT and HOW are not enough:
 - WHAT: Love and encourage each other (Hebrews 10:24-25)
 - HOW: Don't forsake the assembly (Hebrews 10:25)
 - When we take this approach, the WHY seems almost like an afterthought, something that obviously everyone should know ... that God's family is important.
- Notice, however, this was not how the Hebrew writer wrote! Largely, the entire book of Hebrews is a WHY message, trying to convince his audience for sticking with Jesus for so many important reasons.
- Starting with WHY:
 - WHY: confident access to God through Jesus' blood (Hebrews 10:19), He opened a new way by His death (Hebrews 10:20), He is our great priest (Hebrews 10:21), He wants to be near to us (Hebrews 10:22), He is faithful to us (Hebrews 10:23)
 - When we truly realize how much God has done for us in Christ, how Jesus acts on our behalf as a great priest to God, and how He wants to be in a faithful relationship to us, the HOW and WHAT will flow from that belief naturally.
- Christian Living: Ephesians
 - WHAT and HOW are not enough:
 - WHAT: Live like a Christian (Ephesians 4-6)
 - HOW: Speak truth, be united, become a new man, avoid anger, love each other, be a good spouse, be a good child, be a good parent, be a good employee, study your Bible (Ephesians 4-6)
 - Again, when we take this approach, the WHY seems like an afterthought. Obviously, our way of life matters!
 - Notice again that this is not how Paul preached. Leading up to chapter 4, he has spent three entire chapters explaining how amazing God is and what He's done for us in Christ. He started with WHY!
 - Starting with WHY:
 - WHY: every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3), chosen before creation (Ephesians 1:4), adoption as sons (Ephesians 1:5), brought back to life by His mercy (Ephesians 2:4-5), seated with Christ in heaven (Ephesians 2:6), reconciled with God (Ephesians 2:16), citizens and family (Ephesians 2:19), God dwells in our temple (Ephesians 2:21), boldness and access to God (Ephesians 3:12), He strengthens us through His Spirit

(Ephesians 3:16), His power works within us more than we can ever imagine (Ephesians 3:20).

- When we begin to comprehend all of the amazing blessings we have in Christ and what He's done for us, the HOW and WHAT of our Christian walk will naturally come from that understanding.

A Church Built On Purpose

- Let's put these ideas into action on the topic of church growth. HOW can we become the church that God wants us to be? HOW can we get our membership invested in and committed to the work that we're doing here at Monte Vista? While it may be tempting to jump to the HOW and the WHAT, let's start with the WHY.
- WHY - Why would we participate in anything here to build up and strengthen the church? (Philippians 2:1-2)
 - Encouragement In Christ
 - Comfort From Love
 - Participation In The Spirit
 - Affection And Sympathy
 - The Same Mind
 - The Same Love
 - Be In Full Accord
 - Be Of One Mind
- HOW - How can we bring these principles to life?
 - Cultivate Stronger Bonds
 - Encourage Weaker Members
 - Integrate Newer Members
 - Welcome Frequent Visitors
 - Fight for US, not just ME (Philippians 1:27; 2:3-4)
- WHAT - So now we look to WHAT we can be doing, with WHY as our basis, using the HOW in order to accomplish this important work.

- Worship
- Work Groups
- Service of Deacons
- Visiting the Shut-In
- Small Group / Individual Studies
- Meeting from House to House

Conclusion

- Jesus had some very hard words for those who focussed only on the WHAT and the HOW, but had forgotten about the WHY: *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!”* (Matthew 23:23–24, ESV)
- If we ever hope to grow together as a church, to be fully invested in the work that we’re doing, we must be focussed on the WHY! The WHAT and the HOW are still important, but we’ll only be effective when we start with aligning to our true PURPOSE.
- **Challenge:** Write down WHY you’re a member of this church, HOW that purpose changes you, and WHAT steps you’re willing to take to help this place grow.