

24TH CME CONVOCATION

SEPTEMBER 21 – 24, 2010

The Galt House - Louisville, Kentucky

Quadrennial Theme:

“An Essential Church:

Poised for 21st Century Ministry”

“Relevancy in 2010 and Beyond”

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“What were the precipitating factors that, in just a few decades , caused churches to move from essential to nonessential in the lives of millions?”

“I did not see
church as
essential to my
life.”

Words from a typical church dropout
“essential church? reclaiming a generation of dropouts” by Thom
and Sam Rainer

Working Definitions

- “Essential” – a basic, indispensable, necessary element.
- “Relevant” – pertinent; applicable; suitable; appropriate.
- “Dropouts” – those who have left the church between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two.
- “Dechurched” – one who was a part of a local congregation but has since neglected the fellowship of the church.
- “Unchurched” – an inclusive term used to describe one who once attended a church or those who have never stepped foot inside a sanctuary.
- “Outsiders” – those who do not attend church and have no connection to a church.
- “Rechurched” – those who once were unchurched but have since returned to a local body of believers.

Top Ten Reasons Church Dropouts Stopped Attending Church

Simply wanted a break from church.

Church members seemed judgmental or hypocritical.

Moved to college and stop attending church.

Work responsibilities prevented them from attending.

Moved too far away from the church to continue attending.

Became too busy though still wanted to attend.

Didn't feel connected to the people in the church.

Disagreed with the church's stance on political or social issues.

Chose to spend more time with friends outside the church.

Was only going to please others.

State of the American Church

The American church is dying.

Conversions are declining in just about every denomination.

Conversions to Christianity have stagnated.

The church is losing influence in culture.

The average church is losing the younger generation and young adults aren't returning.

People claim a church but do not attend regularly.

Dramatic change is needed.

Seven Sins of Dying Churches

- Doctrine Dilution – watering down Scripture is not the answer.
- Loss of Evangelistic Passion – obedience to the Great Commission is lacking passion.
- Failure to be Relevant – ways to relay the Gospel to the culture around them.
- Few Outwardly Focused Ministries – no community outreach.
- Conflict over Personal Preferences – squabbling over insignificant things.
- The Priority of Comfort – doing nothing outside the bounds of ones comfort level; unwilling to be ‘spiritually stretched.’
- Biblical Illiteracy – ones inability to comprehend the Scriptures will have trouble remaining obedient to the Word of God.

Can the church
do anything to
reverse this
trend?

How can the church go
back to being an
indispensible,
applicable, suitable,
appropriate and
necessary entity for
humanity?

FIRST Order of Business

- Individual churches need revivals among their people.
- Individual churches must make a decision to become essential in the lives of their congregations and communities.

'An Essential Church' from the Observation Deck

- ✓ Message of the local church being essential to the lives of Christians has been communicated.
- ✓ God's intention for local congregations to gather, worship, disciple, minister and evangelize has been demonstrated.
- ✓ The local congregation understands its role as a biblical fellowship that is critical to the life of others.

4 Components of The Essential Church

1. SIMPLIFY – too many churches are filled with activities that have little coherent purpose.
2. DEEPEN – challenge membership to invest in their spiritual formation – learn more about God's Word and His truths.
3. EXPECT – when expectations are low, commitment will also be low.
4. MULTIPLY – help its members to multiply spiritually.

Author's Proposed Solutions

- CLARITY – what is the purpose of your local church and how will the purpose be accomplished?
- MOVEMENT – spiritual movement has to cease being stifled; people are staying the same – remaining unchanged, unmoved and no transformation; “spiritually constipated” (Bishop T.L. Brown)
- ALIGNMENT – move towards unity; ministry departments should work together; the Principle of Unity in Diversity (Eph. 4:16)
- FOCUS – just say NO! Every idea that’s a good idea is not necessarily a Godly idea!

Group Assignment

- ▣ Groups of 5 – 7 people to discuss a realistic first step process in becoming an Essential/Relevant Church for 21st Century Ministry!