

24th Annual CME Convocation

Theme:

An “Essential Church”: Poised for 21st Century Ministry



Wednesday, September 22, 2010

Class #4:

Nurturing Congregational and Denominational Loyalty

Facilitator: Ida P. Suggs

10:15 a.m. – 12:15; Location: Nun Room

Reverend Dr. Tyrone T. Davis, Convocation Director
Bishop Thomas L. Brown, Sr., Program Chair
Bishop Paul A. G. Stewart, Sr., Convocation Chair
Bishop Sylvester Williams, Sr., Host Bishop
Bishop Kenneth W. Carter, Chair, College of Bishops
Bishop Thomas L. Hoyt, Jr., Senior Bishop

Agenda
Welcome
Prayer

Purpose of Session:

- To understand and share how to nurture congregational and denominational loyalty.

Group Activity:

- (a) Define “essential”

Introducing the Essential Church – Case study of eighteen-to-thirty year olds adults in America

- (a) Case study done by Thomas S. Rainer & Sam S. Rainer III, author “Essential Church? Reclaiming a Generation of Dropouts”

Ten Top Reasons Church Dropouts Stopped Attending Church

1. Simply wanted a break from church
2. Church members seemed judgmental or hypocritical
3. Moved to college and stopped attending church
4. Work responsibilities prevented me from attending
5. Moved too far away from the church to continue attending
6. Became too busy though still wanted to attend
7. Didn't feel connected to the people in my church
8. Disagreed with the church's stance on political or social issues
9. Chose to spend more time with friends outside the church
10. Was only going to church to please others.

Other Reasons for 18-30 year olds at your local church who do not attend:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Fact: "Churchgoing students drop out of the church because it is not essential to their lives.

Activity:

Respond to the statements above by deciding on what action that you as a regular "attending church goer" attempt to implement back home at your local church.

Fact:

- The authors estimate that on a given Sunday, about 85 million people in America attend a Protestant church. What would the spiritual impact on our nation look like if that number suddenly increased to more than 150 million?
- Most churches in America are doing little to become essential to the lives of their members.
- Church is seen by most young adults today as but one option among many for their lives. It is no more important than work, leisure activities, or simply doing nothing.
- Grandparents were at the church everytime the church doors were open. Their parents went regularly but not as often as the grandparents. Then the children and grandchildren grow up, **church and fall** away between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two.
- Rainer & Rainer also discovered in their research a “downward spiral “of not only church dropouts but also people who claim Christ. The church is losing the generational battle. Not only are we **losing the national to the ways of the world, but we are not winning our own children in Christian families. Multitudes are dropping out of church. But many also are not claiming the faith of their parents.**

THE ESSENTIAL CHURCH HAS FOUR MAJOR COMPONENTS....CHURCHES THAT DO NOT LOSE YOUNG ADULTS AS FAITHFUL CHURCHGOERS

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1. The church has learned to **simplify**. Too many churches are filled with activities that have little coherent purpose. They have no clear process or structure for making disciples, in obedience to the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20.
2. The church moves its members to **deepen** their knowledge of God's word and His truths. These congregations have resisted the temptation to "dumb down" biblical teachings in an attempt to draw a crowd or to avoid tough issues.
3. The church has high **expectations** of its members. The high expectation church expects much and, thus, receives much from its members.
4. An essential church is **committed** to helping its members multiply spiritually. Evangelism is part of the heartbeat of the church. Missions and ministry are common in the lives of the members, and many of these essential churches seek to plant other churches.

ESSENTIAL CHURCH:

- Simply.....Get the structure right
- Deepen.....Get the content right
- Expect.....Get the right attitude
- Multiply.....Get the right action

WHO ATTENDS CHURCH IN AMERICA EACH WEEKND?

Generation	Birth years	Percentage Attending Church
Builders	Before 1946	51%
Boomers	1946 to 1964	41%
Busters	1965 to 1976	34%
Bridgers	1977 to 1994	29%

The growth of the unchurched America is obvious. The younger the person, the greater is the likelihood that he or she will be unchurched. And the growing ranks of the unchurched are not due to geographical areas...it is happening everywhere.

Seven Sins of Dying Churches

Sin 1. Doctrine Dilution

Certain absolutes found within Scripture are so critical that a Christian should be willing to sacrifice his or her lie for them. Cardinal truths such as the exclusivity of Christ must be followed if the American church is to survive this evangelistic crisis.

Watering down Scripture is not the answer to reaching a younger generation for Christ. Teaching anything less than the absolute truths in Scripture will make the younger general feel betrayed when they learn that a large gap exists between what the Bible really says and what they were taught in church.

Sin 2: Loss of Evangelistic Passion

- Dying churches have little evangelistic passion
- Dying churches stop speaking about Christ to the world
- It is the responsibility of the pastor and other key leaders to exhibit this evangelistic passion.
- In many thriving churches, the driving force behind obedience to the Great Commission is the passion that the senior pastor maintains for the **lost**.

Sin 3: Failure to be Relevant

- There is nothing more relevant to a lost world than the saving grace of Jesus Christ.
- The church must find ways to relay the gospel message to the culture around them
- Churches that keep their internal culture unchanged for fifty years while the world around them goes through continual period of metamorphosis typically dies with that old culture.

Sin 4: Few Outwardly Focused Ministries

- “It’s all about me!” is the anthem chant of the dying church. As crucial as Bible studies and fellowships are, dying churches gorge themselves on closed study groups and churchwide fellowship events while neglecting outreach in the community.
- The country club church can remain so for a limited amount of time. In order for the American church to survive, it must reach into the community with outwardly focused ministries. Dying churches heavily skew their ministries internally.
- **Essential churches think outward into the surrounding communities and into the world, earnestly seeking ways to win the next soul for Christ.**

Sin 5: Conflict Over Personal Preferences

- Are the bulletins supposed to be trifold or bifold? What type of font is better? Pews, seats or sofas? People within the church can squabble over the most insignificant things to the point that they forge about the Great Commission.
- When the church focuses on trivial matters, the greater gospel message is left on the sidelines
- **The essential church breaks through the “mire and mut” of personal preference and unite the people around the common causes of spiritual growth and missions.**

Sin 6: The Priority of Comfort

- Dying churches are comfort with their ministries. They do nothing outside the bounds of their comfort levels.
- People in dying churches choose their priority of comfort over reaching beyond the church bubble into a community full of specific difficult needs.
- **Essential churches honker down and prepare to get uncomfortable in following God’s call.**

Sin 7: Biblical Illiteracy

- One major sin of a dying church is the neglect of theological teaching. If a church member does not understand the basics of Scripture, then they are hampered in their witness. Those who do not comprehend the Scripture will also have trouble remaining obedient.
- Biblical illiteracy runs rampant in floundering churches

The Essential Church

- Strive to connect newer members with others in the church
- Low expectation churches make it too easy for young adults to drop out.
- Churches that are intentional about reclaiming dechurched young adults are seeing significant responses in these young adults returning to church
- If we invite them, they will come
- Retain those who are in the church
- Scripture is important and teach matter of biblical depth
- The church and church leadership is intentional
- Are doing something, they are not just standing there
- Seek to look and reach beyond themselves

Reference: Rainer, Thom S. and Rainer, III, Sam S., *Essential Church? Reclaiming a Generation of Dropouts*, 2008, B&H Publishing Company.