

## **What's the Point?**

### **What's the point of purpose?**

**Intro:** I grew up going to church. I attended church every Sunday morning – every Sunday night and every Wednesday night. I remember some stores that would not open on Sundays. Schools would not have sports practice on Sunday and there were never games on Sundays. I grew up in an era where the church had significant influence. BUT...times have changed. That influence is long gone. I'm not saying the influence should look the same today, but back then, many churches understood their purpose. Today, I fear not so much. Churches can forget the reason they exist and people can forget the reason they attend. The church loses its influence in the world when it no longer lives out its purpose. Now we have people asking; "What's the point?" We have the data to prove it.

#### **Church data:** Gallup Poll

- Two decades ago, an average of 42% of U.S. adults attended religious services every week or nearly every week. A decade ago, the figure fell to 38%, and it is currently at 30%. This decline is largely driven by the increase in the percentage of Americans with no religious affiliation -- 21% in 2021-2023
- Specifically, more 18- to 29-year-olds, 35%, say they have no religious preference than identify with any specific faith.
- Church attendance will likely continue to decline in the future, given younger Americans' weaker attachments to religion.

If we are going to solve this problem we have to start with the basics. Let's first define "the church". Much of the confusion starts right here.

- This building is not the church
- The church is not a location – building or structure
- The church is not religion – programs – activities – rules, rituals and control
- We do not GO to church (although we all use this verbiage)
- The truth is WE ARE the church!

Every person on the planet who has a relationship with God through the work of Jesus on the cross is part of the church. This is called the church UNIVERSAL.

The gathering of believers in Jesus at any specific place is called the church LOCAL

- The Greek word used for church is Ekklesia: The definition is simply 'assembly,' 'congregation,' 'meeting' and 'church'" We are a called out assembly of followers.
- Jesus said in Matt 16 that He would build His church and the gates of hell could not prevail against it. Jesus builds His church through His people cooperating with Him. We partner with Jesus living out the purpose of the church he is building.
- The purpose is bigger than simply you and I going to heaven. It's bigger than taking care of ourselves eternally and spiritually. This spiritual self - focus is limiting the church's influence in this world.

So let's understand the point of purpose. Especially as we enter Fall. This is a great time to sharpen our focus after summer. Especially after the events of Charlie Kirk's assassination. There seems to be a wakeup call going on in the church and in people's lives. Understanding the point of our lives matters!

### **1. The point of purpose is to harness energy**

*Phil. 2:2 "Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose." (NLT)* It is purpose that empowers us to live this verse.

- Why is purpose so important for a church to understand? Because it is purpose that harnesses the collective energy of the church and moves it in a unified direction together to accomplish great things for the Kingdom of God.
- This is why churches will either resemble a rocket or a bomb.
  - Both have explosive energy
  - A bomb simply blows up with energy going in every direction and wounds people. This is why churches can have reputations for blowing up.
  - A rocket harnesses the explosive energy and moves it in a direction.
- This is why embracing the purpose of Foothills is so important. What's the point? Purpose protects us from being a bomb. Purpose protects us from wounding people. Purpose harnesses all of our energy for the Kingdom of God.
- Foothills Purpose: REACH – EQUIP - TRANSFORM – Explain
- When a church forgets its purpose, it's only a matter of time before something blows up.

Now, there's more to purpose than simply agreeing with our purpose statement.

### **2. The point of purpose is to go**

*Matt. 28:19 "Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." (NLT)*

*Acts 2:47 "...And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved." (NLT)* That's because the church was following the first part...going! When we embrace our purpose the church grows and expands.

- What does it mean to "GO"? It is every person's responsibility to influence other people to follow Jesus. This is what a disciple is. A disciple is a learner...a follower...not just a believer.
- We are disciple makers. We just influence as we go about our normal everyday lives. God is not asking you to be a pastor, missionary, or work at a church, but He is asking you to influence.
- Consider the other imagery used to describe Jesus' disciples - Salt – Light – Ambassadors – Witnesses – all refer the influential role the followers of Jesus are to have on this life.

- The church is giving up its influential role because we don't embrace our going purpose. Now, I want to say something that may be hard to hear but it needs to be said. How many of you have ever intentionally considered how you are influencing others to consider Jesus?
- It's not enough for us to simply embrace forgiveness and eternity for ourselves and ignore our role as the church to share it with others.

#### How can you begin to embrace your going purpose?

- Be aware of your witness – what are people learning about Jesus watching your life?
- Be aware of opportunities – God will give you opportunities if we're paying attention.
- Be courageous by opening your mouth – talk about spiritual things not religious things or church things. Connect with others over life – pain – fear – disappointment.

Goal: What if we all influenced one person this year? What if we all made one disciple?

### **3. The point of purpose is to grow**

*Eph. 4:13 "This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ." (NLT)*

- What does it mean to grow? We are to grow spiritually. Jesus does not save us to leave us the same. He transforms us. He changes us. We are to mature - grow in the Lord and resemble...measure up to the complete standard of Jesus.
- Impossible you say! Yes, this side of eternity we will always fall short. BUT, we are being changed toward this goal and we should be cooperating with this process not actively resisting it.
- One of the reasons the church loses its influence in this world is too often we look and act just like it. How appealing do we make Jesus when we can't even love one another?
- Quote from mom's bible – "We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough Jesus to make us love one another."
- If we are not allowing Jesus to change our lives we will hinder the influence of the church. Please understand I am not talking about being perfect or legalistic in any way. BUT, our lives are to resemble Jesus more and more. The purpose of the church is to grow people like Jesus.

#### How can you begin to embrace your growing purpose?

- What am I learning? If you are not learning you are not growing. You can use Sunday mornings. Notes – handouts – questions – go back and reflect.
- What am I applying? You're not growing if you're not applying. We must take new truth and incorporate it into our lives somehow. It's called application...and it is hard.

- Where am I risking? All true growth takes place when we leave our comfort and step into something new. Are you taking any spiritual risks?
- Second service only: We have an opportunity to grow. This service is full and we need some of You to change services - explain

Goal: What is one decision you can make to choose growth this Fall?

#### **4. The point of purpose is to serve**

*I Cor. 12:7 "A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other." (NLT)*

*Eph. 4:16 "He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love." (NLT)*

- Let's first understand what this is talking about. Every person who is part of the church...every disciple has been given a spiritual gift to help each other. When these gifts are employed, they have a profound impact on the church. Your gift fosters growth and creates a healthy, growing full of love church.
- Wow! Do you understand the influence you have? Do you understand how essential you are? Can you see how necessary and needed you are to what Jesus is building? The church needs you and you need the gifts of other people in the church.
- It's easy to look at Foothills with all it does and conclude; "They don't need me." "They are successful and influential without me." What can I do? What can I add? How can I contribute anything that matters?"
- Instead of looking at yourself, how about we look at the word of God? How about we agree with what God sees instead of what we see? God knows what He put in you and what you are capable of.
- The reality is if we do not learn about our gifts and walk the process of employing them we are robbing others and robbing ourselves. We are limiting the influence of the church. (Again...no guilt but we need to have a greater level of self-awareness)
- We are so convinced we don't matter but this is exactly what our spiritual enemy wants you to believe. Because the church suffers from a self-esteem problem first, we suffer from a labor shortage next.

#### How can I begin to employ my gifts?

- Believe that you are necessary and needed. Believe God's word more than how you feel. BTW...that is growth when you do this!
- Choose a place to begin serving (easier to lead someone moving rather than sitting still – how can you steer a car sitting still?) This will require you to learn about places to serve. Foothills is a 7 day a week operation. Web site.
- Learn about your SHAPE – This is a lifelong process. The more you understand how God designed you the more fulfillment you will experience.

Goal: How can you begin using your gifts somewhere in the church in the next 30 days?

## 5. The point of purpose is to do this together

*Heb. 10:24-25 “Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.*

*<sup>25</sup> And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.” (NLT)*

- The word “church” literally means to assemble. Therefore when we say we don’t need to assemble with other followers of Jesus this is biblically inaccurate and does not reflect the heart of Jesus.
- People will say; “I don’t need to go to church to believe in God.” That’s true. BUT you do need to assemble with other brothers and sisters in Christ if you are going to say you follow Jesus.
- There are relational and spiritual dynamics that we experience in the context of the gathering that cannot be experienced by ourselves. The church is a collective of believers not an individual experience that is all about Jesus and me. That perspective is a very self-centered, all about me kind of Christianity that is not represented in the pages of scripture.
- The gathering doesn’t always have to happen on Sunday mornings. They can be Life groups – serving opportunities – relational activities – bible studies – classes – but assembling with other believers is essential to live the purpose of the church.
- These verses use the words “motivate” and “encourage” one another. This is what happens when we assemble. The reason is we cannot maintain our spiritual fervor alone.
- The church is like a campfire. Each log keeps the fire stoked and influences the others. BUT...take one log out and set it off by itself it will eventually go out. Isolation kills our spiritual passion folks. We keep each other stoked spiritually. This is why we need to be together on a regular basis.

How can I prioritize gathering together more this Fall so my spiritual passion can grow?

- Only 30% of people assemble every week. Maybe it’s time to make Sunday more of a priority in your schedule and with your family
- Join a connection group – bible study – class – serve on a team
- How can you spend more time with other believers who have the same spiritual goals to follow Jesus?

Do you see how important purpose is to the church and to your life? Do you see the point? It is purpose that harnesses our energy – causes us to go – helps us grow – motivates us to serve – and keeps us meeting together to keep the passion alive.

How does God want you to cooperate with the purpose of His church this Fall? He has not called you to be a spectator. He’s called you to be a part of His purpose on planet earth. Can you imagine what would happen if a church like Foothills fully embraced it’s purpose. Let’s find out!

Prayer: