

It's Not About Me

Matthew 9:10-13 And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. [11] And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? [12] But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. [13] But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Matthew 11:19 The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

1 Corinthians 9:20-23 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; [21] To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. [22] To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. [23] And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

Once we are committed to Christ and part of His church, the devil knows that he is going to have a much harder time ensnaring us in sin. That's why he changes his lies to something much more insidious and subtle. It has been his mission from ages past to pervert the principles of God's Word, and nowhere has he done a better job than this one:

"The mission of the church is to preserve a small nucleus of people who are separate from the world."

WRONG! This absolutely flies in the face of everything that Jesus, the apostles, and the New Testament church were about! They constantly pushed the boundaries of religious tradition so that more people could hear the life-changing message of the gospel.

Last Sunday / Anthony Mangun message at General Conference

The greatest danger is always at the edge (where the church meets the culture). But so is the greatest opportunity for rescue and redemption.

The New Testament church lived "on the edge" – never safe, always one step from disaster if God didn't intervene! Jude felt the tension:

Jude 1:22-24 [22] And of some have compassion, making a difference: [23] **And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire**; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. [24] **Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling**, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

The problem with living on the edge is that some people try to push you over and other people try to pull you back. It's dangerous on the edge – people actually fall off the edge from time to time! But there is absolutely no chance for the church to impact our culture unless we get on the edge! Almost all of the growth in any church comes from the edge, because the trend is for Christians to disconnect from unsaved people the longer they are around church. That's not the way Jesus – the friend of sinners – did it. That's not the way Paul – all things to all men – did it. They were not isolationists! They engaged their culture!

The sad truth about the majority of churches today is that their members literally expect church to be all about "ME!" But, **it's not about ME** – it's about THEM out there!

Jesus hit this controversy head on in Matthew 18, when His disciples came to him asking "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" What ministries take priority? Whose needs are most important? Who gets the most attention? Questions like these have sidetracked the Great Commission for far too long in most churches!

Notice Jesus' answer – He doesn't pull any punches!

- He sets a child in the midst and says, "If you don't become humble like a little child, you're not saved!" That absolutely devastates the idea of people sitting back analyzing the pastor's sermon today – a little child receives what you tell them as the truth!
- Then He says, "It's going to be easy to get offended if you're always concentrating on your own ego needs! But people who get offended are going to be cast into everlasting fire!"
- And then Jesus tackles the biggest offence to lukewarm Christians – that the focus of the church should be the one lost sheep that we need to reach instead of the 99 who are already reached! God rejoices more about that than He does about your personal blessing!
- Finally, Jesus tackles the remedy for lukewarm Christians – forgiveness! He even says that if someone can't forgive, there comes a point when the church needs to start treating them like a heathen, and binding them in prayer!

What is your attitude when the pastors of this church become more focused on reaching the lost than they are on babysitting the saved. If that offends you, you've told on yourself – you're lukewarm! The attitude of a real Apostolic is, **“IT’S NOT ABOUT ME!”**

How do YOU react when church services and activities are more focused on the lost than on you? Are you excited? Or resentful?

How do YOU react when the church moves out of our comfort zone and really begins to interact with our culture? We all know it's uncomfortable on the edge; it's so much easier to move to one extreme or the other!

The biggest enemy of your future is your past! If the devil can turn the church into a cautious, cowering bunch because of some setbacks in the past, he has by and large succeeded in making us ineffective!

Matthew 14 records the story of the disciples in their boat on the stormy Sea of Galilee – and it was Jesus who sent them out into the storm! What is their reaction? To hang on to the boat for dear life! Suddenly, Jesus comes into sight, walking on the water; miraculous power is manifested where Jesus and the storm intersect!

Even though it's obvious that Jesus is “out there” in the storm, the disciples cry out in fear – and clutch the boat even tighter. Except one named Peter – brash, bold, impetuous Peter. “Bid me come unto thee on the water, Jesus!”

Notice that Peter didn't ask for a PROMISE (“You won't sink”), he just asked for a COMMAND. Why? Because he knew that everything would be okay if Jesus was out there in the storm! He caught a glimpse of this fact – what they feared most (sea) was what was bringing Jesus to them!

Was it all “smooth sailing” from that point? No! Even Peter got scared and began to sink when he got his eyes off of Jesus. But he immediately cried out for supernatural help and Jesus lifted him up. Criticize Peter for a momentary lapse of faith if you want, but he was the one who walked back to the boat with Jesus – across the stormy sea!

Mark records Jesus' appearance without mentioning Peter, but Matthew was actually there in the boat that day – and I think he felt a little ashamed that it wasn't him out there with Jesus!

Do you know what happens if you sit in the boat too long? You start to drill holes in it! You start to criticize those that step out into the storm to walk with Jesus! You start to rock the boat!

Step out of the boat! Jesus is waiting to do something miraculous!