IDENTITY CRISIS Pastor Rick Baker

#10 What does the church do? March 28 2021

**Church is a *Connecting* and *Reaching* Community**

*It is NOT GOOD for man to be alone. (Gen. 2:18)*

*The joy of the LORD is your (pl.) strength. (Neh. 8:10)—the joy was their collective celebration of the Lord together.*

*“They all devoted themselves to…the* ***fellowship****…All the believers were* ***together****…And the Lord* ***added*** *to their number daily those who were being saved.”* (Acts 2:42,44,47)

**CDC Ministry Masterplan**

 *Word*

*Great Commandment Worship WORSHIP Make Disciples Lovers of God/Neighbour*

*Great Commission Growth* ***CONNECT*** *Disciple-Makers*

 *Prayer* ***REACH***

 *Witness*

The Ministry of **Connect** 🡪 “the fellowshipping church”

Obstacles—individualism, mobility, consumerism, privatism

Digital or online church is a necessary compromise for those shut in, but analog or in person church will always be the intentional design of God for His church. “*We must make clear to our communities that*[*digital is a necessary compromise*](https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/church-online-coronavirus-age/)*for some and not a convenient option for all.”* (J. Kim, Analog Church, 2020)

**“Koinonia” is the gift God gives to the church of what exists in the Trinity.**

Through Christ’s death, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, God has enabled us to fellowship with the Triune God and with each other. *Can’t fellowship with God and be out of fellowship with His bride (1Jn. 1:5-7; 2:9-11)—Kerygma and Koinonia (Ray Stedman, Body Life, 114-15)*

It means “sharers of something in common.” The church is connected because we all share in common CHRIST and the blessings of our salvation. Our common identity and clothing in Christ cover our identifiable differences (Gal 3:26-28) “there is neither” So, socio-economic, geo-political, gender-racialized secular activist solutions have no place in the Fellowship—our shared identity and benefits are equal in Christ. *Christ is the reparation of the injustices perpetrated on my Irish ancestry.* We are ONE NEW MAN— fellow citizens of God’s household (Eph. 2:13-22).

**Connectedness to grow and serve…**

Where the “one anothers” are worked out in real time and space (Rom. 12:16; 15:7; Col. 3:16; 1 Thes. 5:11)

Personal and corporate health are dependent on vital body life…

* Evangelism – churches unhealthy in connectedness are ineffective in evangelism
* Spiritual drop outs –the likelihood of dropping out of Christianity is directly proportionate to the meaningful connectedness one has with other believers

Christ came to serve (Matt. 20:28), pastors are to prepare the saints for service (Eph. 4:12), and the point of growth through connectedness, is to unconditionally do good to all people and especially the household of God (Gal. 6:10). *It’s the salt and light effect that reflects well on our good God (Matt. 5:13-14).* The poor will always be on the sightlines of Christ’s special attention (Matt. 25:40).

**WHAT’S YOUR GROW AND SERVE PLAN?**

* Starts with knowing Christ as Lord and Saviour and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
* Commit to a membership connection to the local Christian family (How to Belong)
* Commit to a small band of committed believers to share this common life in Christ (**D**iscipling **C**ommunities)
* Find a place to serve one another—you were made (created/recreated) for this

**CBC Discipleship Pathway—(diagram)**

The Ministry of **Reach** 🡪 “the evangelizing church”

For the most part, the work outside of the corporate gathering dependent on the healthy work inside of the gathering. Evangelism is mostly incidental to the “gatherings” since church assemblies are mostly believers.

After the great commission, not much is stated about the call to evangelize. Salvation is the work of God as believers live out the life of Christ in them. Evangelism is the ministry and mission of the authentic—those who export their love of God and story of transformation—what Jesus meant when he defined evangelism as being “my witnesses.”

Although intentional plans to evangelize bear fruit, church historians note that evangelism almost never happens unless people are crazy passionate in their love and devotion for Christ and where lives are noticeably changed!

* God won’t adopt children into unhealthy settings
* People take notice of lives that are actually changing

**Seeker Sensitive or Sensitive Seekers?**

Jesus came **to seek** and to save that which was lost (Lk. 19:10). **Go** into all the world (Mk. 16:15). We should not expect the lost to do what they can’t do. How can the dead seek?

**Growth prospects in the West?**

1740-1848 in U.S. < 100 cong. 🡪 > 11,000 cong. (800,000 members)

SBC growth <1% in this decade 🡪 identity crisis/ systemic unhealth

In the absence of trading Christian consumerism for true commitment to Jesus, not much is going to happen in the evangelism front. You simply can’t attract people to what is not attractive to you.

In the rest of the world, Christianity is thriving –the only truly global religion! Modern era missions founded by William Carey (1761-1834) a Baptist who founded Serampore University (first degree granting U in India), Carey Baptist Church, built 1809, Kolkata, India

Are you **connected**? How?

Are you **serving**? Where?

Are you a **witness**? Among whom?