

PASTORPEDIA™

Cutting Edge Conversations for Pastors and Church Leaders

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Are going to church and being the church the same?

Let's get them inside the church!

We all want to build the church, of course. Else we would change work assignments immediately!

But we all also know that our job is not to try to get them inside the church building, but rather inside or a part of the body of Jesus Christ – a spiritual issue! And that is a matter of true faith in Jesus Christ and who He is and what He did for us. And does. And will do.

So it can happen that we major more on what happens when they are inside the building than what is happening on the inside of their spirits or hearts. And that should change.

Take a moment to consider these basic thoughts and then to discuss them with your staff or leaders. It could be a rather significant discussion. With eternal ramifications.

*Glad someone helped us inside,
Knute, for Jeff and Jim*

Are going to church and being the church the same?

- Absolutely not!

What is the difference and does it matter?

Jeff Bogue

- There is a massive difference because you can't actually go to church. You can gather with the church, but the church is the people. You can go to a *building*.
- While we use this phrase, "going to church," in our North American vernacular, how we use it is not that big of a deal. How it affects our thinking and our actions is actually a really big deal. We want to make sure we're thinking about this correctly, because if I go to church, then it is a duty. If I am the church, then I live a lifestyle.

Jim Brown

- Going is our time to receive and be fed with the sustenance from God's Word. It allows us to be equipped to do the work of the Lord. It also allows us to find community that will encourage us to serve and love one another.
- We are the church and are here to fulfill the mission of God that will ultimately point people to Jesus by using our talents, gifts, and abilities that God has given us.
- Going to church is a gathering; being the church is the way we live out our faith.
- The term "church" is a reference to the people of God; going to church is about the place the people gather.

Knute Larson

- The difference is like the difference between trying to honor Christ and living in combination with Christ. Going to church is an action, and being the church is a way of life. It matters for eternity! It is the difference between a duty or an event and a relationship, the difference between a date and a marriage.

Which reminds me of a hobbyhorse – many who attend church cannot clearly explain what being in Christ means or how a person is reborn spiritually. It must be told again and again from the pulpit. And of course personally.

The corny thought that being in a garage does not make you a car does make sense. And being a church attender or member, regular or spasmodic, does not mean you live with assurance of a relationship with Christ and His Spirit, or that you could explain it to anyone else.

How do you really define what it means to be a part of the body of Christ?

Jeff Bogue

- Being a part of the body of Christ is active; it's engaged on mission.

Jim Brown

- We must believe and then serve, connect, and be on mission to reach the world for Jesus. This is why we are here. It must be our number one priority, to live out our faith in a visible way so that people find Jesus!

Knute Larson

- Jesus uses the phrase, "born again," to speak of a new start with His Spirit in you. This is a combination life, where we still make choices and determine our ways, but now have His Spirit working in us and helping in so many ways. So the body of Christ, the church of the Lord, is composed of people who are linked to and indwelt by God's Spirit. People who attend church are people who attend church.

Surely it means that we understand who Jesus the Christ is and what He did on the cross, and those are the issues that must be said again and again. It may not be productive to argue whether or not we must be able to explain the act of atonement and the gift of righteousness and the part Jesus Christ has in them, but it surely is not enough just to say, "Believe on Jesus." That can mean to some that they believe He existed and was here and did amazing things. That would pass a true and false quiz, but not a 1 John 5:12 exam.

How do we help people cross the line and really join Christ?

Jeff Bogue

- We talk to them about faith and surrender.
- We cast vision.
- We help them to understand what it means to be transformed.

Jim Brown

- Every single ministry must have an arm of evangelism.
- Someone must speak for the voice of the lost by asking, *How would a lost person respond to this?*
- Your budget has to allocate resources for lost people.

Your church must pray for lost people.

Your people must be actively sharing their faith.

The pastor must live out his faith and daily share Christ with outsiders.

We must spend time with lost people.

Our own lives must reflect Christ in a positive, loving, and contagious way.

We must share the benefits and joy of knowing Jesus.

We must care about lost people more than we do our own lives.

Make the ask and give people a chance to trust in Jesus. How will they know how unless we show and demonstrate the way?

- Pray that God would give us His heart and mission for the world, to seek and to save the lost!

Knute Larson

- Carefully, with prayer and also repetition. And also with the lifestyle that shows our love and how we favor Christ in our decisions. This is true in a pastoral way and also a personal way.
- We define it. It would seem that a quick call to faith or “Believe on Jesus” does not say enough, because many understand that as agreeing that He was once here on earth as the eternal but also human Son of God. And of course that is on the right track, but not a stopping point.
- We urge it! Sometimes people need to be invited, questioned, and persuaded because the flesh is weak and indecisive.
- While there is certainly room for quick, spontaneous, evangelistic questions or statements, the best is usually when there is a relationship built and love shown and progressive amounts of truth given. And in between are acts of love.

Apply that to church services themselves and you have a call to have a mood of love, careful hospitality, and even repetition of what it means to live in Christ and be His. I personally do not think it is enough to explain the gospel or head to the cross in your sermon only every once in a while.

Everyone who has taken a survey of their church has been disappointed with answers to the question, “How do you know you are a Christian?” I think.

- And we call for a response. Many who have ditched the “come forward” way of response in church have also dropped any way of knowing who turns to Christ by faith for salvation. In a one-on-one conversation it has to include a challenge to receive or trust Christ, a turning point that is defined and sure.

Pastorpedia is a resource provided to you by Momentum Ministry Partners. Please contact us at info@buildmomentum.org or 574.267.6622 if we may be of any help to you or your ministry!

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