

***We Don't Need Another Church***  
Matthew 9:35-10:1  
Life Point Ministries Summer Conference  
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Two months ago, I sat in a Sunday morning service journaling along as I listened to the sermon. I began praying for the Holy Spirit to stir up boldness within me. Just like Peter and John in Acts 3, I wanted to be able to speak when the Spirit said, "Speak." I wanted to move when the Spirit said, "Move." After service finished, my grandparents and I headed for lunch.

As I was paying for my food and walking into the dining room, a woman in a motorized wheelchair caught my eye. Her face frantic and distressed, searching high and low for something but to no avail. Rolling back up to the counter, she inquired of one of the associates whether they had discovered a set of keys on a green lanyard. Upon learning they had not, she returned to her search. As I carried my plate of food to the table, I looked back to see her attempting to pull the garbage bag out of the can. That's when I heard it.

"Speak." "Move."

I hesitated for a moment. *Wait. Seriously? I don't think you understood my prayer, Lord. I meant boldness to preach and witness, not this.* The Spirit would not relent.

"Speak up, Callie. Move, now."

I looked down at my clothes. I was wearing one of the dresses I had brought back from Kenya, and didn't particularly want to get it dirty.

"Callie, I became dirt itself for you."

With that, I swallowed my shallow pride, spoke up and said, "So you think you may have dropped your keys in here." She nodded. I looked over at one of the clerks and asked her for a pair of latex gloves and a broomstick. She returned with the gloves, and well I dug in.

I searched through the trash can for about ten minutes again to no avail, then helped retrace her steps. The entire time I was praying that we would find them. We never located the keys. I never caught her name. I haven't seen her since. But that grocery store encounter has wrecked me ever since. How often have I missed it? How often have we missed it?

How often do we pray that God grant us boldness or use us for the furtherance of His Kingdom, but then attempt to quantify those prayers? We give a list of our personal preferences of how we want to be utilized. How often do we look down at our Sunday duds and prefer not to get them soiled in any form or fashion? We know we are supposed to be the hands and feet of Christ, but we prefer not to get them dirty in any way. Have we turned the original *"Go into all the world"* into a *"Come and get it"*? Have we, as the American church, become more attractional than missional? For this reason I say we do not need another church.

Join me in Matthew 9:35-10:1, ***"Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness."***

Church as we have always done it is no longer cutting it. Americans daily are becoming more disenchanted with the traditional Sunday morning service. My generation and the next, and I genuinely believe many of those before us, crave something more than sitting in a service for a 3 song set, a sermon, and a send-off. Please understand that I am not saying we need to throw tradition and biblical teaching to the wind. However, I am saying rather than being a church

based on attraction, we need to be a church of action. We do not need another church. We need to be doing church differently.

Doing church differently means taking a hard, fresh look at the fact ***we have been called to a Kingdom collaboration that should be driven by Kingdom compassion in obedience to our Kingdom commission.*** Throughout Matthew 9 we see Him modeling these for us in word and in deed. First we see Him modeling what we, the church, are called to do in collaboration with Him. Verse 35 serves as a summary statement for the entirety of the chapter. The first thing Jesus did was *He went*. He met people where they were, how they were. He went to them rather than expecting them to come to him. ***Jesus models a Kingdom of service, not show.*** In the latter part of verse 35 as Jesus went he “[proclaimed] the good news of the Kingdom and [healed] every disease and sickness.”

Starting in verses 1-8, look at the close attention Jesus gave to the physically ill. A paralyzed man is brought to him, and verse 2 says that when Jesus saw the faith of those that brought the man, he first forgave the paralyzed man’s sin. Something critical we need to grasp here. The faith of those who brought the man who had no other way of getting to Jesus played a key role in the forgiveness of the man’s sins and his ultimate healing. *That* is what doing church differently is all about. Men and women bringing the spiritually paralyzed before the Lord so that they might walk with Him again. Our faith that they might be set free plays a big role in them coming to know Jesus. As Paul says in Romans 10: 13-15: “...***For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*** *How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it*

*is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”* It is up to us church to be believing for their salvation and bringing them before the Lord both in prayer and in practice.

Secondly, Jesus takes care of the man’s spiritual need prior to his physical need. Signs and wonders were never meant to be the stopping point. All throughout Acts we see where the signs and wonders done by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles were to be confirmations of the gospel. If we water down the gospel and magnify signs and wonders, we have missed it. We as ministers of the Word of God need to be rooted and grounded in Scripture. If we cannot back up what we are doing with Scripture, something is not right. More than an appendage being restored or a disease being healed, a person’s soul needs to be eternally secured. Both are critical, but the one is crucial.

Later, we also see Jesus caring for the sick in verses 18-31. We see a synagogue leader, Jairus, himself fell at the feet of Jesus begging him for help and Jesus rushes to his aid. In the process, the woman with the issue of blood touches his cloak. In that moment, Jesus stops and sees a woman, who for the past twelve years has been hidden. She is known only by her disease, but in that moment Jesus restores her identity. No longer is she diseased, but Daughter. He touched the untouchable. We as the church should not be afraid to touch the untouchable and be attentive to the socially overlooked and outcast.

From there Jesus continues on to Jairus’ home where mourners have already gathered. He dismisses the mourners due to their lack of faith. He then proceeds to take Jairus’ daughter by the hand, speaks gently to her, and the life re-enters her body. He did not use this as an opportunity to preach at Jairus or make it into some grandiose display of power. He was present and intimate, yet still all-powerful. He walked with Jairus through “death’s dark shadows,” until life was restored to the one he loved. Are we as Christ’s body willing to walk all the way through the

darkest of moments with the broken until they encounter the light again? Are we willing to simply sit in silence and break with them? Are we alright with not having all of the answers? Yes, we should pray with all the faith we can muster and trust God with the outcome, but are we willing to wait in the hallways of life until the next door is opened praising God all the same with the broken? We don't need another church. We need to be doing church differently.

Returning to verse 35, we see that Kingdom collaboration consists not only of Jesus healing diseases, but the prioritization of “...*proclaiming the good news of the gospel.*” In 9:9-10, we read of the call to Matthew: ***“As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth. “Follow me,” he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples.”***

This passage again begins with Jesus going, going now to the spiritually sick in addition to the physically sick. He is intentional about noticing and speaking to this man whose lifestyle is of ill-repute. He is not ashamed of anyone overhearing his conversation with Matthew. He isn't doing it under the cover of nightfall to keep anyone from seeing. It is out in the open air. It is authentic and genuine. Imagine what it may have been like that dusty Galilee day. (Insert clip of the call of Matthew.)

The response of Matthew is beautiful and raw. Knowing his sin, he comes humbly to Jesus, moved with gratitude by the grace shown him. Jesus then intentionally sits and dines with him and his friends, other tax collectors and sinners, those on the bottom rung of society. This appalled the religious Pharisees. In verse 11 we read their response, ***“When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”***

Why would this man who claims to be the holy Son of God associate himself with the filthy scum that were sinners? Oh the power of Jesus' response, though, to the disdain of the overtly religious Pharisees and oh that we his church, his body, take these words to heart: ***“On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’<sup>[a]</sup> For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”***

“I desire mercy, not sacrifice.” This attitude is echoed in 9:36 ***“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”*** In verse 35, we saw how Christ modeled the Kingdom collaboration in which we as the church should be joining him in. Here in 36 He models the Kingdom compassion we should exemplify.

Strewn throughout the pages of the Bible from beginning to end is the message of mercy over sacrifice. God does not desire our worked up religious displays of half-witted affection. He desires authentic, self-sacrificing love for others. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3: ***“If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have faith that can move mountains, but do not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love I gain nothing.”*** If we are merely going through the motions, but we have not love and mercy for the least of these, we have missed the point.

Church is not a country club where we should don our best duds, parade our good deeds and the trophies of our victories. According to 9:12-13, the church, as an extension of Christ and His Kingdom mission, should be a hospital. We should be welcoming in the dirty and filthy,

broken down sinners in need of saving grace. We should be a collection of broken vessels, mended by grace, unafraid to share our scars and the stories of the Almighty God who redeems and heals the wounds beneath those scars.

Paul reminds us so poignantly in 1 Corinthians 1:18, ***“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”*** Christianity itself was not founded upon the healings of Jesus or all of his powerful sermons. Rather the crux of our faith was the one act where Christ allowed himself to be weakest, His death on the cross. From there his most powerful work was done in being raised to life three days later. Our faith was built on the redeeming scars of the Almighty Son of God; scars that testified to his gruesome death and glorious resurrection. Perhaps scars communicate deeper than strength. ***“But He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*** (2 Corinthians 12:9-10) He desires mercy, not sacrifice. Collaboration, with compassion

Christ has modeled kingdom collaboration and compassion, finally he issues the Kingdom commission in 9:37-10:1: ***“Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’ Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.”*** Currently, I serve as the office manager of a mental health clinic a few doors down from here. Daily I hear the stories, heart cries, and burdens of hundreds of hurting people through the small hole in my glass office window. That small hole provides me the exact glance into seeing the gap between my two worlds of church

and work. The counseling center is nestled here in the small, college town of Franklin Springs. Within the radius of the tri-county area surrounding the Springs, there are hundreds of churches. Yet in those same three counties, there are many trapped in severe forms of addictions. We are marked with one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the state. We are plagued with an ever increasing suicide rate. Our homes are filled with families struggling daily to make ends meet. This is the harvest of the hurting and we, the commissioned, the harvesters of healing, are missing it. We do not need another church. Rather, we need to be doing church differently.

Many churches throughout this community, our conference, the state, the nation as a whole appeal to one specific culture or people group. The faces I see day in and day out belong to subcultures and people groups who do not fit into the traditional church culture. Fewer churches are gearing ministries toward divorcees, single parents, recovering addicts, assault victims, those suffering extreme loss, and post college singles. These individuals are hurting desperately and hungry for healing. We need to wake up church, open our eyes and hearts, and extend a helping hand. We have to *go* into the field.

Jesus Christ, the Author and Perfector of our Faith, himself did not expect those outside religion to come. He went. We have seen, on the minute scale, of how he dined with tax collectors and sinners, inviting one to even join the original Twelve; elsewhere he engaged in conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well with a seemingly questionable past, be it divorce or multiple affairs (John 4:7-26); touched the untouchable and saw the hidden. But, on the grander scale, he came from heaven to earth. He bridged the greatest gap by coming to us and stepping into our world. In Luke 19:10, Jesus Himself said, **“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”** The crux of our faith was the act of Jesus Christ coming to earth, laying down His life, conquering sin and death through the power of the resurrection so that we might



live eternally with Him. Therefore, the church, the tangible extension of Christ's ministry today, needs to follow suit in the way we reach the lost.

We cannot blanket evangelize and expect one particular method to work everywhere we go. We must learn the culture of our communities. Where do they spend the majority of their time? What is the average annual household income? If they have children, where do their children attend school? What specific emotional, physical, and financial needs do they have?

Specifically, here in this area, based just on the clients that come through my office doors, I witness some of the greatest needs and cultural distinctives. As mentioned earlier we serve many who fall in the low income bracket and those who battle severe addictions. Most of our clients below the age of 18 attend public schools in the tri-county area. There is a strong involvement in extra-curricular activities in our area so parents are typically attempting to schedule around sports practices, 4H meetings, FFA meetings, choir and band practices, and dance rehearsals. This means a large portion of their time is spent on or around school campuses. We also serve divorced and separated families who are between two homes all throughout the week. There is a significant percentage of our clients with no immediate access to transportation, dependent upon outside assistance to get both themselves and their children to appointments.

So what would it look like to harvest effectively in this area? What would be practical ways to begin doing church differently here? Job training could be one. Whether it be a workshop on crafting a resume; how to start a business from your home; or even a job fair for companies that allow their vendors to work from their home, as these are on a prominent rise. This begins enabling those who are willing to become more self-sufficient. I have also heard of some churches hosting budgeting workshops, so that families can better manage what funds they have, how to stretch their dollars, and rely less on federal assistance. These events begin

introducing families to the church, while meeting a deep need of the community to become more self-sufficient.

In regard to the need for transportation, more and more churches, like Victory Restoration Church in Christiansburg, Virginia are restarting bus ministries that became prominent in the 1960s and 70s. Perhaps churches could find an innovative, cost-effective way to offer this ministry not just to bring children to church, but to serve other transportation needs without crippling efforts toward building self-sustainability. One option could be for parents involved in the church, polling other parents and guardians in their children's classes to begin a car pool to help cut down on gas expenses. Churches could facilitate a discounted driver's education course of some kind so those who don't know how to drive could learn. Again through the utilization of a budgeting class of some kind, offered at little to no cost, families could begin to learn how to save up money to purchase a car of their own and set aside money for gas and insurance. We could also offer light mechanical and car service by church volunteers.

Other needed ministries are those for divorcees, assault victims, and post-college singles. Obviously these would need to be initial care ministries, as often times these individuals need professional counseling to help heal the deepest of wounds. Grace Fellowship Church in Athens has a divorcee ministry catering specifically to addressing the needs of these individuals as they navigate this new, confusing season of life, while also providing a support group to relate to, break with, cry with, and ultimately heal with.

Prior to graduating from college, I never realized how big a gap there is in ministries for high school and college students and young married couples. Not many churches have ministries for post-college singles. These individuals, like myself, are in a season of liminality or between-ness that can be extremely confusing, lonely, and even depressing. They are attempting to figure

out where they belong, what they are supposed to be doing with their lives, who they want to do life with, laying financial foundations for the years to come, and how to pursue God while ‘adulting’ full time. Now more than ever they need a community to keep them accountable, encourage them, pray with them, dig into Scripture with them, and simply do life with them.

By finding ways to meet these practical, but often, overlooked needs, churches can begin to move from simply just being *another* church, to doing church differently. Hopeful as these ideas and speculations might be, a large portion of their success depends upon the willingness of the individuals to actually participate. You can teach a man to fish, but if he has no desire to fish, there’s not much more you can do. Being a different church, rather than just another church will not be easy. It will take more thinking, effort, exposure, man power, falling down and getting back up, and much, much more prayer. However, I believe it would be entirely worth it.

Nick and Tiffany Rucker, pastors of Impact Church in Hartwell, Georgia list among their core values or DNA statements for the church, “We will always pursue and celebrate, ‘the one’.” In the end that is what truly matters, if one person receives salvation, redemption, freedom and experiences total life change it is worth it. We cannot sit idle any longer, church. We have been given a Kingdom commission and we must do something about it. We have to do church differently.

In closing I share a quote one of my seminary professors, Dr. Brian Edgar, included in his book, *The Message of the Trinity*: “We [the church] cannot be like the mythical character who thoughtfully commented to a friend, ‘You know sometimes I would like to ask God why he doesn’t do something about famine and injustice, when he *could* do something about it.’ His friend replied, ‘Well, what is stopping you from asking him?’ and the rather sheepish but revealing answer is, ‘I’m afraid he might ask me the same question.” We have been called to a

Kingdom collaboration that should be driven by Kingdom compassion in obedience to our Kingdom commission. There is a world out there searching through the garbage of this life for the keys that unlock something more. Are we as the church going to sit watching idly as they hopelessly search afraid to get our own hands dirty? Or are we willing to join them right there in the search through the muck and the mire, and offer the keys that we have been given to the Kingdom? Are we ready to stop being just another church and to begin to do church differently?

***“Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”***

Wake up church, it is time to work.