

***A Letter to Tucson Pastors This article is somewhat not finished yet and a little rough-sorry!**

Introduction – I first want to say that I know how difficult it is to be a pastor of a local congregation and that I respect the job that so many are doing in our community. There are so many wonderful pastors in Tucson I wish I had time to tell all of their stories. There are so many aspects to pastoring that it can be an overwhelming and unrewarding job and one that has a specific context to each local congregation. I pray that this will not come across as critical, but more of a critique that calls us all to evaluate what God is doing in his Church today. I believe that each local church is going to be unique and that no church will be perfect, for the body of Christ is no longer made of unleavened bread. Every local church has a context that needs to be considered to gain understanding of its call and purposes and no local church will do it all. To be healthy we have to accept our limitations, sin and brokenness but also the redemption offered by our savior. However that does not mean that God is not calling us to a higher standard and understanding as the bride of Christ. As we learn to trust Him and do his will, according to His kingdom we will become the bride that is washed with the word and “a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish.” (Eph 5:27) That bride has become His hands and feet to a world that needs His love and grace. We as the faith community, city church are called to a major role in leadership in city transformation. “Only a city wide, Christ-centered church can displace the powers of darkness from the spirit realm.” Francis Frangipane

***NEW WINE SKINS**

The Church is being invited into some exciting adventures all over the country. As the government struggles financially many churches have moved to step back into positions of service and leadership once held by them in their communities, their faith expressed in “good works.” They are changing shapes, in how they organize the practice of their faith and the priorities of their sacraments! The whole gospel is not only being taught, but also lived out! My assistant moved to another part of the country a few years ago and came back to visit last week. I asked her how her experience with her new church is, and she told me an amazing story. Her church takes a month off from Sunday services once a year to make a difference in the community that they live in. Sunday morning teaching gives us knowledge, but if we don’t apply it we are just staying in the classroom. Would your church consider this sacra-religious? What do you think your church believes are the essential sacraments they need to practice to stay connected to God? This church believes the practice of service, by applying the knowledge of God through faith to their community is God’s call. They research the needs of their community, raise funds and serve together in areas where people are hurting. Their view of redemption is holistic. **THE CHURCH IS MOVING FROM A PLACE OF LEARNING ABOUT GOD CORPORATELY, WORSHIPPING HIM CORPORATELY, TO DOING HIS WILL CORPORATELY.**

- What should the Church look like? During the Jesus Movement the structures of the Church took different shapes. The mission of the Church during the Jesus Movement revival was to see the baby boomers saved and their lives transformed. In my church having a Sunday morning meeting would not have developed or maintained the hippies faith. However many of the boomers had the seeds of faith planted from the traditional

church. I remember a woman who was converted who came from a strongly militant gay culture. She wore combat boots and military garb and wondered why the folks from a local traditional church stared at her when she attended their Sunday morning church service. The counter culture needed more fellowship, structure, discipleship and Bible study in the context of a very grace based atmosphere to thrive in their new found faith. We created halfway houses that many in the Jesus Movement lived in that had Bible studies every day. I found that the Jesus Movement pastors who cared about their congregants were very creative in the structures that they shaped to sustain and facilitate faith. Tradition was not helpful in church structure in that the music, dress, order of service and so much more had to change to really be helpful in pastoring these young people. However the traditions had played a significant role in maintaining the faith of their parents and grandparents. The new believers who were being invited into the faith community often felt excluded rather than included by the old traditions, especially if there was rigidity and judgment with these traditions. Questions arose of what was truly sacred or important to God and what were the traditions of men as opposed to God's will, were asked frequently. So many of the old traditions were shed and new religious structures created to help with the purposes of our new found faith. Some faith communities had two hours of new contemporary music every night with only fifteen minutes of teaching. There was a lot of discussion about organ music being replaced by guitars and how the devil had entered the church. Were only the old hymns acceptable in worshipping God? Many were baptized in rivers, lakes and the ocean, rather than baptisms. Things were changing and some loved it and some were very threatened by it. Form follows function until form becomes tradition and then often function or purpose is lost as a vision for faith. Traditions are the maintenance or infrastructure of organizations and both development and maintenance are important for organizations to thrive, even if at times their values clash. What is important in the building of our faith? What is important in sustaining our faith? What are the visions given in scripture for building and sustaining a living faith?

How does the Church become more Missional in its purposes? When I finished the 60's and 70's as a Jesus movement pastor I realized that so much of the mission of the Jesus movement was gone. The hippies who had tremendous need were now yuppies with families and jobs by the 1980s and the intensity of mission driven ministry was gone. I was busy with church administration, teaching and pastoral care, but knew that our church was losing its passion. We were in maintenance mood and working on sustaining the revival of the faith of the Jesus Movement, which was needed. However I felt like there needed to be meaningful service and mission for the spiritual life of our congregation to stay alive. Was I also to go beyond our church and find meaningful missions that offered our church the sacredness of mission? Were we losing our saltiness and the light because we had also lost our sense of mission? What was my role as a pastor in mission? We were turning inward and I could see that this was not healthy spiritually? How important is mission in the life of the body of Christ?

When King David gives his personal advice to his son Solomon about what is important in his life he mentions three things, number one- get to know God, two- worship him and three- serve him with your whole heart. This also requires that Solomon **seeks** God in these three areas all the days of his life. 1 Chronicles 28:9 Service is where

we often see the life of Christ manifest and gain a sense of the fact that the Lord is alive and working in our midst, especially if we tell the stories of how God is working today.

One of the major changes in the church today is structural. The main structures of the local church are changing. There is a movement of God that is moving believers to the purposes of God in His Kingdom and challenging some of the traditions of the church. Our sacraments are changing in the Evangelical church. What if the religious traditions we have invested in and organized our faith culture around, miss some of the most important aspects of Christ's Kingdom. That is what the Missional Church movement is saying! In his book called "Missional Renaissance," Reggie McNeal says that "the rise of the Missional Church is the single biggest development in Christianity since the Reformation." Why? Mott says, "There is no "presence" or "existence" of Christian community without mission. The church is not to be absorbed into mission but neither is it to be divorced from its tasks in the world. Neither mission nor church is to be subordinate to the other; both are essential in the great work of the Reign of God."

HOLES IN OUR GOSPEL

Starting in the mid part of the last century church leaders began to discuss the dividing of the gospel into two camps one that emphasized evangelism, saving souls for the next life because sins caused a spiritual death, separation from God and one that emphasized good works and social reform, because evil needed to be confronted and social systems also needed to be redeemed. This left a hole in the gospel, where churches only attended to part of the gospel.

Why is this a problem for us as pastors? Because we are living in church cultures that are partly established by division and sin and that causes the Gospel to be twisted. The one arm of our church will over emphasize that salvation is through grace and that it can not be earned, it is only in having faith in the completed work of Jesus Christ. Because this is emphasized over the good works part of our gospel the cultural effect is that it minimizes the importance of our call to good works. Many pastors and theologians are now saying that this calls into question whether we are teaching a saving faith. The other side of the church minimizes the foundation for salvation and puts its emphasis on works, neglecting the grace given us. John Piper says, "Our deeds are not the basis of our salvation, they are the evidence of our salvation. They are not foundation, but they are demonstration." From Future Grace. In all the passages of being judged by our works, examples Mathew 25:31-46, James 2:14-16, 2Corinthians 5:10, good works are evidence of our faith. The question becomes in the Evangelical culture is there enough evidence of faith to convict us in this judgment before God. For us as pastors and teachers this is significant in that leading a congregation into saving faith has both elements of faith in the works of Christ and our good deeds coming from faith, and we bear a greater responsibility to teach the whole gospel. We also maybe called to facilitate the structures that encourage the exercise of our faith.

As early as the 1960's the church began to create documents that were for the purpose of confession and repentance for this hole in the gospel. In 1974 the Lousanne Covenant was produced which read, "Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and for having regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive.... nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both of our Christian duty. For both are expressions of God and man, our love for our neighbor and our obedience to Jesus Christ." Other meetings and documents cried out for change as

well. The Wheaton Declaration of 1966, the Salt and Light gathering in Britain in 1988, and the “Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility by the National Association of Evangelicals in 2004. These times of reflection and then exhortation by Christian leaders called evangelicals to minister and fight for the poor, to make strong commitments to justice, take stands for human rights, value the sanctity of human life and care for the environment, while continuing to be evangelistic and developing personal holiness or piety and spiritual maturity. They confronted the Evangelical culture on its lack of a holistic gospel and its tendency to be Gnostic in its emphasis on the spiritual over the natural.

SCRIPTURAL TEACHINGS ON RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

In Jesus day the religious community had made their religious traditions their mark of spirituality and had missed knowing God and doing his will. In Mathew 23:1-3 “Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, “The teachers of religious law and the Pharisees are the official interpreters of the scripture. So practice and obey whatever they say, to you, but don’t follow their example. For they don’t practice what they teach.”

Was teaching the scriptures important? Absolutely! Was having teachers who could teach God’s Word important? It was essential to the spiritual development of believers. (Acts 6:4) However the Word had to become flesh, it needed to become not only what the faith community knew in their heads, but also how they lived. The knowledge of God to be faith has to be applied. Faith is to engage the life of the hearer! Faith without works is a dead faith, a faith without power. (James 2) If the structures of our faith facilitate passivity rather than involvement we maybe guilty of doing relief work rather than developing disciples of Jesus. Almost everyone today knows that relief work, giving a person a fish can create dependency and that empowerment, teaching a person to fish, is so much more important. God is sovereign and at work I am not leaving him out, but some structures facilitate better than others. In healthy families the nurture and love given is for the purpose of helping children become capable adults and it is not to keep them dependent and passive children. Could it be that our church traditions error on the side of giving our faith communities knowledge without teaching them how to use it? Guidance is the second role in development. It is where knowledge is applied in a particular context, with the care of a mentor, parent or discipleship relationship, Is discipleship as important in the development process as teaching the Word? Have we created a dependent faith community instead of a healthy vital and mature faith community in Tucson, in America? A woman counselor I was interviewing for a counseling job one time told me, “I like that church (good Bible teaching church) but it infantilizes its people. It makes adults into babies.” In other words from a health point of view it created an unhealthy dependency on pastors and their teachings without moving the congregation to personal responsibility and empowerment.

There are four roles that facilitate growth in the family teacher, guide, gatekeeper and consultant. Each role has to do with the next stage of development by the child. For the child to grow the parent has to move to their next role and do it well or have someone facilitate this new role in the child’s life. As this article develops I will try to give some information about the next role. The one we are talking about is the teacher, who teaches God’s Word, in the church family. However I just also touched on being a guide or discipler of believers. There is also a pre -evangelistic role and evangelism role, which with the family may relate to courting, marriage and childbirth.

Referring back to my Jesus Movement days when I was a young pastor I struggled and in my opinion failed with creating healthy rituals that continued to facilitate a vibrant faith after the hippies were evangelized and became believers. For the first ten years there was a constant sense of the miraculous and God's presence. People were being saved, lives changed, answered prayers, sin confessed, recovery and an expectation that God was real and working among us. The Christian faith was engaging and vital. As we moved forward I began to see us slip into maintenance mode, an almost sluggish apathy. Where was God in the everyday, marriage, family, business, home building, and neighborhoods? What happened to the sense of miraculous? The youth of the sixties were growing up, getting married, finding significant work and establishing themselves, which was good. The hippies were becoming yuppies, we were no longer young rebels, but were we becoming too worldly? How could we engage in our adult responsibilities and they not become idolatries like what happened to the Israelites as the gifts of God were now the golden calves that separated them from God? Were the worries, responsibilities, riches and pleasures of the world choking out the faith that had been planted? What I did not know then was how to, as a pastor, integrate faith into healthy adult life and the tasks of adult life. How does God and faith become a part of **family life**? How was faith related to being a husband or a wife, a father and a mother? What does it mean to be a man or woman of honor in your own household? Is loving my wife as important to God as teaching a Bible study? Was being a good parent as significant a call of God as being a missionary in Africa? How does the Kingdom of God become central to our **work lives**? How can we be just with our employees? Gracious and yet make a living as a business person? Is giving people a good job as important as evangelism in God's economy? How does the faith community contribute to the common good of the city it lives in, rather than isolate from it? What part do we as a faith community play in **contributing to the well being of our community**? How could God reign in every part of our life? I struggled and failed as a young pastor in my marriage. I was religiously arrogant and even though I preached my first sermon on there is no division between the sacred and secular I did not know how to live out these truths. The religious community also was struggling and failing with many of the basic life tasks in integrating faith and God's kingdom into their adult lives. I soon learned this as a Christian counselor, (my next role after being a pastor of a local church) that even Christians and the leaders of the community could not see how to find God in their everyday life and how to trust and obey him. It was easier to focus on religious tradition and its structure than to get to the place of finding a vital faith in adult life.

Was all that God required of us a Sunday morning attendance? Was faith losing its priority in our lives? Were the responsibilities of life crowding out the issues of faith? Where young believers in the early days loved the teaching of the Word almost without limit, now there was a complaining if the teaching went five minutes long on a Sunday morning. We were busy with life, family, homes and work. I could see that we were in many ways losing the vitality of our faith, even though God was still faithful and we were growing up and there was a strong commitment to maintaining what had been created. Some of the romance had worn off our new faith, we had left the courting and newly wed stage. I approached the elders of my church with a radical idea I had found from another church leader. That we would quit the Sunday morning teaching, which seemed to me, to be desensitizing the church to the Word, until we could see that it was

being applied in the lives of the congregation. We always had personal sharing about how God was at work and we would pray and share until there was an application of the Word through faith in the lives of our congregation. The eldership was not in favor of this and wanted to stick with a more traditional Sunday morning service of worship and Bible teaching. This was too radical even for a Jesus movement church who now had settled into its own traditions. It is very difficult to change our structures once they are established. What we put in place to maintain us may also hurt us or bore us. It is not that maintenance is not important it is very important. However the traditions of men can hinder the purposes of God and minimize the will of God. - Here is one of the things Jesus says about religious traditions.

“Some of the Pharisees and teachers of religious law now arrived from Jerusalem to interview Jesus. “Why do your disciples disobey our age-old traditions?” they demanded. “They ignore our tradition of ceremonial hand washing before they eat.”

Jesus replied, “And why do you, by your traditions, violate the direct commandments of God? For instance God says, ‘Honor your father and mother, and Anyone who speaks evil of father or mother must be put to death. ‘But you say, You don’t need to honor your parents by caring for their needs if you give the money to God instead,’ And, so by your own tradition, you nullify the direct commandment of God. You hypocrites! Isaiah was prophesying about you when he said, “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far away. Their worship is a farce, for they replace God’s commands with their own man-made teachings.” Mathew 15:1-9 In Jesus’s opinion religious tradition had replaced a vital relationship with God. Maybe they also did not know how to find God in their family life and allowed religious traditions to blind them to the faith needed to have a vital family life.

When Jesus showed up the faith community had turned inward and was on the defense and highly isolated from the rest of the world. Their faith was self- serving rather than serving God and others. The Jews were the chosen people but were far from their glory. They were now the “tail rather than the head” and faith was somewhat of a foreign concept. One of Jesus favorite confrontations was to exhort his disciples on their lack of faith and one of his validations was to say, “your faith has made you well.” The object of our faith is our God and he is easy to miss when we get too focused on our religious traditions. Most organizations start into deterioration if they loose sight of their mission and focus too much on the maintenance of their structures or traditions. Here is a little about IBM when they were in their deterioration mode. They were loosing up to two hundred million dollars a month and were laying off thousands of their workers. Listen to how much this sounds like the church and its struggle with tradition. This is a passage from the book , “Who says Elephants Can’t Dance,” written by Louis Gerstner who was hired to turn the company around.

“To someone arriving at IBM from the outside, there was a kind of hothouse quality to the place. It was like an isolated tropical ecosystem that had been cut off from the world for too long. As a result, it had spawned some fairly exotic life-forms that were to be found nowhere else. And because IBM was so deeply inbred and ingrown, so preoccupied with its own rules and conflicts, it had lost its robustness. It had become extremely vulnerable to attack from the outside.

This hermetically sealed quality- an institutional viewpoint that anything important started inside the company-was I believe, the root cause of many of our

problems. To appreciate how wide-spread the dysfunction was, I need to describe briefly some of its manifestations.

They included a general disinterest in customer needs, accompanied by a preoccupation with internal politics. There was general permission to stop projects dead in their tracks, a bureaucratic infra-structure that defended turf instead of promoting collaboration, and a management class that presided rather than acted. IBM even had a language all its own.” Pg 189 Sure sounds like many of the critiques of churches I have been involved with through my years of ministry.

What would the church look like if it structured its emphasis on application as much as it did for learning? What if the emphasis was on trusting and obeying God both individually and corporately and I know many churches do emphasize these things. On development as much as maintenance? On works of substance that made a difference for the common good of our community? If the expectation of the faith community was the good works that come from a life of faith? What if discipleship was more important than church attendance? What if we believe that God is still at work and we are to be a part of that work and see his miracles today?

RELIGIOUS RITUALS AS FALSE GODS OR FALSE SECURITIES

It seems that religious rituals have always been a false security for the faith community. In the Old Testament the prophets hammered the Jews because they substituted their religious traditions for a vital relationship with God. Their religion replaced their relationship! The voice of God came from the prophets and it often made the faith community angry and they ignored it. In Isaiah 58, Isaiah says, “Tell my people Israel of their sins. Yet they act so pious! They come to the Temple every day and seem delighted to hear my laws. You would almost think this was a righteous nation that would never abandon its God. They love to make a show of coming to me and asking me to take action on their behalf.” Again the faith community was more focused on their religious rituals, personal piety but was not obedient to God’s voice. They were bad in their relationships, neglected the poor and needy and did not apply the Word to their lives, so God was not blessing them or answering their prayers and they could not understand why. They were fasting in a way that was full of religious traditions, even good ones like prayer and church attendance but far from what God required of them. Here is what Tim Keller says about a right view of this passage, “Fasting should be a symbol of a pervasive change across the whole face of one’s life. People changed by grace should go, on a permanent fast. Self indulgence and materialism should be given up and replaced by a sacrificial lifestyle of giving to those in need. They should not spend only their money but themselves (vs10) on others. What is this permanent fasting? It is to work against injustice, to share food, clothing, and home with the hungry and the homeless. That is the real proof that you believe your sins have been atoned for, and that you have truly been humbled by that knowledge of him.” “Generous Justice” pg 95-96 Often the religious community focuses on sins of commission and feels that if they are doing their religious rituals and not committing certain sins they are good, and righteous but they over look their sins of omission. It is what they are not doing that is the problem.

Jesus ups the ante in his teaching telling the faith community they will not be invited into the Kingdom of heaven because they do not really come under the rule and reign of God. In Mathew 25 He talks about the judgment when the Son of man comes in

His glory and separates the sheep from the goats. “ Then the King will say to those on the right (sheep), ‘Come you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink, I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick, and you cared for me, I was in prison, and you visited me.’ These are believers who are sensitive and responsive to the needs of others and perhaps the voice of God in their lives. However he also says to the goats on his left, “Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his demons. For I was hungry and you didn’t feed me.This group is unresponsive to human need and misses Jesus altogether. Maybe they are too busy with their religious traditions and rituals.

PROPHETIC WARNINGS

Again the prophetic message is hard, especially in a post- modern age where they are usually viewed as judgmental rather than protective and caring. Therefore warnings are often overlooked or discounted, but to walk with our Lord it is important to hear his voice, even a hard prophetic voice. “Today you must listen to his voice. Don’t harden your hearts against him.” Hebrews 4:7 What does it mean to be hard hearted? What happens in a relationship when one person becomes hard hearted? What happens to the other person who is dealing with a hard -hearted person? God gets angry when we don’t listen and this keeps us from entering his rest and then his blessings are missed in our lives. We need the grace of God to keep our hearts soft and responsive, so it is God that helps us be responsive to his Spirit, when we listen. This may also be difficult for the Evangelical faith community because of our traditions. Which scriptures do we emphasize when it comes to our faith and which scriptures do we ignore? In our community is it more important to have faith in the justifying works of Christ than to live out our faith through the works of love?

What was important in the religious community of Jesus day was the teaching of the Word and not its application. So Jesus warns his disciples about knowledge without application. Here is what Robert Lewis in the “Church of Irresistible Influence” says about this, “Our postmodern world is tired of words-it wants real....What we are geared to is slicker, more technologically brilliant presentations of the truth. But the real truth is, where is the love of God we talk about? Where is the transforming power of Christ? The changed lives? The selfless giving? The good works? While the world waits to see it in their communities, the church is consumed with **talking** about it in their sanctuaries.

This is why we are not spanning the chasm and connecting with the community. We are trying to build bridges that balance public proclamation with congregational incarnation. Bridges that are suspended by the steel cables of the Great Commandment well as the Great Commission. In the twenty first century, the church must understand, as never before, that faith-without works-is dead. So, too, will be our influence....As George Barna says, “Americans are not going to patronize an institution which appears incapable of living what it preaches.” “Church of Irresistible Influence” (pg.40) Sounds a lot like Jesus, only his exhortation is stronger towards the religious leaders.

In Mathew 23:13-15 &23-24 He says. “How terrible it will be for you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you won’t let others enter the Kingdom of Heaven, and you won’t go in yourselves. Yes, how terrible it will be for you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. For you cross land and sea to make one convert, and

then you turn him into twice the son of hell as you yourselves as are....How terrible it will be for you teachers of the religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest part of your income, but you ignore the important things of the law-justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe yes, but you should not leave undone the more important things. Blind guides! You strain your water so you won't accidentally swallow a gnat; then you swallow a camel!"

Wow did they miss it! And this is a very stern warning from our Lord ! A prophetic word that called them into the light to expose some religious darkness. Was there more emphasis on knowledge than application of God's word? More emphasis on teaching than application? Is that a part of the problem today? Was the faith community missing the boat because it had traditions that missed what God wanted in his kingdom? That their religious tradition majored on the minors and missed the important parts of the will of God. This was to be a correction, like Martin Luther's ninety five theses supposedly nailed to the Wittenberg door. Luther believed he was being prophetic and calling the church to repentance and to do restitution. As a young man Luther believed that the Catholic Church would repent and make the appropriate corrections. That the Church was missing justification by faith that Christ offered believers. He was not attempting to start a new denomination. When a judgment is given we often get defensive and don't ask the key questions. Lord is this you, are you requiring a change? Is this a call to me? To my church? Is confession required? Is this about repentance individually or even corporately? Am I afraid to change out of my comfort zone, is my church stuck in its comfort zone? Are we stuck in our traditions and ignoring your voice? Are our religious structures hindering the work of your Spirit? Do I need to trust you, do we all need more trust and faith, so we can obey you? Would you sustain our church if we took a month off to serve our community? Are there consequences if I don't hear your voice and trust and obey you? What is sacred and not to be messed with and what is just a tradition that maybe an old wine skin? What do we keep, let go of, and what needs to be added?

***JESUS'S MAIN POINT**

Jesus is the hardest on the religious community! He even challenges them in this passage not to aspire to positions of status, power, or title. "Don't let anyone call you Rabbi – teacher, master, or Father...but be downwardly mobile and aspire to be a humble servant, rather than exalting yourself – paraphrased from Mathew 23:5-10 (the first will be last) The central verse in this passage is verse 11 and then the consequences in verse 12. "The greatest among you must be a **SERVANT**. But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." So is it more important in the Kingdom of God to be a servant than a teacher, a humble servant? So Christ exhorts us to organize our faith around being humble servants, above teachers of the Word? (Does the Evangelical community do that today or are we making the same mistakes in our religious traditions that the religious leaders of Christ's day made?)

I know in my own life I have seen the sin of pride and arrogance, especially during times where I have transitioned from being the leader to not having a position of esteem. To let go and follow God's leading has been painful at times and definitely faced me with my own sinfulness and lack of trust in his promises in my life. I have been confronted with my own egocentricity, not knowing how God is at work outside my own little world. I like the twelve steppers definition of the sin of pride, "I may not be much

but I'm all I think about." In every move of God confession of sin and repentance are a part of revival and reformation, whether individual or corporate. In my own experience of losing my place and position as I confessed and repented I was granted the grace of new service opportunities and shown that it is God's grace that allows meaningful service and that is more important than position, security and status.

-When are we to have great confidence and when are we to be humble and confessing our sin? I shared at the pastor's breakfast how touched I was at a recent St. Andrews Presbyterian Sunday morning service of confession and healing. The pastoral staff had called the church to invite people who had been wounded by church leaders to a healing and reconciliation service. I was at a U of A football game the night before this service and a church member said to me and said, "are you coming tomorrow?" So I got up the next morning and went to see how the pastors would confess their own sins and ask for forgiveness and how this would affect the church. As Pastor Jim Toole led I was caught off guard at how personally moved I was. Then I watched with a sense of God's grace as many congregants came up for prayer as he called upon them to bring their complaints and encouraged them to forgive. It was a tremendous time of healing and comfort initiated by the humble and courageous hearts of the pastoral staff.

TUCSON CHURCHES

In Tucson, churches are becoming more Missional, and responding to the needs of our community through service. Many churches have adopted schools in their neighborhood, like pastor David Drum's church, there are many others like the Journey and Christ Community who also have made significant commitments to schools in their areas. Churches like Pantano Christian and Victory Assembly have penetrated their own neighborhoods as well as surrounding areas with service. There are many good churches with pastors living very sacrificial lives for Christ in Tucson. I see churches becoming more holistic in their views of redemption. They are feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, educating the illiterate through tutoring, helping with job development, instructing people to budget and retire debt and earn and save money, giving micro-loans, they are facilitating counseling for bad marriages and family dysfunction, starting programs for those addicted to get recovery and helping "at risk" populations like single moms or ex-offenders. There is a commitment to mentor "at risk" youth involved in the courts with restorative justice as a goal. Many of the evangelical churches have realized that sin has permeated all of creation and are seeing the huge mission field that Tucson and the State of Arizona is with its opportunities for ministry. Missional work is not just over seas it is in our own community. Our demographics are some of the worst in the nation in almost every area, addiction, crime, poor education, teen pregnancy, family breakdown, poverty and so many more categories and sub-categories. We are a world city with people groups from all over the world, like the refugees that pour into our city every year. It is difficult for many churches to make connections with "meaningful ministry opportunities" even though there are so many of them here in our community. However as churches and para-church organizations hear the stories of people hurting and in need they are and have been creating ministries around those needs or partnering with those in the community that are already involved. Pastor Anthony Lopez has created one of these partnerships with a tutoring ministry called Higher ground, because 54% of his neighborhood does not have high school educations. We need connections with para-church organizations like Young Life, Hope Net, Tucson Refugee Ministry,

The Sober Project, Interfaith Community Services, Gap Ministries, The Gospel Rescue Mission, The Crisis Pregnancy Center, Youth on Their Own or so many more in our community that have a heart for the broken and marginalized of Tucson. This is a call that is creating more substance in our ministries and service. One of our worst stats is the number of people in prison in Arizona, but in Tucson one of our great spiritual legacies has been our jail ministry, where over the last thirty some years over seven thousand of those in our local jail have been led to Christ and baptized. In talking with the man Danny Burgoyne who has sacrificially led this ministry he told me that doing evangelism was very rewarding. However the discouraging part was seeing offenders come back to jail again even after conversion. Now this ministry is gaining more depth through being more holistic. It is not just the issue of sin separating the incarcerated person from God, but also the redemption needed in their families, their education level, their job readiness, their ability to gain sobriety and maintain it. Steve Martinez is the new chaplain for this jail ministry. As they are seeing these things they are becoming more substantive in their ministry and their understanding of Christ's redemptive work. In the book, "To Transform a City," the authors comment about this more holistic gospel, "this **thick** gospel brings transformation to the totality of life." Pg. 135 To expand our ministries we have to submit to the whole gospel and surrender our forms of ministry to His truth.

GRACE AND TRUTH

Truth may come across as demanding, unkind and costly. Truth is often harsh or even condemning especially when it is without grace and relationship. Jesus embodied Grace and truth in his incarnation, that incarnation invited relationship, John 3:16. This is obviously a relationship that is presently alive and personal for those who believe, and full of grace because of the price that Jesus paid for us. His obedience even to the point of death on the cross grants us a grace and a perspective that obedience leads to future grace, a great reward for our faith. When grace is present there is a context for truth that allows us to be reflective rather than be defensive. Truth is not the harshness of law that condemns us and holds us accountable for punitive purposes, it calls us to receive grace so we can be in a right relationship with Christ. Truth can put us in a place of being accountable and having retributive justice if we do not turn and seek God's grace for our sinfulness. Jesus has brought his grace to us and also allows us to be individuals with respect for who we are and the context of our lives, and yet challenges us to submit to God's will or truth. Is God speaking to me? Am I to obey and take up my cross? What does this mean in terms of who I am and what I do? Os Guinness says in his book about calling that the concept of call allows for relativism, that what applies to me may not apply to you. The relational issues of obedience and trust are very personal, there is a context of time, space and life. One size does not fit all in terms of the application of truth. There is tremendous freedom and personal validation, which flows out of grace in that personal relationship, but also the concept that God's greatest blessing is in the context of his will for our life and the life of the church. "God does call us to "be ourselves" and "do what we are." But we are only "ourselves" and can only truly "do what we are" when we follow God's call." (Pg 48) from "The Call." In the story of William Wilberforce, his main call was to serve God by abolishing slavery in England and secondly reforming the "manners" or morals of England. Like Solomon's call to build the temple, Wilberforce was given a life task to do and a role to live out. He was gifted as a great orator and was in line to be the Prime Minister of England. However

because of his commitment to God's purposes he never became the Prime Minister. In fact from a political point of view he was not popular, being called the most hated man in England at one time. The paradox of the Kingdom being that often "the first will be last and the last will be first." In the world's eyes being Prime minister in the United Kingdom- England, maybe the first or exalted position, but in God's economy serving as Wilberforce did he maybe in first place in the eternal Kingdom. He may have had to humble himself to follow God, but God promises to exalt the humble and humble the proud. He has been called the greatest moral reformer in the history of England. His called followed the great Wesleyan revival as a leader in the reformation. In either position Wilberforce could use his gifts and abilities, but would only truly be himself when in right relationship to God and his call. We need to be in right relationship with God both individually and corporately as a church. The application of God's word for me maybe different than it is for you, we need to know what it is. God's word for my local church maybe different than it is for your local church. Your church maybe called to organize itself around exegetical teaching, but it may also be a tradition that is missing that personal connection with God. God's truth is most palatable when we are in that grace relationship with God and his spirit is leading us.

GRACE AND CONTEXT

When I gave this talk at the pastor's breakfast one pastor got a little upset. He felt like God was calling him to teach more Bible on Sunday mornings and that his congregation was Biblically illiterate, so he got a little defensive. He did not want to feel forced or obligated to change. Our context is where we often gain our meaning and significance personally. He came later to apologize. The holes in the gospel are not about all or none we each have a part to play. There are many different parts to play for the church to be healthy, especially when looking at the city church. In my talk I was challenging pastors to think about how they organize their religious rituals around teaching the Word. Could there be other aspects of the gospel that need to be emphasized and structured around? Are there partnerships or collaborations that you need to have in your local church? I thought it was good that this pastor's voice of dissent was present, because it added grace and the element of call. He maybe doing his part, but also needs to be in relationship with other pastors, so the city church works in partnership according to God's multiple calls and purposes. Christ is the center of the church, but we may gain perspective by knowing others and other churches. The siloed church is isolated from others. Being isolated or siloed may bring about a disconnect that removes us from a bit of knowledge or a resource that would move us out of our problems. What we have to give may also be needed by others and essential to their well-being. Call is not only individual but also corporate.

If we are too individualistic we are also endanger of missing the mark. Some believe that call is always a corporate call to the whole church. When we are siloed or too individualistic our references are limited. We do what we know but that can cause us to be stuck in a rut. There is a twelve step saying; that says when we repeat the same behaviors over and over and expect different results that is the definition of insanity. A local church maybe ethnocentric and miss its disconnection with God's sovereignty and His rule in the city. Isolation and independence may lead to disunity in the big C church and our cities may miss the transformation that God intends to accomplish as He works with the corporate body of Christ. Mike Birrer is one of the catalysts for for the

Missional church movement in Tucson. He closes many of his communications with this quote, "Only a city wide, Christ-centered church can displace the powers of darkness from the spirit realm"- Francis Frangipane. This quote was used early in this article on the city church concepts. The vision of His Kingdom and His rule may need a larger context to take root in our lives and community. Isolation and independence are often manifestations of pride and insecurity and keep us from exposing ourselves to needed resources, God's will and other's call. Our disconnect from others can rob us of bodies of knowledge that would bring welfare-shalom to our local churches and relationships that would complete and empower local churches for the missions that God intends them to succeed at if they are humble and in unity with others. I often see the para-church as having relationships, knowledge and skills that local churches really need and vice versa, especially in Missional areas. Truth requires conformity and is often condemning if a person opposes it. This is where my pastor friend may have felt defensive. However when we submit our lives to God's Truth it cleanses us from both sins of commission and omission. When truth is in the context of relationship and grace, each person can freely question its call on their life. Maybe this applies to me tomorrow, maybe this applies to my wife or that church down the street or maybe this applies to me today. Maybe it applies to me and God is calling me to take up my cross and follow him. Maybe this applies to my church and its relationship to the city church. When we hear what others are doing according to their call we may get a broader view of the gospel and how God is at work. The whole gospel surely applies to the whole church, but through the leading of the Spirit in the context of a loving relationship with Jesus Christ and each other. Christ is always at work filling in the holes in his body, with his will in his Kingdom.

SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL, BUT ALSO THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF THE KINGDOM

One of the pastors that came to this pastor's breakfast, pastor Mike Begley from the Vineyard Christian Community shared a story that I think demonstrates how the Kingdom works. In our State of Arizona immigration has become a big issue, a justice issue! This pastor had an illegal immigrant in his congregation that was lead to Christ by one of his congregants reaching out in their neighborhood. She was a single mom who cleaned houses to make a living. She approached the church with her financial needs and asked to work cleaning the church. As the leadership started talking about this they found people in the congregation that felt strongly about not hiring an illegal. They wanted to do things right and legal. There were also those who felt strongly about being compassionate and providing for the poor and marginalized. There were those who knew her, her circumstances and were invested in her well-being. They loved her and cared about her and her financial status. As they worked on uniting and solving this problem even though they had conflicting values, they ended up working with the congregation to help this single mom get her papers. They raised \$2500 and helped guide her through the process. On a Sunday morning she stood up and waved her papers that her local church had helped her acquire. She now could work legally and the church had shown righteousness and compassion, grace and truth. In her book, "Street Saints" Barbara Elliott says, "Trying to help "the poor" is overwhelming, but helping one family in need is a manageable task. It is the most effective way of reaching individuals: face to face." (Pg.240) This is the metaphor of how do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time! It is also the most substantive and sustainable way to see our communities changed. When

systems get too large they become impersonal, insensitive, lose their meaning, cannot create community and the meaning of mission is often lost or reduced to just impersonal financial contributions or policy decisions. So small is beautiful in that it can facilitate healthy, meaningful relationships, like this one. There can be a sensitivity or intimacy with the people in your neighborhood that is flexible, personal and adaptable. Often large organizations in contrast work off of impersonal policies and rules that violate relationships, community and the context of people's lives. It takes personal involvement like this story to solve many of our community's problems, not impersonal systems. However in the Missional movement denominational walls are breaking down and the big C church is working together on tasks, projects, populations and problems that could never be solved without uniting together in corporate call. Like Pantano Christian has done with the 29th street collaboration. The Missional church is coming together to accomplish God's purposes in ministering in families, churches, neighborhoods, communities and cities. Rick Stevenson and Living Waters church has also created one of these collaborations to facilitate mentors for juvenile offenders with the African American churches and the government. To do this we have to work together and do our parts. It probably would have been a hardship for one family to give the \$2500 needed to help this single mom, but for a congregation working together it was joyful and doable. Those emphasizing personal responsibility and conformity to the laws could work in unity with those emphasizing inclusion, compassion and generosity. In this story the holes in the gospel were filled in, both the good news and the good works were manifest as a local church worked together to love a neighbor well.

PASTORS AS LEADERS OF MISSION

"Great institutions are not managed they are lead," says Max Dupree In the Missional movement pastors are often called into leadership roles. Instead of talking about service they often lead in serving others. A great example of this in our community is pastor Mike Simpson who pastors a church in one of the worst neighbors in Tucson. He decided that God was calling him to stay in the city rather than move to the suburbs. As he looked at his neighborhood he found the poor, immigrants, addicted and many other "at risk" populations that needed to be loved and served. So he started a feeding program himself. At first the congregation was taken back, but Mike felt that they always wanted to serve their neighborhood but just did not know what to do. As various ministries that Mike started took root the congregation got involved and began taking over. They now own and run the feeding of up to two hundred people several nights a week. They also have programs for those struggling with addiction. Mike continues to move forward in his desire to serve God and has been getting his counseling license while being exposed to all kinds of "at risk" populations and learning new ways to bring healing to his neighborhood and community as well as empower his congregation.

PASTORS LAUNCHING

One of the most difficult aspects of pastoring is launching people from the congregation into their own ministries in the community. Pastor Pat McClanahan who has put together the pastor's prayer summits in our community brought Robert Lewis to town a few years ago. We sat eating breakfast together and he told me that the Little Rock Fellowship Bible Church had launched about a thousand people into ministry. He reflected on the local church, and how he saw it as an incubator for spiritual growth as people grew in their knowledge of God. He also said that one of the areas in the

Missional Church movement that we are struggling with nationally, was what forms or structures in the faith community were available as believers followed their calls into ministry. How do they maintain meaningful and empowering connections with other believers? Who cares about them as they begin to walk in faith and make significant sacrifices in following their God? How do young believers in ministry take responsibility for their own walk and learn to sustain their own faith and call? Often times as people of faith begin to find their wings there is not enough space for them in the local church to stretch those wings. They become like teenagers who do not want to be at home anymore and feel there is not enough room for them to become who they are. They are creating a spiritual life of their own, just as adolescents who begin to create a life outside the family. They have to invest in the development of their life if they are to grow and become mature. As they head into adult life their life becomes their responsibility. If they stay within their own families and do not go to school or work or develop outside relationships, they will not develop the competencies needed to succeed in adult life. Parent's jobs are to let go, support and give some direction. They also are gatekeepers who help the adolescents who are now full of pride and power, take calculated risks, because they do not know what they do not know and need some guidance from those who have gone ahead of them. However they have to take risks, walk in faith to grow and develop. Parents and pastors can become very anxious and lack the faith in this stage of development and even be controlling rather than empowering. Believers who stay within the safety of the local church and do not venture out into ministry, will often stay limited in their growth. (Story of Wayne A and the church retreat)

Dr. Andrew Ross of Northminster Presbyterian Church said to me in a discussion on this subject that he thought this is one of the most difficult tasks for pastors. To launch or let go of church members who they love and have invested their lives in is painful but can be an affirmation of a job well done. One of the pastors in our community that I think does the best jobs on launching is Pastor Mark Harris. He has been a pastor to Larry Munguia who runs the Sober Project and the Sober Church, he pastored Nick Jones who runs the Old Pueblo Foundation and the many ministries under its umbrella and many others who lead church plants and para-church ministries. Mark recognizes the champions who are risk takers and willing to make significant sacrifices and take responsibility for their ministry and believes in them and validates their calls.

One of the joys of my life has been to run a leadership group called Tucson Coalition of Compassion Ministries or TCCM. Over the last 12 years I have seen about fifty mostly para-church ministries come and go from this meeting. I have also come to know and love a lot of the people running these cutting edge ministries. They are true champions of ministry in their willingness to make sacrifices and follow God in his leading. I have listened to many of their stories and know the upsides and downsides of leaving the local church family to follow what they believe is the call of God on their lives. One guy who started a dynamic ministry burnt too many bridges as he left the local church and sounded just like the teenager angry at his parents for not validating him as a young adult. His pastor was also angry at him and cut him off relationally, just like in families who do not resolve their difference and then the teenager leaves home poorly, often forming alliances that cause more division and rebellion. I have also seen many leave in ways that just changed the relationship to more of an adult to adult, rather than a parent child relationship and continue their love for one another. Another mission

minister had a hard break away from their local church. Part of growing up is moving from dependency to self sufficiency or in faith, sufficiency from dependence on Christ. People who stay emotionally dependent are more likely to be resentful and also often fearful about talking through their expectations and hurts. This person found that they did not have to be dependent on the local church to supply their needs and that God would provide through many diverse means as they did God's will. In fact they soon coined a saying that "God will provide when you do this will in his way." However God's way may not be the way the original church family did it or even saw it. All transitions create some level of differentiation and diversity strains unity and calls for more grace and respect. The original church family struggled to validate this ministry, partly in my opinion because of the differences. In my life as I became an adult my father had some level of struggle because he was a businessman with a call to provide well for the family. I was a pastor who was bi-vocational and did not make much money, so my competence as an adult was often questioned because we lived in different domains where the measuring sticks for success and competence were different.

During the Jesus movement there were pastors who were great at launching and also stayed in their role as mentor. One of the best in my opinion was Chuck Smith of Calvary chapel, who was a master of church plants. His Calvarys grew exponentially during the 1970s and 1980s. He still maintained the role of gatekeeper as he launched and validated young pastors all over the country. Many of the Jesus movement pastors had a lot of freedom and got into lots of extremes in theology. I saw one revival go from a traditional church to Jesus Movement to charismatic to a cosmic consciousness. So orthodoxy was being lost because of the freedom experienced by young and not so well trained young pastors. Chuck seemed to be able to give freedom and yet hold boundaries for these young pastors. He was a great father figure in the Jesus movement, giving roots and wings to young pastors. I also saw him restore broken pastors who had gone astray.

In the Reformation one of the issues of reformation was the focus on the division between the clergy and the laity. The clergy was not to be in a class above the laity that controlled and limited their congregants, (parental) because of their education and position. Luther strongly believed that we were a "Nation of priests" and that the Kingdom of God was about **all believers** trusting and serving God. That the church was about empowering people of faith to live out their faith, so pastors jobs were to equip the believer for works of service in every area of life, so there was secular-sacred division in the life of faith. However I believe there is a spiritual growth pattern that is developmental very much like what is ordained by God in the family.

EQUIPPING THE SAINTS FOR SERVICE

There maybe holes in the gospel that need to be filled in. Like a puzzle missing pieces, those pieces need to be found and put in place for the whole gospel to be incarnate in the whole Church. The focus of this article has been the division between the good news and good works in the church today. There are other gapping holes that need attention also, but for a later time. E. Stanley Jones says this another way in regards to the main church division or hole in the gospel. "The social gospel divorced from personal salvation is like a body without a soul; the message of personal salvation without a social dimension is like a soul without a body. The former is a corpse, the latter a ghost." We need healing in this area for the saints to fulfill their callings. The local church needs to work with the city church to fulfill all of its roles and callings which will empower it to

see the Lord's Kingdom come and his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. There already are many great stories of service and good works in Tucson that need to be told, that is a part of empowering people of faith. God is always at work and the life of Christ is being lived out in the saints as well as the pastors. Teaching pastors are important leaders in this process and but not the only leaders.

“He is the one who gave these gifts to the church; apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to **equip** God's people to do his work – **works of service**- and the building up of the body of Christ, until we come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's son that we will be mature and full grown in the Lord, measuring up to the full stature of Christ.” Ephesians 4:11-13 What will that look like in the life of an individual and in the life of the church?

At a wedding the other night I was listening to a man in his fifties complain about his church experience. “Its all about the pastors in our church, there is no room for the lay people to really minister in our church.” What I believe he was saying is that the church leadership does not really know how to launch their members into meaningful service and this man felt blocked, powerless and confused as to how to serve Christ. There was no space for him in his church family to grow. The funny thing is that I consider his church to be one of the best churches in Tucson. I also think he is afraid to leave the nest. Why? Why does he need to grow and become a mature person of faith?

For what Purpose? Or purposes? What works of service? In the book, “The Purpose Driven Church” Rick Warren gives five purposes of the church. He believes that the main reason 80% of church goers attend church in America is for fellowship, to be with other believers. (pg.123) For sure fellowship is important and very important in some of the stages of spiritual growth. In fact we usually need to be in the type of family structures that fit our level of maturity and tasks to develop, be secure and then launched. However, what are some of the other important purposes of the Church? One of the purposes of the Missional Church movement of God is that the Church is to be an army that fights the battles of God! All the purposes are important, like being a hospital for sinners is essential, we have to attend to the wounded and not shoot them- amen! But organizing around brokenness is only one of our purposes. We are the body of Christ who manifest the life of Christ. Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, who came to murder, destroy and steal. (John 10:10) We are called to fight evil by being loving and doing good in the context of a relationship with our communities and Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit. In the legacy of King David the Church is called like David to fight the battles of our God. Abigail says to David in 1 Samuel 25:27 “The Lord will surely reward you with a lasting dynasty, for you are fighting the Lord's battles.” The Church is moving into a position of an army in learning to fight evil as it is strengthened and becomes healthy. Churches that are internally healthy make a difference externally in their communities, just like healthy families. They organize their lives around mission and noble purposes. One of the reasons for the equipping of the saints is so they can fight the Lord's battles. The man I was talking to at the wedding wants to be a warrior, have a meaningful challenge in his life and become spiritually fit to fight the battle he is called to fight. He does not want to be on the sideline of a battle, watching or hearing about it, he is willing and almost prepared to get into the discomfort of the battle. It is not all about being comfortable with people of like mindedness or as some would put it, the holy

huddle but it is about defeating the enemy who has already been broken by Christ. This is how Newbigin puts it in “The Gospel in a Pluralist Society”

“He came as a king claiming the throne that was his by right. And he accepted, with open eyes, the cost of the claim. The throne would be a cross. But it was, and is, the throne. The death of Jesus was the place where “the ruler of this world” was cast out of his usurped throne (John 12:31). It was the place where the principalities and powers were disarmed (Col 2:15)

This, surely, is the image that must control our thinking about the relation of the Church to the city, of the Church to the world. And it will therefore control the way ministry is conceived. The task of ministry is to lead the congregation as a whole in a mission to the community as a whole, to claim its whole public life, as well as the personal lives of all its people, for God’s rule. It means **equipping** all the members of the congregation to understand and fulfill their several roles in this mission through their faithfulness in their daily work. It means training and equipping them to be active followers of Jesus in his assault on the principalities and powers which he has disarmed on his cross. And it means sustaining them in bearing the cost of that warfare.” (Pg.238)

The Church cannot be a body of people who hide behind their crosses if they are going to become warriors they have to carry their own crosses! If they are to share in His glory, they have to face their own shame and carry their own crosses. (Col 3:4 NLT and Hebrews 12:2 and Col 1:24) This means that the battle is costly and not for those afraid of the suffering. There can be no romanticizing of the battle and it is best led by those who have suffered the costs of a spiritual battle. To minimize the suffering causes great disillusionment as believers pay the prices involved in taking up their crosses and following their King. A Hollywood view of the clash between good and evil can miss the paradoxes of the Kingdom in spiritual battles. That it is often weakness not power, humility not pride, gentleness not force, dying that gives birth to life and grace, biblical rest not just responsibility, and forgiveness not vengeance that wins the battle. The battle is the Lord’s, but he uses his body to fight his battles. His work of redemption is multifaceted and we are privileged to share in this service. He will not stop until his purposes are complete.

“Look at my servant, whom I strengthen. He is my chosen one, and I am pleased with him. I have put my Spirit upon him. He will reveal justice to the nations. He will be gentle—he will not shout or raise his voice in public. He will not crush those who are weak or quench the smallest hope. He will bring full justice to all who have been wronged. **He will not stop until truth and righteousness prevail throughout the earth.** Even distant lands beyond the sea will wait for his instruction.” Isaiah 42:1-4
Jesus will establish his kingdom.

What a privilege to have the life of Christ manifest in the body of Christ, his bride and to serve him in his purposes. To see his will being done and the missions of his Kingdom being accomplished. To be productive and fruitful in the good deeds that we were created to walk in, so we might be salt and light to the world around us. My prayer is that Tucson can be a place where the faith community comes together to worship our Lord and Savior and serve him in ways that manifest his love to the rest of the community so his kingdom will be experienced by those who do not know him and that they “see the goodness of God.”

NEW STRUCTURE FOR THE MISSIONAL CHURCH

Many of the para-church organizations that I have worked with over the years have struggled in their battles to see victory and not be crushed or defeated. They often also feel abandoned as leaders by their local churches. Their personal faith and sacrifice has made huge differences in the lives of the broken and marginalized in our community. I have seen a lot of hurt and resentment as these young leaders struggle often by themselves to fight the battles that I believe God has personally called them to fight. They are the front lines and it is important that the front lines are not cut off from their supply lines. In war it is said that for every soldier on the front lines there are seventeen people making sure they have the supplies they need to fight the battle. I have written two books on burn out because being Missional has a down side. It is called burn out and when the burden out weighs the capacity of people and organizations they become depleted and often deteriorate. I have experienced battle fatigue and seen many people burn out and never return to battle. They need mentors and supporters who will be there for them and do not see them as a threat to the local church, but indeed a partner and compliment to the work of Christ's Kingdom in our community. They often are broken themselves and still recovering from personal sin and failure, so it is easy to be critical of them and shoot our wounded-healers. However this is a place where Satan would love to take us and often has over the years in our community. I have also personally struggled with feeling hurt and marginalized as I have ministered in our community, so I can identify with those who feel abandoned at times. There are many stories in war of where a platoon will get cut off from its supply lines and fail in their mission and die because they have lost connections with their resources. So many veterans of war who come home after making huge sacrifices and are wounded and broken because of battle scars end up marginalized and homeless. Of course what is most important for the soldiers in God's army is the grace of God for any one called to minister. That grace often comes through family, friends and the church family. I know it has often been these supports that have enabled me to keep going in ministry. One of the para-church leaders who was an outstanding leader, felt abandoned by his church and then became embittered towards God and could not sustain his ministry. I know maintaining healthy relationships is so important to sustaining ministry and mission and winning battles, without support and supply even champions may give in to discouragement and loose faith.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD NOT THE DOMAIN OF THE CHURCH

Why was so much of the ministry of Jesus outside the religious structure of his day? It is clear from the Mathew passage that the religious leaders were to teach the Word of God and followers were to do what they said, in the context of their own walk with God. Why was the Kingdom of God somewhat a mystery to the religious leaders of Jesus day? Is it still a mystery today? What caused them to be short sighted?

Every domain is a little myopic and the church domain is as well. We tend to be loyal to the systems we live in, which is not a bad thing, but it may cause us to miss the bigger picture. The greater perspective is the Kingdom view in that Christ is the Lord of every domain of life. He has power and dominion over all of life, He "is supreme over all creation." (col 1:15) In preparing his Church for works of service, he places them in many areas so that his rule will be established in all sectors and domains of our society. (Quote Eric Swanson) There are many amazing people of faith serving in positions of influence in government- like Linda leatherman, business- like Walt Pearson and other

domains of our culture. The scriptures make it clear that God is sovereign and that he has put us where he desires. We all have our little silos or kingdoms where God has placed us, to do His will. (decentralized view of the Kingdom of God) In the book of Daniel one of the main themes is that, “the Most High God rules the kingdoms of the world and appoints anyone he desires to rule over them.” Daniel 5:21 Daniel repeats this theme over and over again, 2:21, 36, 4:3,17,25,34-35, 5:21 7:14. He also says that this rule will go to his people as he establishes his kingdom. “But in the end, the holy people of the Most High will be given the Kingdom, and they will rule forever and ever.” Daniel 7:18 Many times our little worlds blind us to the bigger picture because to don’t know what we don’t know. God is always at work ruling and creating his Kingdom. Our call in our relationship with Christ, has to do with understanding his rule in our lives and our domains, and to seek him and his grace so we can have the faith and follow him. It is His Kingdom and His purposes that are the most important aspects of life. As Dr. Larry Crab says, (“our little stories need to be connected to the big story,”) which is the story that the Lord is writing through our lives and through history.

In a post modern world I believe that the Church has to be more humble and often take a not knowing position, because at times we do not really know how God is at work, especially in other domains than our own. Even though we want to partner with him in the works that he is doing. The religious community has always had events orchestrated by God to keep us humble. The Jewish people knew that they were a “special people” called by God to reveal to the world who God was, and that he “is a good God.” Being special can cause us to be proud and arrogant and think we are more knowledgeable and powerful than we actually are. In 2 Chronicles 35 Josiah dies because of this presumptuous arrogance, even though he was doing wonderful things ceremonially and in restoring the Temple. King Neco of Egypt comes up from Egypt with his army to do battle. Neco is not a person who is supposedly a “special person” one of the chosen ones. However God has a plan that has to do with Neco and not Josiah. Josiah thinks this is about him! Neco warns Josiah that God has brought him up to do battle and says stay out of this, “..God has told me to hurry! Do not interfere with God, who is with me, or he will destroy you.” And then it says “But Josiah refused to listen to Neco, to whom God had indeed spoken and he would not turn back.” Vs 21-22 The result was that he died from the wounds he received in a battle he was not supposed to be involved.. It must have been hard to believe that such an outstanding believer and King could be left out of His God’s plans with a pagan nation. He was a great King who did wonderful things in relationship to his God, how could he not know? In modernity we as the faith community often emphasized what we knew and at times were arrogant about our knowledge of God and the special place he has given us. It is difficult at times to take that not knowing position. Daniel makes it clear that God will humble the proud (Daniel 4:37 and King Nebuchadnezzar’s story) I have struggled with arrogance as a pastor and have been critical towards domains like business. Several times I have seen God break me of my pride and show me like Josiah that “it is not about me.” It is clear to me that the church today does not have a lot of credibility and influence in our culture. Barna’s research has confirmed that fact. That we are marginalized in our influence and that this is a position of humility if we recognize it. To be who God called us to be we need to contribute to the common good, especially to the poor and marginalized. When the Psalmist describes the legacy of the godly he says, “They are generous, compassionate, and righteous. All

goes well for those who are generous, who lend freely and conduct their business fairly.....They give generously to those in need. Their good deeds will never be forgotten. They will have influence and honor.” Psalm 112:4,5 &9

John DiIulio the faith based academic for the Bush administration says that the faith community makes a huge difference as they serve. In his book “Godly Republic” he talks about all the areas that the Christian church has positive influences on our society. He calls the faith community the overlooked positive factor in the health of our communities. He quotes Dr. David Larson who “left behind a monumental scientific legacy encompassing over 270 professional publications.” (pg. 183) These publications “proved that there were links between religion and a variety of physical and mental health outcomes, including prevention, recovery, and coping with chronic and serious illness.” (pg 183) DiIulio also talks about all the areas that the faith community makes a difference, but especially to the poor, minorities and marginalized of our cities. In the opening paragraph of this paper I talked about the church that takes a month off to serve in their community. This is nothing new in the history of the Church, but the rise in the Missional church movement is significant because of emphasis on service theologically and incarnationally as the Church becomes the hands and feet of Jesus to those in need.

We as the Church have been given a “special place” and God does want to use us for His glory. Robert Lewis believes the Church is called to facilitate much of God’s agenda to a world in need. Here is what he says, “I love the Church of Jesus Christ. I love the truth it stands for. I love the life it alone can give. Despite it’s shortcomings due to the open arms it offers sinners, it still remains the greatest force on earth for good. Nothing else is like it, especially when it is healthy.” Pg17 Part of that health is to have healthy structures that allows God’s purposes to develop in His people. I believe that the city church especially has to organize itself around not only teaching, but guiding, gatekeeping and consulting as believers move through the stages of maturity.

End of the article