



## **THE ALTER PROBLEM:** **IS CHURCH BENT ON SAVING THE LOST?**

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Have a discussion with your Staff about reaching the lost inside your church. The first thought is “yes of course” we should call the unsaved to the Alter. There is a knee jerk reaction to not talk about this subject. It seems preposterous to look at this long standing tradition. This is what we have always done and will always do. Ok now that you have that out of the way, can we talk about the Alter?

This place called the Alter is a sacred Place. It has been with us since the days of Moses. This is a place where we can come before God and repent, sacrifice, and talk with God in Heaven. We have always done it this way. So what is wrong with tradition? Nothing really except things have changed. The Lost don't come to Church anymore to find themselves. The world offers many ways to find yourself now. The world considers nature walks,

spiritual treks, and reading an inspiring book great ways to connect with your spiritual side. Many people tell me they find “themselves” to be a sacred place to be explored: it’s not in Church or at the Alter anymore.

This is hard to conceive inside your Church boardroom. You have been trained to believe you are the way, the truth, and the life, but to the real world, your just another way to find one’s self. We know God is the best answer but the lost don’t. This brings me back to the Alter. Church is built for the saved. We have to admit it. We did it that way. Our mandate is outside the Church. We were supposed to have hearts for the lost like Jesus did and still does. These Questions below will help you discover a better way to use your pulpit and alter in Church.

## **1. WHAT IS OUR REAL MISSION?**

**Luke 19:10** “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” This is Jesus mission. We are the body of Christ: this is our mission too. Jesus mission was in the church and outside the church. Honesty is needed here. We have built the church for believers. We train them like Jesus did to go out. The problem might be: has our mission changed? are we consumed with training and the church more than the mission?

## **2. DO WE HAVE AN ALTER PROBLEM?**

Church is not the place for saving the lost. A Pastor’s alter call for the lost is fruitless. The saved are in church. The call to the lost should be done outside. If we were a business would it be affective targeting less than 1% of your target audience? Church is for the saved. Outside the church is our agenda. If were traveling north with a compass we go where the

needle is pointed. We encounter hills, valleys, and forests, and these things get in our way. We still need to go north so there is a struggle to overcome the obstacles. The goal is still to go north. We train in the church but the goal is still outside.

### **3. WHAT IS OUR AGENDA?**

Realize that we talk about the lost inside the church, but it has not been our agenda. Church is built for the saved. We need to take a deep look at our agenda. Yes church pastoring is needed, but our main goal should always be the lost. so often we wear horse blinders; we only see what is in-front of us. There are targets, agendas, financial goals, and themes for the year. Are these things taking us away from the mission. Oh I know you will say they fill the mission, but I have been in your boardrooms. The mission is broad strokes and the agenda is deep sea diving. Here is a test: how much time do you spend in the mission field? Your congregation are just like you.

### **4. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF OUR CHURCH?**

This place is for learning, sheparding, and healing. Church is the community of Christ. This is where we build disciples and community. Jesus called us to go out into the world and spread the good news. Disciples are built inside to go outside to the lost. The mission should always be to go outside. I have seen church building plans kill a church. was it better to build or split in two? Maybe the idea of growth comes in reproducing more than adding to the numbers? The purpose is the lost. a smaller church can reach the lost much more effectively than a big one.

## **5. WHAT IS GOD REALLY PASSIONATE FOR?**

**Luke 15 (read):** The passion in heaven is for the lost. Jesus goes out of his way to point out how passionate Gods kingdom is for lost people. Jesus spoke more than one parable on this topic. Why? I believe it was because he knew they were not getting it. God is in the business of finding people who are lost. yes we train and yes we build up, but it's all done to reach the lost. I know a pastor that said "he was not sure there is anyone to be saved anymore." In church: that is echoed. It's in our actions. We are trending inside the church rather than outside. Our passion needs to be for the people out there.

## **6. DO WE REALLY VENTURE OUTSIDE THESE WALLS?**

There is a statement in Leviticus 10:10 "**we are to distinguish between the sacred and the common.**" How can we do that if were inside while the lost are outside? Is giving money and creating programs effective for the lost? If we don't know how they think, what makes you think they want to know you? What would Jesus do?

## **7. Is there a better, different, or innovative solution to the Alter outside and inside?**

Move the Alter outside. The Alter inside is for confession and repentance. The Alter outside is the cross of Christ. Help guide the lost to the cross. This is our calling as Christ followers.