



YOU HAVE NO STONE TO THROW: **WHY DO WE LOVE THROWING STONES?**

Church has become a place where we show our humanity and not our changed lives. That's just not true Patrick! Really? J Vernon McGee often tells his listeners that in church he couldn't say the things he does on radio, but since he retired from the pastorate he can say what he wants. We blame church gossip on people but I blame it on the church. We come in nice clothes, we talk to certain people, and we sit in the same place. People are creatures of habit. We talk about ourselves, we watch others, and we secretly get annoyed with people. If we were honest, that is real church. It's too bad a pastor can't tell it like it is.

We do church our way. We ask for money, we tell our plans, and we preach on what we want done. We do church our way. Is that the way God would do church? Jesus does church differently. He preached on the things that were unpopular. He gathered money when

needed, not to plan a ministry. He went from place to place ministering to those who came within his view. I don't believe he had an agenda so to speak. Money never bothered him. He never worried about anything. Yet for all those things: we plan a church service.

Who do we hire in church? Who is the head elder, the head usher, and the music director? We hire only the best of the best don't we. We want the best so they can give us what we want flawlessly. Is that how Jesus ran his ministry? Was Peter the best? Was Paul the best Christian (think about it before you answer)? Was Joshua, David, and Sampson the best? Is your church so perfect because of who you have running it? If the real Jesus showed up at your door, what would he look like? Would you hire him (think before you answer that one)? Below are seven questions that will challenge your church thinking.

1. DO WE LISTEN IN CHURCH?

I can remember someone coming to church and they looked terrible. Something was wrong in their lives. That whole sermon I kept looking over at them. What was the sermon? I dunno, I wanted to know what was wrong over in the third row on the left. We are not very good listeners at church sometimes. I told a pastor when I was single that the sermon did not preach to single people. He asked me if it was Biblical. I said yes, so then he told me I was not listening and needed to go home and dig deeper. He was right, I came to church for the wrong reasons. We need to put ourselves aside when we come to church and just listen. What is the Pastors role in listening?

2. ARE WE DOING CHURCH OUR WAY OR GOD'S WAY?

I think planning a service is good. We need to know the message and the song selection before. It will provide the right bulletin and the right flavor for the service. I get

it. Yet there is something terribly wrong with it. We preach to move the people our way. Oh sure we say it is God's way but is it? God wants us to preach on a building campaign. God wants us to preach on gossip. Why: because God sees it in the church or is it that the pastor does. I knew a pastor that gave a whole sermon on church bickering and then left for three months on stress leave. The agenda in the service was based on his heart more than Gods heart. When I went through divorce God put me in situations to help other hurting divorcees. I hated that. God's agenda is not about us or what we think but about what needs to be done for others. Just stop and think about your planning, is it you or God?

3. WHY DO WE PEOPLE WATCH AT CHURCH?

One time my kid wandered off in church to the front. I was silently trying to bring him back. At one point the pastor asked me to get him, it was distracting. We are supposed to focus on the sermon but we tend to wander. I know a scripture on the church wall by heart. What does that say about the sermon? I know who is snotty, who is hurting, and who is asleep. Did I hear the sermon? Why do we do that at church, I mean people watch? I think it's for two reasons. One is that we are human and that's what we do. Two I think it is because the sermon is 30 minutes and not pulling at my heart. I preach with passion and have been told so. I am there to pass on my passion to you. Maybe pastors have a role in people watching too?

4. IF JESUS SHOWED UP TO CHURCH: WOULD YOU KNOW HIM?

I witnessed a disheveled man coming into the church for help. The pastor gave him a place to stay for a week. The pastor said after that it seemed like a test from Jesus. Was it Jesus at the door? Jesus says over and over that he is the poor and needy. In Matthew 25 Jesus makes it quite clear who he really is. I remember a man wanting to say

something to the church. The whole staff became consumed with finding out exactly who this man was. They decided he was trouble and planned on arresting him if he caused trouble again. Hmmm...

5. HOW WOULD YOU REACT IF SOMEONE SAID YOUR CHURCH SUCKED?

I do not attend a Pentecostal church. We were and still are quite conservative in our worship. One day a lady got up and prophesied. I got to tell you, it did not go well. That kind of thing never happens in that church and I mean never. The leadership decided to discuss the merit of her words. In the end they dismissed her because she did not follow protocol. Many people thought she was bang on and they took notice. The church leadership thought differently. Maybe what Jesus has to say about your church would not be popular, but it might be the truth? How hard would it be to see your church from their eyes about your leadership? Maybe protocol is not the only way God tells a church the right thing?

6. IN CHURCH DO PEOPLE SEE YOU OR WHAT YOU WANT THEM TO SEE?

There are seven woes in Matthew 23. Each one is a stinging attack on the character of church leadership. I had a friend tell me those verses are just for church leadership aren't they? Are they? Each person in church is a Jesus preacher aren't they? I know a man who says he does not willfully sin. He says he is looking for those of good character. Is Jesus looking for those of good character or those who he can create good character in? There is a difference you know. I think Aladdin from Disney touched people in the theatre because it gave hope for the hopeless. Jesus is into the hopeless. This whole series came about because someone in church told me to be careful about what people see in my life. That was the last straw. People now see me and nothing more. They see my flaws and my growth as a Christian. I would like to believe that I am more

honest and real than most pastors today. Simply put: are you fake in front of the people? What are you losing in a service by being hidden?

7. DO WE COME TO CHURCH FOR: MY ENTERTAINMENT, MY HURTS, AND MY RESPECT?

Why do you preach? Why do you serve? Why do you come to church? Again J Vernon McGee has a good answer. If you feel commanded to do all those things then go home. God wants none of that garbage. Are you there with your desire and your heart or because you are scared of God? We come for many reasons. Is it important to be healed at church, or is it important to be entertained at church (it is sadly). Is it important to be seen as all together in your life? A measure of you is who you talk to after church. We tend to migrate to certain types, trust me we do. Maybe we preach or attend a church for the wrong reasons. Maybe...