



OUR COMFORT ZONE: **DO WE LOVE A COMFORTABLE CHURCH?**

As a church staff, are you willing to go to those uncomfortable places? Once, I attended a church that was about to expand like never before. The pastor decided to bring in a man to preach on sexual integrity. I thought it was uncalled for because after that night it turned that church upside down in the middle of a building project. Yet, it began to teach the people to explore those uncomfortable places. Places in our lives, and in the lives of the lost. In some ways we can't know pigs and love pigs until we become one (Luke 15 the lost son).

Church should be lived and run by chance. That seems reckless doesn't it? We need order, I get that, but a sense of uneasiness is needed sometimes to remind us we are not in control: God is. Each one of us where: saved by chance, found love by chance, and became who we are by chance. Our church should reflect the way we are found by God. God saves

people in strange ways. He gets ministry done by miracles. How can we emulate that in our church?

In church we have a very bad habit these days. We preach joy, but love to argue over doctrine. We preach saving people, but rarely leave the building ourselves. We preach big words like sanctification, but use them as a marker for the elite Christians. In church we don't speak the language of the people or the lost? It is all about the "in" club isn't it? Church is set up for the saved not the lost. That's fine, but Jesus came to seek and save the lost didn't he?

Below are a series of questions that might jar your bad habits. It might turn your church upside down in the middle of "your" program. Think about it, if God changed your agenda, what would happen? Would there be chaos or just a realization that God wants you to adjust? A corporate run church lacks revival, renewal, and miracles. Discuss it!! You know it's true, God does not follow the plans we make does he? Church grew in the first century because it was on edge. The Christian religion grew in history when we were not in control.

1. ARE YOU WILLING TO LET GOD CHANGE YOUR PLANS?

In Acts 17 Paul is driven by God to Mars hill. Is your church being driven by God? I know we all answer yes. What if you found out your driving instead of God? Maybe the best laid plans are not always the best plans. Some of the greatest events in history happened "by chance." Would it revitalized your church if you changed the course and did something reckless? Discuss it around the table. What does a vibrant church look like? Listen to the song "reckless" by Jeremy Camp.

2. ARE YOU ABLE TO SEE WHAT GOD IS DOING?

I have this idea called sideways preaching? No I'm not lying on my side silly. It's when we focus our words on one group of people, yet God is providing an audience not in our focus. I was talking about God to someone, yet the person beside me was agreeing. I ignored the person beside me because I wanted the person in-front of me to hear. It was about my focus and my agenda. I could not see what God was doing, it was all about me. Paul in Acts 17 is focused on the synagogues, yet God kept kicking him out to the women and Greeks. Paul was sideways preaching and did not see it at first until Mars hill. Has your preaching been your focus or Gods focus? When you preach who is the audience God has provided?

3. DO CHRISTIANS SPEAK THE LANGUAGE OF THE LOST?

I had a wise pastor ask me once if I knew the language of the people I wanted to reach? Sure they are English speaking. He changed my mind because it was their life language he was referring to. Oh I get it now. In a Christian public speaking course I was challenged to leave Christianese out of my sermons. That is tough to do let me tell you. Do we know how to talk to the lost in their understanding? Does it matter?

4. IS YOUR CHURCH GOING WHERE THE LOST ARE?

Paul in Acts 17 is traveling to the lost? He does not set up ministry or programs. He is not putting an advertisement on Face Book. Paul is using his feet. Time is saved because Paul is on the go. The planning part is left to God if you noticed. Well that was Paul's way. Really? Is it Gods way to plan ahead? Discuss it around the table: you are inside and the lost are outside.

5. CAN YOU SEE THE AUDIENCE GOD HAS GIVEN YOU?

A man showed up at the church for food. A woman stood up and prophesied about the church. A flood happens or a tornado. A minister dies or leaves. Things change and agendas change, but the audience is the same. Is it about ministering inside or outside? When God changes things, do you wake up and take notice? Do you fight the change? Maybe the message should be the same, but the audience varied?

6. IN CHURCH MEETINGS DO WE REALLY ASK GOD WHERE WE SHOULD GO TODAY?

Read Acts 17 from the events point of view. Write down the journey of Paul. Was his journey done by his plan? Maybe the audience is at a store or in a food bank. Maybe an event happens and the church must adjust to serve in a different area. Have we been reduced to a ministry of babysitting? Maybe your church can't do what God needs of them. Is that the people's fault, God's fault, or your fault? If you as a staff don't go, why should they? Do you dare ask God where to go today?

**7. ARE WE GOING WHERE WE FEEL COMFORTABLE OR WHERE GOD NEEDS US TO
BE?**

Where is God taking you? What has he been showing you? If we were honest, what might God be asking of you? To leave, to reach this people or that, or to minister right where you are? If you say you know God, then you know that wherever he takes you, it won't be very comfortable. Is comfortable church really church?