



Millville United Methodist Church

THE DOVE FEBRUARY 2016

HELLO CHURCH,

I heard an interesting quote at the last retreat I had to go to at Camp Pecometh that's been stuck in my head ever since. A big part of the ordination process is going to Residence in Ministry retreats for a couple days twice a year. It has a few components to it, but my favorite is the sessions with a Spiritual Director. During one of her presentations she shared this statement from Dallas Willard taken from his book *Renovation of the Heart*, "Terrorists as well as saints are the outcome of spiritual formation...spirits or hearts have been formed" (19-20). My gut reaction to this was that someone was being inflammatory for the sake of getting a rise out of people, but that was me just trying to deflect the challenge and immediacy of this statement. If you've never read anything from Dallas Willard before I strongly encourage it because I would call him one of the modern authorities on spiritual direction. How does that statement make you feel? What does it make you think about?

After dwelling with this statement for some time now I see it as one of, if not the most critical challenge we have to face as individual followers of Jesus and the Church. First of all, have you ever heard the term spiritual formation before? If that is a new term you can think of it as the process by which you take care of your soul, your spirit. Being a follower of Jesus Christ is a commitment to allowing our souls to be formed and more importantly transformed by our

relationship with our Savior. It's a unique and wonderful process because we have to be disciplined and strive as hard as we can to allow someone else, God, to do the work and bear the burden of the state or our souls. A common parallel, which is mostly right and gets the general idea across, is physical fitness and how we take care of our bodies. The analogy falls short though because the end result of working out is ultimately up to us. Sure there are genetics and other conditions beyond our control, but we don't go to the gym or go for a run to wait for something to happen to us or upon us. It's self-improvement, which is good in its own way, but our destiny in Christ is about spiritual formation. I'm reminded of this familiar passage from Luke's Gospel, "And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined" (5:37). By accepting the grace of Jesus into our hearts we are called into repentance and a conviction to leave our old selves behind. There are countless forces and beings in this world that do everything they can, whose sole mission in the world, is to convince us that improving or dressing up our wineskins is all we can do or the best we can hope for. We need to be mindful and vigilant to make sure we are not giving any of these false and deceiving forces any space in our hearts or souls. The best defense against such things is to fill our days and lives with things that enrich and

strengthen our relationship with Christ in all places and ways. Our wineskins are what they are and will be what they are going to be, but that which fills our hearts and souls is timeless, beautiful, and meant to flow from us into the world we are called to serve. Pursue God in all ways for the salvation of your soul and for all those you'll meet along the way!

**With Blessing,
Pastor Brad**

Feedback Regarding Pastor Brad's Survey

As most of the congregation is aware, our Pastor conducted a recent survey to see if the members of the congregation were receiving the message needed in order to maintain their journey with the Lord.

Overall, the health report was good with an overall satisfaction rating of 73%. As in any organization, improvements can always be made and comments have been provided; which will be addressed as we move forward. The survey was based on ten questions the Pastor prepared, and members of the congregation either responded to an on-line survey, or they provided feedback after a recent Sunday service.

The questions and the results of the survey can be reviewed on the Church web site at: www.millvillemethodistchurch.org

An area noted, was our need to attract new members so we can continue to grow and continue our mission work both locally and worldwide. In this regard, Pastor Brad is planning to start an effort in March to address this issue. You may be called upon to assist with this mission.

Our church with the lighthouse on the corner, has been doing an excellent job in supporting Mission efforts, both locally and worldwide. Our plan is to continue supporting these critical issues.

Several other areas were noted to include our music program and the overall length of the Sunday service. These along with the other comments will be addressed by the various Chairperson's responsible for that activity, along with the Pastor. Where required, changes will be presented to the Administrative Council for their review and acceptance.

This report is provided by a team formed at the request of the Staff Pastor/Parish Relations Committee and is staffed by Bob Chin, Kristy Moran and Ron Smith. We welcome any comments you may have in regard to the survey or our report.

The UMW

The UMW (MUMC's Women's Organization) will have its first meeting of 2016 next Tuesday, February 9, at 10 AM in Wesley Hall. At every meeting we have a devotional, dessert, and conduct our business. Our meetings are scheduled for 1 hour.

All women of the congregation are invited to join our group. Our dues are \$15/year. Our major fund raiser is our November bazaar. We also have bake sales once a month in the summer. We celebrate our sisterhood in Christ at Christmas with an annual luncheon.

**It's good to belong to such a caring group of fellow Christian women. Please join us.
Marie Myers, 539-4623**

Aging Faithfully

Aging Faithfully will not be active during February and March. Stay warm, and we'll see you in the Spring!

Brad

A Thought

The best style of worship is the one that most authentically represents your love for God!

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee is pleased to report that we ended 2015 with two very strong months of collections. The treasurer's report shows that through December 31, the budgeted receipts for 2015 were \$156,256 which was only \$3,089 less than we received in 2014. It was \$10,530 short of our budgeted goal, but we were able to control our spending knowing that we were having lowered income. We ended up spending \$735 less for budgeted items than we collected for them.

The total receipts for 2015 were \$186,281 which was \$2,580 more than our total disbursements. This includes missions, memorial accounts, rental income, flowers, etc. The building fund for 2015 started with a balance of \$12,887 and received an additional \$975 during the year. The disbursements from this fund were \$6,762, which left the building fund with a balance of \$7,100 on December 31st.

At our January meeting, after a long and involved discussion, the committee decided to hold a pledge drive this fall to better enable us to arrive at a realistic budget for 2017.

We have placed a jar at the back of the church to collect loose change to supplement our weekly income and we have designated the

third Sunday of each month to have a basket for mortgage reduction. Please continue to pray that our collections improve and that we spend God's funds wisely.

Larry Kaplan, chairman

Living Last Supper

I am so happy and blessed to tell you that 12 wonderful men as well as Pastor Brad have been working on our production of The Living Last Supper.

As The Light House on the corner, our church has brought many folks in with our productions. It is my prayer that each and every one will support our efforts and come. We are doing this on Wednesday March 23rd and Thursday March 24th at 7pm. Please let your friends and neighbors know! We are looking forward to giving this wonderful Easter message and spreading the word of God. If you have company coming that week, please bring them.

We look forward to a full house each night.

Marianne Smith

A Quote from "The Purpose Driven Life"

Servants are always on the lookout for ways to help others. When they see a need, they seize the moment to meet it, just as the Bible commands us:

"Whenever we have the opportunity, we have to do what is good for everyone, especially for the family of believers." When God puts someone in need right in front of you, He is giving you the opportunity to grow in servanthood. Notice that God says the needs of your church family are to be given

preference, not put at the bottom of your “things to do” list.

Revival – Part 1

By Ed Thornton

Introduction

Because of our nature, we stray from God's truth. We ignore it or water it down to meet our needs. In every age the religions of culture try to persuade Christians to accommodate their beliefs to the religions of culture. So all Christians, both leaders and congregations are continually challenged to renew their commitment to God's truths. Our readings from the OT and NT address this challenge.

What does the OT say about revival? - How Spiritual Revival Comes

Read 2 Chronicles 29: 1-10.

In our reading, Hezekiah sets about to correct problems with the church and its leadership. Revival will not come to the church until the leadership is renewed. Spiritual leaders set the greatest example of revival when they proclaim Biblical truths unaffected by societal pressure.

To understand this story we need to refer to the previous chapter of Second Chronicles, Chapter 28. It describes the dismal spiritual situation in Judah under King Ahaz, (A haz) Hezekiah's father. King Ahaz introduced idol worship alongside the worship of God in the temple and ended by closing the doors of the Temple, sacrificing to the gods of Damascus, and establishing centers of idol worship in every Judean town. The religious leaders of the time went along with what King Ahaz did.

They did not protest the King's actions. Because of King Ahaz's actions, the Lord stirred up enemies against him from every side ending in wars and ending with Judah's economy in ruin.

Even when the catastrophic devastation swept over Judah the Lord was preparing King Ahaz's son Hezekiah to take the throne and to restore the nation.

Although King Hezekiah was raised in one of the most ungodly environments imaginable, he came to know the Lord in a very personal way, committing his life, wholeheartedly, to the Lord.

When Hezekiah became king he issued three calls of revival for the religious leaders of Judah.

- 1. He called for SEPARATION**
- 2. He called for SURRENDER**
- 3. He called for SACRIFICE**

Let's look at each of these calls.

First A CALL FOR SEPARATION

Hezekiah knew if the people would return to the Lord, they would have the blessings of God as they sought to rebuild the nation.

He called for the leaders to part ways with the religion of culture. And this call for separation was based on PERSONAL PURITY. Hezekiah recognized that the need for revival among God's people was very personal. He recognized, first, HIS OWN NEED, and the needs of the LEADERS of God's people to return to God's Biblical truths, to be purified, to set themselves apart from worldly truths. No organization will ever rise above the level of commitment found

in their leaders. LEADERS LEAD, they set the example, they can't escape this fact.

King Hezekiah's first act was to open the doors of the closed temple and call the leaders together and to challenge them spiritually to be cleansed. The challenge for spiritual separation focuses on repentance and return.

This is what Hezekiah said: "Listen to me, Levites! Consecrate yourselves now and consecrate the temple of the LORD, the God of your fathers. Remove all defilement from the sanctuary." In order for there to be spiritual revival among the leaders they must first reject the influence of the religion of culture and second to reaffirm Biblical truths.

It is the only way to be separated from the religion of culture and the foundation of messages of revival. Each leader must clean out the junk of culture that is keeping them from personal revival.

Then the leaders needed to lead their members in this call for personal repentance and return. They must lead their members in cleaning out their junk of culture hindering revival.

Next Hezekiah said: "They also shut the doors of the portico and put out the lamps. They did not burn incense or present any burnt offerings at the sanctuary to the God of Israel." Leaders shut the doors of the temple and put out the lamps, plunging the temple into total darkness. With these actions the religious leaders turned from God and failed to seek His guidance and follow His truths. The lamp of intercession symbolized God's eternal presence and is therefore never extinguished.

Without the lamps of intercession they were refusing to seek atonement and reconciliation

with the Lord. It had been far too long since the religious leaders fell on their face before God prayed for His forgiveness and guidance.

Hezekiah's second Call was FOR SURRENDER

This personal surrender happens in worship and always starts with the leaders. Early in the morning on the day after the call for separation, Hezekiah led the religious leaders and the people in a great rededication and surrender. They rededicated both their own lives and the temple to the Lord. No time was wasted in demonstrating this new call for surrender; a new beginning, this fresh new start recommitting their live to God's truths.

Hezekiah's third call was FOR SACRIFICE

It is important to reemphasize this spiritual truth, when leaders have whole hearted revival that is evidenced in separation and surrender there is an unwavering expression of God's Biblical truths no matter the consequences.

Religious leaders are called to proclaim God's truths in the face of the religion of culture, not compromising God's truths with the culture.

If the leadership follows this pattern for revival first, then the people will follow the example of the leadership in speaking God's truth no matter the consequences.

Conclusion

Remember revival comes from two sources. First there is the revival of the leaders of the church. The challenge for today's church leaders is the same as in Hezekiah's time. They are called to spiritual revival; a time to repent and return, a time rededicate

themselves to the Lord and His Biblical truths based upon **SEPARATION, SURRENDER, and SACRIFICE!**

Next month we will look at the challenge for revival to individual believers.



Why Nobody Wants To Come To Church Anymore by Thom & Joani Schultz

A Synopsis by Ed Thornton

Introduction

There is no easy way to say this. The American Church is broken. Yet there is an abundance of hope things can change.

Chapter 1: It Was Clear Something Had Gone Terribly Wrong

Church attendance is shrinking. While 40% of Americans say they attend church every week, the actual number is more like 20%. Four out of five Americans say they are sure God exists and identify themselves with a faith group. But less than half of them ever attend church. Every year more than 4,000 churches close their doors compared to approximately 1,000 new, mostly very small, churches are started.

So why does nobody want to go to Church Anymore?

The church needs a wakeup call. We, as a church, need to admit we do not look that good. When others see us they are not attracted to us and wonder why we don't make some changes. Admit the church is broken (the thesis of the authors of this book).

So, why do we care?

About 20 years ago the answer to "fixing" the church was Christian education. People began experiencing the Bible as they never had before. It was a mini revolution. But now we realize that focus was wrong. Faith is not a subject to be taught. Faith is a relationship to be experienced. Once you understand that, our view of what happens at church changes. And it opens doors we never knew existed.

Chapter 2 Why Aren't They Coming?

Four reasons:

1. "I feel judged."

87 % of Americans label Christians as judgmental.

2. "I don't want to be lectured."

More than ever today people want to participate in the discussion of God, faith, and the Bible.

3. "Church people are a bunch of hypocrites."

85% of Americans make this claim.

4. "Your God is irrelevant to my life. But I'd like to know there is a God and he cares about me."

Most people do not experience God in a typical church service.

If this picture is correct where do we start?

The facts are people have stopped coming to church because they have a negative perception

of the church. They have real concerns and issues that church today does not deal with. Yet people are spiritually hungry. They want to grow closer to God. Is it possible to create a church environment where people truly experience God all the time? To answer that question we as a church have to acknowledge we have to make some changes.

Where do we start?

So what to people really want out of church? A Gallup survey, after extensive study uncovered the six needs of Americans- the need:

- 1. To believe life is meaningful and has a purpose**
- 2. For a sense of community and deeper relationship**
- 3. To be listened to and to be heard**
- 4. To feel one is growing in faith**
- 5. To be appreciated and respected**
- 6. For practical help in developing a mature faith.**

So one of the first things we need to do is to learn about the power of experience.

Our experiences actually form our beliefs which then form our actions, followed by results. Because the church, at its core, is people who claim to follow Jesus “regular people” perceive “church people” through their experience of interaction with “church people.”

Today “regular people: experience six types of churches:

- 1. The Police Department – this church makes sure people follow the rules, a long list of rules.**
- 2. The Political Action Committee (PAC) – social issues dominate the agenda and prime responsibilities of these churches.**
- 3. The Theater – it delivers dazzling, orchestrated, crowd pleasing, seat filling, and highly scripted, rehearsed shows.**

4. The Mortuary – they are solemn, serious, and not fun. They stress to somber aspects of worship and faith.

5. The Seminary – teaching the truth has become more important than living the truth. Information is not destination. Relationship with God is the key to growing faith.

6. The Museum – these exist to preserve the memories and traditions of the past. It reminds people of days gone by.

Because people experienced one of these six types of churches they have left the church. There are two responses people experience with the “current church.” There are those who voted with their feet. They are called the church “declined.” But not everyone has walked away. Some people feel very comfortable with the status quo; these are the church “inclined.” There is another group - the PIBOS. They are the Present In Body Only (PIBOS). They quietly attend church, say little, look a bit detached, and leave quietly after the service.

Now What?

The rest of this book reveals a bold new experiment that can forever change the way we think about church.

Next month Chapter 3: A Bold New Experiment.

Ed



