

The Purposes Of The Church

Introduction. In Tony Morgan's Q3 UnStuck Church Report, he shares that among churches his team surveyed, in-person attendance is 36% of what it was pre-COVID. No leader entered 2020 saying, "I hope we're at 36% of where we are right now by the end of the year." But that's exactly what's happening. Church leaders said, "People have always gathered in person, and they'll gather again as soon as possible." You can find cases of churches who have seen 50% in-person attendance rates, and even some that top 70%. But again, no one started the year thinking "losing 30% would be such a win."

A Barna/Stadia survey found that only 42% of Millennials say that when COVID is over, they want to return to primarily in-person worship. 41% of Gen Z say they prefer primarily in-person worship. This means, of course, that the majority don't. Maybe now more than ever, Christians have to help the church be what it was designed to be.

Every organization is driven by something or someone. There is some reason for their existence and some purpose for their activity. A local congregation is no exception to that rule. Every local church is driven by something. It may be spoken or unspoken, but it is nevertheless there influencing every aspect of the church's work.

It is important for the growth of any congregation that we evaluate what prompts us. What causes us to plan the activities we do and what keeps us from doing other activities? Our continued growth as a congregation and as people of God depend on our ability to recognize how we are to plant and water and make changes when necessary (1 Corinthians 3:6).

I. What Some Churches Are Driven By

A. Tradition.

1. Some churches exist for the sole purpose of perpetuating the past.
2. It is good to have solid history behind us, and we should appreciate those who have made sacrifices to bring the local church to this place and time. But having done so, we must set our eyes to the future.

B. Personality.

1. In some local churches, personality could very well be the number one driving force. Personality-driven churches are destined for trouble because the church is held hostage to and dominated by the whims of a few.
2. Leadership development suffers because no one else develops the ability to lead; there is fear to act on initiative. What happens, even in the best of situations, when the "personality" is no longer faithful or alive?

C. Finances.

1. Everything is evaluated by, "How much will it cost?" Therefore, faithfulness is equated with a big balance in the bank.
2. Some feel that they are protecting the Lord's money. The Lord's money does not need protecting, it needs using. Practice good stewardship, but use it. What is important is not how much we save, but who we save.

- D. Programs or events.
 1. Some churches have a certain number of events each year (maybe two gospel meetings) in order to feel like they are “doing something.” This is the idea of activity equals accomplishment.
 2. But many programs that churches engage in accomplish very little. What is needed is to be reminded of the purposes of these different events.
- E. Purpose.
 1. No congregation can grow properly without being built on the proper foundation (1 Corinthians 3:10-11).
 2. When we understand, accept, and articulate our goals, the local church can grow. Notice what following the Lord’s purpose can do:
 - a) Purpose brings unity (1 Corinthians 1:10).
 - b) Purpose lets us keep our mind on what is important (Philippians 3:13-14).
 - c) Purpose keeps us working on the same goal (Isaiah 26:3).
 - d) Purpose brings a sense of accomplishment (Isaiah 55:11).

II. The Purposes Of The Church

- A. Virtually every congregation needs to focus on evangelism more. But ignoring the broad scope of the Lord’s work by focusing on evangelism alone is counter-productive. This improper focus would neglect to build the base needed to nurture and cultivate its fruits.
- B. Most congregations only do one of the following tasks well. In fact, it is unusual to find a congregation that functions well in all these areas and fulfills completely the purposes of the Lord’s church.
- C. Consider the five purposes of the Lord’s church:
 1. Worship God (Acts 2:42, 47). The purpose is to exalt the Lord (Romans 15:11; Hebrews 13:15).
 2. Enjoy fellowship (Acts 2:42, 44, 46; 2 Corinthians 8:4; 1 John 1:7). The purpose is to encourage one another (Romans 14:19; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 24-27; 1 Thessalonians 5:11).
 3. Edify one another (Acts 2:42, 44, 46; 1 Timothy 3:15; 2 Timothy 2:2; Hebrews 5:12). The purpose is to train and equip (Ephesians 4:11-16; 2 Timothy 4:1-4).
 4. Minister to one another (Acts 2:44-45; Matthew 25:33-46; Romans 15:26; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2). The motivation is to relieve. This can be done with those who are anxious (Philippians 4:6), fearful (1 John 4:18), and poor (Matthew 26:11).
 5. Convert souls to Christ (Acts 2:38, 41, 47; 3:19; Matthew 18:3). This purpose is to evangelize the world (Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:19-20).
- D. The work of the church is threefold: edification, benevolence, and evangelism (Ephesians 4:12). The five purposes detailed above fit into these three categories. If not, they would be unscriptural.
- E. An intense effort should be made by this congregation to fulfill God’s purpose in every area, not just personal evangelism. By accomplishing these purposes, we will grow stronger through worship, grow closer through fellowship, grow deeper

through edification, grow broader through service, and grow larger through evangelism. This will give meaning to us and meaning to the church.

Conclusion. When Jesus built His church in Matthew 16:18, He designed the purpose. It is not our job to create or define the purpose, but to discover and act on it. We all should answer the following questions: Why does this church exist? What are we to be as a church? What are we to do as a church? How are we to do it? As it relates to evangelism, we must see if there is anything worthy in this congregation to compel people to come. If not, we need to change those circumstances.