

What Kind of Church Ought We To Be?

- What is our most powerful witness?
- What is a true test of Christian authenticity?

The answer is always in the most simple terms—Christ in, with, through us--the mediatorial body of Christ in the world!

Consider:

In the context of “doing mercy,” Christ's response to John's inquiry regarding his authenticity as the messiah was answered by quoting the expectations of Isaiah (note Luke 5:17ff)

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn... And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” (Isaiah 61:1-2)

Today, these same words serve to authenticate the church whose founder and head is Jesus Christ.

John 20:21, “Just as the father sent me, so I send you”

John 13:34-3--“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

“The church is to be a loving church in a dying culture. How, then, is the dying culture going to consider us? Jesus says, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” In the midst of the world, in the midst of our present culture, Jesus is giving a right to the world. Upon His authority He gives the world the right to judge whether you and I are born-again Christians on the basis of our observable love toward all Christians.”

(Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Mark of The Christian*)

True witness is therefore a holistic and public endeavor wherein Christ's salvific power is directed to both the inward and outward person, and at the same time, and both the church acting severally and jointly!

WCF 26.1 All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their head, by his Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory: and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.

The Key-- Do Something!!

The temptation is for the overwhelming needs to discourage doing *anything* until we conclude that we can fix *everything*. At the risk of becoming cliché, the closer we get to real impact, the messier it will become. Perfectionism, as characteristic idol of self-righteousness, is the great enemy of missionary witness wherein we are tempted to do nothing in fear of failure.

We are reminded here of the vision that inspired the beginning of the Salvation Army, as per the exhortation of James 1:22 and William Booths subsequent exhortation, “just do something.”

James 1:22 *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*

It's true-- whatever we do, it will not be enough and it will result in exasperation (humanly speaking). The missionary witness of mercy is ALWAYS not enough and too much! But we “do something” to be authentic and leave the ultimate issues of salvation to God.

What then is our public strategy to do something as the missionary witness of Christ in mercy for New Haven? (For while no strategy is sacred, having no executional strategy is negligent!)

New Haven Impact is our attempt at a doable strategy to be “doers of the word, and not merely hearers of it.” To be sure, it is our prayer that the church acting severally (the church un-programmed and acting individually) can be as stars shining in darkness. But what of the church acting jointly (collectively and communally)? How and when do we move closer to approximating the missionary witness of the apostolic church in Acts wherein it is said:

Awe came upon everyone... All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together with one accord in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And day by day the Lord added to them those who were being saved. (Acts 2:43-47)

**THE GOAL OF “NEW HAVEN IMPACT” IS
TO MORE VISIBLY AND AUTHENTICALLY BE THE CHURCH
ACTING JOINTLY AS THE MISSIONARY WITNESS OF CHRIST IN THE MIDST OF NEW HAVEN
BY WORD AND BY DEED**

Components of our multi-congregational strategy

- **A week that to approximate Act 2!**
 - Session/WLB Planning Retreat—Thurs evening June 23-24
 - All Church Day Retreat— Sat. June 25th
 - Ascension Sunday Worship with all congregations—June 26th
 - Mission and Mercy—June 27-July1
- Basic Organization
 - Impact Week Co-Directors—Craig Leuken and Kevin Nelson (Key Leaders of Event)
 - To submit a draft strategic plan to SLB at it May meeting (see below)
 - Impact Week Coordinators (Key Leader for Impact “Ministries”)
 - Mercy—Kevin
 - Day Camp In the Hill—Craig
 - Theology Youth Camp—Aaron Rathbun
 - Visiting Church Host-- ?
 - Other?
 - Impact Team Captains (Key Leaders for Ministry teams)
- Role of SLB—to assume “board” responsibilities over non-teaching elements of NH Impact week and to submit a unified strategic (vs. tactical) plan to session for review and approval at its May meeting

