

SOME THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT US

Dowlen Road, July 19, 2009 AM

Introduction:

- A. Have you ever driven past a church building and found yourself wondering: what's that group all about? I wonder what goes on in that place. Maybe it's the sign out front that stirs our curiosity. Some of them can be interesting.
- B. While our sign may not create that kind of curiosity, it does occur to me that with the thousands of cars that drive past our building every day, surely there are people who wonder about us. What goes on in this place? What are we all about? Certainly when we invite our friends to come, they will wonder what kind of place is this that you are asking me to visit. They may ask you: What kind of place is this? What goes on in your church? How would you answer those questions?
- C. There are some things that we would want people to know about us. There are things that we should be telling people about this group when we encourage them to come and visit. I want to talk about a few of those things in this lesson. An abbreviated version of this lesson has been put together for our website. You can point your friends to this three minute video that will answer some of their questions. What do we want people to know about this church?

You Will Need Your Bible.

- A. It's sad that we need to say this.
 1. It should go without saying that, when you visit a church, you're going to need your Bible. But sadly, this is simply not the case.
 2. Bible teaching has largely disappeared from many churches. Young people are sent off to the gym where they get a quick exhortation about not using drugs, sing a few songs, then shoot baskets and eat pizza until the adults are done. The adults listen to musical performances and then get a quick devotional talk about being nice to other people or protecting the environment. There may be a few allusions to scripture along the way, but no real study of the text. In fact, bringing a Bible really isn't necessary in many churches. You're just not going to use it much.
 3. I've had many visitors comment over the years how refreshing it was to come to a place where the Bible was actually opened and studied. This just wasn't what they found in other places. It's a sad commentary on the state of things in our religious world.
- B. But it's an area where we ought to be different. Something we want people to know about us is that when you come and visit, you will need your Bible. We're going to use it.
 1. This is not some kind of religious gimmick, some marketing niche to draw in a crowd.
 2. It is a practice rooted in some of our most fundamental convictions.
 - a. We believe the Bible is inspired by God, literally the word of God (**II Timothy 3:16, II Peter 1:20-21**).
 - b. We believe it supplies us with the wisdom we need to live the best life possible here on earth (**II Timothy 3:17**).
 - c. We believe it contains the information we need to prepare for the eternity that lies beyond death (**John 12:48, Matthew 7:21-23**).
 3. Early disciples gave their constant attention to this teaching (**Acts 2:42**). What else should we be doing with our time when we come together? Like the early disciples, this should be something to which we give our constant attention. We want people to know this about us – that when they come and worship with us, they will need their Bible.
- C. Let me caution that we must do more than simply pay lip-service to this idea. We need to do this.
 1. We need to use our Bible – to be students of the book. This means:
 - a. I should bring my Bible to worship; my kids should be bringing theirs.
 - b. I need to have it open, read from it, mark things in it. But I need to do more than this.
 - c. It needs to go home with me. I need to bring it in my house and study it. I need to be reading it with my kids.
 - d. I need to carry it to school or work and talk to my friends about it.
 2. Our daily habits should serve as a powerful testimony to the great things we believe about this book.

God Will Be Worshipped.

- A. Again, this seems like such an odd thing to say. When you visit a church for a worship service, isn't it obvious that God is going to be worshipped?
 1. This is anything but obvious today. When it comes to worship, many churches are far more focused on entertaining people than honoring God.
 2. Some are quite upfront about that agenda. One church in the Chicago area bragged openly about how they had gone door to door, surveyed the community and designed their worship service to give people exactly what they wanted (professional singing performances, 15 minute sermons and no appeals for money).
 3. This didn't have anything to do with honoring God. It was all about entertaining the crowd.
- B. We want people to know that this is not the way we do things here.
 1. Our objective in worship is not to entertain ourselves. It is directed toward God; it is an expression of our love and gratitude for Him and for all that He has done for us (**Psalm 66:1-4**).
 2. Since honoring God is our objective, doesn't it make sense that we would consider how God wants to be honored?
 - a. The Bible makes clear that we cannot honor Him with just anything we do. Nadab and Abihu were struck down before the Lord because they offered strange fire to God (**Leviticus 10:1-3**). They dishonored Him.
 - b. Jesus told the Samaritan woman that God **MUST** be worshipped in spirit and in truth (**John 4:24**). We must worship with all our hearts, but we must also worship in the ways He has told us to worship Him.
 3. The New Testament is filled with instructions about how to worship God:
 - a. with singing (Colossians 3:16)

- b. with prayer (Acts 2:4)
- c. with the Lord's Supper (I Corinthians 11:23ff)
- d. All of these things are to be done in a reverent, orderly, edifying way (I Corinthians 14:26,40)
- 4. The point is that God has revealed to us how He is to be worshipped. If the objective is to honor Him, then we should respect what He says.
- 5. But keep in mind that, when we begin to try to do this, our worship is going to look at a lot different from what goes on in many other places.
 - a. For people who are more carnally minded and concerned with pleasing self, it will not be much of a draw.
 - b. But then again, drawing a crowd is not our goal. We are honoring God. We want people to know that God will be worshipped here.
 - c. To offer up some shallow effort to entertain ourselves as worship of God is an insult to Him.
- C. Let me add that we need to be sure that our purpose is always to honor God.
 - 1. This should be reflected in our efforts to carefully follow what God has revealed about how to worship Him.
 - 2. But it should also be reflected in our spirit and demeanor. In light of the great things God has done for us, our worship should be from the heart and passionate.
 - 3. This should be the kind of worship that we offer up to Him.

Questions are welcomed.

- A. A friend shared with me an experience he had a few years ago.
 - 1. He was visiting a charismatic church where many of the people were allegedly speaking in tongues. They all did this at the same time and no effort was made to interpret what they said.
 - a. Even if they were truly speaking in tongues, the way they did this violated scripture (**I Corinthians 14:27-28**).
 - b. After the service, my friend went to the preacher, showed him this passage, and asked him to explain what had happened in the service.
 - c. The response of the preacher was to point him to the door – a strong suggestion that he leave.
 - 2. This is not an isolated incident. I've known of church members who've gone to their preacher with questions and were rebuked for asking.
 - 3. I mention this simply to make the point that it's not always acceptable to ask questions.
- B. But it is here! In fact, we appreciate people who take their faith in God and their service of the Lord serious enough to ask questions.
 - 1. It's not uncommon for people to have questions when they visit with us.
 - a. Because our objective is to worship God, the service will be different. Some will want to know why everyone sings and there is no piano.
 - b. If they happen to visit when there is a baptism, some will want to know about that.
 - c. It may be as simple as something said in Bible class or a point made in a lesson that raises questions in people's minds.
 - d. They need to know that it's okay to ask.
 - 2. We're not afraid of questions because we have no denominational agenda to protect.
 - a. Our only goal is to do the will of God just as it is revealed in the Bible (**Matthew 7:21-23, II Timothy 3:16-17**).
 - b. If we are missing that in some way, we want help to see it. We welcome questions someone might have about what we teach or practice.
- C. Every disciple needs to welcome questions about their faith, even if it comes from someone who is challenging what we believe (**I Peter 3:13-16**).
 - 1. Rather than being intimidated or offended, we should see it as an opportunity.
 - 2. Truth has nothing to fear from a test. So, questions are always welcome.

We care about you.

- A. It's sad to say that people do not always feel this way when they visit churches.
 - 1. Sometimes they get the opposite message. No one speaks to them. No one explains the "program" to them.
 - 2. Sometimes they are even treated like intruders, especially if they get someone's spot on the pew.
- B. We want our guests to know that we do care about them...about everyone that walks in the door.
 - 1. This care is not based on their social status, wealth or position in life. In fact, the Bible condemns this kind of partiality (James 2:1-9).
 - 2. We care about every person because every person has a soul, a soul that will spend eternity somewhere (Matthew 10:28).
 - a. This makes everyone who comes through our door important. We want to know where they stand with God.
 - b. We want to help them make their lives right with God. This is our mission (Matthew 28:18-20).
 - 3. We want people to know that they are coming to a place where they are genuinely cared for.
- C. Let me add that we need to be sure that this message gets communicated.
 - 1. Every one of us plays a vital role in this effort.
 - a. We may park next to a guest in the parking lot.
 - b. We may encounter them at the door.
 - c. They may sit next to us in Bible class.
 - d. They may take our spot in the auditorium.
 - 2. Every word we speak and action we take should communicate our care for them and desire to help them connect with their God.

Conclusion:

This is our desire for anyone in this crowd whose life is not right with God.