

# CHANGING TIDES

## *How Pastors See Other Pastors*

October 4-8, 2010

### **PART I**

NOW, MORE than EVER, what is needed in these times of CHANGING TIDES, is for pastors to have healthy, strong, relationships with other pastors; relationships that are transforming them as disciples, husbands, fathers, friends, pastors, and leaders of congregations on a mission for God within a city, region and the world.

And what I propose to you, based on what I have seen in my life, in my 21 years of pastoral ministry, and now as I work with church planters and pastors from all over our nation and world, is that:

- many, if not most pastors, lack some key strong, healthy, enduring relationships and partnerships with other fellow pastors,
- many are feeling, and are, isolated and cut off from each other,
- many are distrustful of other pastors or denominational leaders,
- many, even though they can build relationships for ministry, often do not know how to develop relationships very well personally, and that
- relational dysfunction is not just something we see and have to speak about and minister to, but it is also something we SUFFER FROM!

#### *Satan's Strategy*

And that is why if Satan cannot divide a pastor's heart, he divides a congregation. If he cannot divide a congregation, he divides the pastor's heart. If he cannot divide the pastors, he divides the denomination and its people, and if he cannot divide the denomination and its people, he divides its pastors.

One of the greatest gifts we can give to our members is to live in front of them what we want them to live in front of us. We call that integrity. It's coming face-to-face with the reality that we reap what we sow; meaning, we reproduce what we are more than what we say.

And when we do, we will be the benefactors; our people and congregations will be the benefactors; the Kingdom and people without Christ will be the benefactors.

- We personally need the prayer, encouragement, partnership, support, and accountability of one another.
- Our congregations need leaders who know how to build and help people build strong, healthy relationships with God, the lost, and with one another.
- The mission field demands it. The number of unreached is continuing to grow.

That is why the call for unity shows up so often in the New Testament, from Jesus' prayer in John 17, to Paul.

John 17:20-21

1 Corinthians 1:10

Romans 15:5-7

Ephesians 4:3

Philippians 2:2-3

Colossians 3:14-15

1 Peter 3:8

Because what happens when we do? We, the Church, God's people, become:

- **A visible reflection of the Godhead**

We were created in the image of God. We reflect God's image when we function as one in partnership with Him and with one another; when we are together.

When the Church lives Jesus' words, the Church also becomes:

- **A picture of reconciliation – our lives as the cross is restored in us**

A verse in particular worth considering more closely from Jesus' prayer is verse 23 of John 17.

May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Jesus says that UNITY with Him and with another as believers results in the world knowing Him as Lord and Savior. Why do unity and collaboration do that? Because the Church becomes an embodiment of the message.

Our message is not just one that we are to share, but also one that we are to embody.

Getting right how we live what we believe, needs to be just as important as getting what we believe right.

Christ made possible the unity within the Church that the world is desperate to experience.

But there is one more thing that happens when the Church lives Jesus' words. The Church becomes:

- **An instrument of redemption – the cross being restored in others**

Whatever we do, we'll be more effective if we do it together.

Luke 5:1-11 & 1 Corinthians 12:12-13

It is about re-learning how to fish together, like the disciples, with nets, instead of only with a single line and hook. It's believing that we can do together what we cannot do alone.

So how do we get there?

1. Thinking KINGDOM.
2. Living BLESSING.

A KINGDOM mindset helps us to transcend our differences, and build the Kingdom WITH one another.

A BLESSING lifestyle helps us to celebrate our differences, and build up the Kingdom IN one another.

**KINGDOM: This means starting with Christ, the King, and His mission, instead of ourselves and our ministries.**

Jesus said, "Seek first the KINGDOM..."

**If the starting point is ourselves and our ministries, we will be inclined to think in terms of what sets us apart from other churches and pastors, not what links us together, and we will not be as motivated, if at all, to work together.**

**But if the starting point is Christ and His mission, you and I will be thinking in terms of what Christ has done to bring us together and what is keeping people apart from God, and we will be much more motivated to link and work together.**

That's what got the disciples and the early church into so much trouble. When they were NOT thinking KINGDOM, look what happened...

- Comparing...1 Corinthians 2 & 3, 12:14-27
- Competing...Mark 9:33-37 "They had argued about who was the greatest..."
- Criticizing...Mark 9:38-41
- Controlling/conforming one another, or legalism...Colossians 2:16-17

When our starting point is the Church and each other, instead of Christ and His mission, the end result is often confusion and division. But when our starting point is Christ and His mission, instead of our ministries and each other, the end result is most often multiplication!

The antidote: We need to get out of ourselves and into the kingdom! We need a BIG enough God, and a BIG enough mission.

We need to spend a lot less time looking at each other, and spend a whole lot more time looking UP at Christ and OUT at the harvest in front of us.

### **Looking UP**

A humility that comes from standing before God.

### **Looking OUT**

A humility that comes from standing in front of such an extensive harvest.

Matthew 28:19-20. Jesus had taught them how to fish with a NET, not just lines and hooks! And the way He did it was with a difficult assignment and an overwhelming catch of fish!

Change only will begin to happen when our greatest fear is not what others are saying about us or what can be done to us, but when our greatest fear is what is going to happen to those who never hear or come to believe in Jesus Christ.

LIFT YOUR EYES TO HEAVEN, LIFT YOUR EYES TO THE HARVEST!

BOW BEFORE THE CROSS, WALK OUT OF THE FRONT DOOR!

The cross and our commission are reasons big enough for us to overcome our division. We can't get along with our mission if we can't get along.

The power of MISSION to help us get along...

### **A Personal Story**

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### **PART II**

#### Living BLESSING

A KINGDOM mindset helps us to transcend our differences, and build the Kingdom WITH one another.

A BLESSING lifestyle helps us to celebrate our differences, and build up the Kingdom IN one another.

Here are some of the words I have heard recently to describe pastors in the LCMS:

- Tired and overwhelmed: There is simply too much to do.
- Hurting: Not a lot of support and encouragement for what they do; just the opposite.
- Confused: Not knowing what to do.
- Frustrated: Knowing what to do but no one else seems to want to do it with them.
- Isolated and battling sin and temptation alone: No one to talk to, pray with, learn from, or be accountable to in a healthy way.
- Timid and apprehensive: Immobilized by negative situations or critical people.

We want and need courageous leaders. But for a person to consistently and over the long-term, act and live with courage, they need at least three things:

1. Conviction – that which God has placed within them.
2. Companionship – those that God has placed around them.
3. Covering (blessings and “under authority) – those that God has placed over them.

So, where do we begin? How can we BLESS one another?

- Pray for one another in your personal prayers. If Jesus said to pray for and bless our enemies, then we certainly should be praying for each other as fellow believers and fellow pastors, especially if you see some fellow pastor some kind of an enemy! You are actually disobeying Jesus if you only criticize them and not pray for them.
- Get to know the other pastors in your area. It’s easy to be divided if you do not know each other, and if you can simply create negative opinions of each other instead of overcoming those opinions by actually knowing each other. If you are going to have a negative opinion about another pastor, at least let it be based on facts and not on hear-say. And make sure he hears how you feel from you personally, not from someone else.

- Gather with other pastors to pray and encourage one another. (Pray, not just study, and sometimes, just pray with no study). Because, I believe, of the context of our conception as a movement and denomination (apologetics – what we believe and teach), we have gotten really good at being what I would call a “text and teaching” denomination. Now those things are not bad. BUT...we are not as good at being a prayer and partnering denomination. Studies are great, but take note that they often only end up highlighting differences instead of forging partnerships.
- Research the city with other pastors. Get to know your city together. Choose to be an expert on your city. Know it. Be specific about how many do not know Christ. It will break and shape your heart. It will also shape your relationships with each other as pastors.
- Celebrate them and with them. Find out what are others are doing that is making a difference and celebrate it, LEVERAGE IT, thank them, and find a way to bless and encourage them. Find ways to add value to the lives and ministries of others.
- Serve together with them whenever you are able, even if it is just you and not the rest of your staff or congregation.
- Have them over to your home for meals. Relationships developed over dinner are very different from relationships developed on the run.
- Refuse to publicly criticize them (verbally or in print), and reconcile with those with whom you have.
- Learn from them. That is one of the most powerful ways to affirm and bless them.
- Meet regularly together with some other pastors you trust (4-5 others) in addition to the other pastor gatherings. This is your own personal discipleship group. In the LCMS, we have had the texts, but not often the contexts for personal and missional growth and transformation.

All of us need others in our lives that we can:

- Look at
- Learn from and with
- Lean on
- Live under and alongside of

In these groups, you and a few other pastors can:

1. Can help one another to SEEK after, LISTEN to, LOOK at, and FOLLOW the King

Help each other:

- Be disciples (personally, at home, in community, in church)
- Make disciples
- Raise up other disciple makers
- Raise up other disciple maker leaders

2. Celebrate with one another and admonish one another (knowing if an air compressor or needle are needed),
3. Eat, rest and re-create with one another.

What kinds of things will happen?

THE BIBLE WILL OPEN UP

YOUR LIVES WILL OPEN UP

We can HEAR the truth in a large group setting, and we do on Sunday mornings, often from our own mouths. But we need a place to TELL the truth. Why? Because Satan knows a powerful secret, and that's the power of a secret. Because if Satan is the only one who knows your secrets, he is able to intimidate and control you, and keep you in fear, shame, and guilt. You break his grip when you break the silence.

It's not surprising that confession is the key to health and strong relationships because confession is the key to spiritual health and a relationship with God (Psalms 32, 51). "Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you maybe healed." James 5:16

YOUR HEARTS WILL OPEN UP

YOUR HANDS WILL OPEN UP

*The Reality*

- Differences + Unity = Addition and Multiplication
- Differences + Disunity = Subtraction and Division

A glass of water

A concert of pianos

We don't just fish with nets; we are the nets

## **John 17:20-26**

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.