

Notes on the Presentation by Harold Percy
Halton Presbytery Meeting October 26, 2010

Slide 1

Important Questions

- **Why are we doing what we are doing?**
- **Why are we doing it the way we are doing it?**

Developing Vital Congregations

- V isionary leadership
- I nspirational Leadership
- T raining in discipleship
- A uthentic community
- L oving: outreach & evangelism

Training in Discipleship

- Often neglected, or, at best, misunderstood
- Intentional reclamation

How do you connect in a society that sees churches as irrelevant? Most spokespeople make the mistake of starting in the middle (coach on how to run the race with people who don't know there is a race).

What are we trying to accomplish as a church? One of the main jobs of leadership is to explain why we exist. What are we supposed to be doing?

Assuming the church is God's idea and God has something in mind in the day this came down the chute, the world needed something we call church.

Two of the most radical questions an organization can ask are: why are we doing what we're doing and why are we doing it this way?

Ask these questions frequently!

Slide 2

Important Questions

- **What business are we in?**

- **How's business?**

Slide 3

Important Questions

(From Peter Drucker's book for non-profits)

- 1. What is our business?**
- 2. Who is our customer?**
- 3. What does our customer consider value?**
- 4. What have been our results?**
- 5. What is our plan?**

George Hunter story: The Church of Bowling Alley

Coffee time conversation with a couple who had been coming to a church for a short while and were asked what they liked about the congregation/church and why they came back. The response was that they didn't like the church or understand what it stood for and that this was the last time they would come – would not come back. Asked why, the man was best able to answer their feelings through a comparison to bowling, an activity which they enjoyed playing. He said that coming to this church felt like they were bowling with a blanket at the end of the alley through which they sent the ball. After a shot someone would call back to them “knocked 3 down” or “knocked them all down” or “missed them all – try again” and so on. In other words they wanted to go to a place where there was a little more clarity.

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Discipleship

Discipleship is about learning to follow Jesus, and share in his mission to the world.

Disciples are people chosen by Jesus to follow him. He said “follow me” and they did. They followed him, were close to him, learned from him, became prepared to share mission and carry on in his name.

Discipleship is about learning to follow Jesus and share in his mission to the world.

Discipleship is more meaningful today than being “Christian”. A “Christian” is a good citizen, a nice guy, family man....etc. but Muslims hated being called good Christians. (I think Harold means that we forget ‘Christian’ actually identifies someone's religious faith, not just their moral status!)

“Church attenders” doesn't capture the fullness of the word disciple – following Jesus and sharing his mission to the world.

Where do disciples come from?

- Not born that way.
- Not combusted on street corners

They are formed, shaped and nurtured by the church of Jesus Christ. “What is the Good News?, What is the Mission?”.

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The Gospel & The Church

Reign
Reconciliation
Response

Percy looked to simplify the gospel in a similar way as the basics of education are considered to be the 3 “R’s”.

Reign

Jesus proclaimed the good news – the kingdom of God is at hand. In Shane Clayborn’s “The World that God Dreams” the mission God has in this world is to take back, heal, & restore everything that evil has taken & harmed.

Reconciliation

If anyone is in Christ there is a new creation.

Alienation from God takes all kind of forms.

A deep, tender, intimate relationship to live in interactive conversation

God in Christ calls us to come home.

Young Benjamin on his bicycle spied another little boy who was new to the neighbourhood. After cycling over and having a time in which they stared at each other and sized each other up, Benjamin simply said “Friends?” and after affirmation from the other child, that bond was created.

Response

Gospel is always an invitation

Repent – put this at the centre of your screen – this is the best news you’ve ever had. The kingdom of God is open for business – come on in!

Invitation requires a response, or eventually, with no response, the answer must be no.

BYOB = Bring Your Own Bible

RSVP = Revised Standard Version Please

Wedding proposal, Volkswagon, fast food parking lot, whispered "Yes", the response that changed everything

Jesus talking to you, you hear a little whisper, "Will you follow me?".

Reign and Reconciliation cannot be separated or it won't be gospel.

Response - I want to live my life under the reign of God

Being church is a lot more than being Rotary and if you try and go head to head with Rotary (as someone who does "good" things), the church will lose. In part because Rotary meets at convenient times and serves lunch!

We can't offer a gospel of "sin management"!

Growing a flower garden – the world God dreams. Darnedest thing, weeds were not invited, they just show up. Someone asks, "What are you going to do about the weeds?". You might say, "Oh, don't be so negative, Shush, you will give the flowers low self esteem". Or, you could make the emphasis on weed killing and forget to grow and nurture the flowers and at the end of summer have bare ground.

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The Church

A community of people reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, learning to live the new life of God's reign, learning to share in God's mission to the world.

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Disciple

Someone who has made the choice to follow Jesus, to learn to live the new life of God's reign, and to share intentionally in God's mission to the world.

Identity : "I want to be part of that!" I want to find my place in it. Who I am is someone who is learning to follow Jesus. The point is not the church! The point of God's mission is the world.

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God's Mission & The Church

It is not so much that the church of God has a mission, but that the mission of God has a church.

Michael Thompson

Slide 9

Three Dimensions of Discipleship

- Child of God
- People of God
- Reign of God

It is important for growing disciples to pay attention to each of these. To leave out one distorts the other.

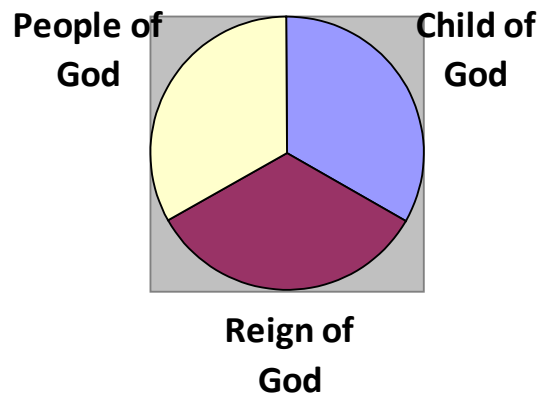
You make a choice to learn to live intentionally under God's reign; you want to be part of God's mission in the world.

EMBED Excel.Chart.8 \s

We gather to worship normally on Sunday, the day of resurrection. In the early church, Sunday wasn't a day off for people yet that's when they chose to gather. It wasn't easy. It was counter-cultural.

Trying to hide from God doesn't mean that God doesn't see you. Sin is also what you do in your heart..."as God has compassion on his children..." If you go to a counsellor you are going to learn something about yourself. God loves us more than we do ourselves. Example a teen age son..."Don't you trust me?" I trust your heart but not your brain. I love you more than you love yourself. God says to the People of God: You have a signature strength that gives you great joy →God will use that strength to build a vital church. To build a richness of worship, caring relationships.

Reign of God – places where we can make a difference – through church, as individual disciples. Justice World – breaks my heart, I want to help God. People can come into a relationship with God, into faith through any of these doors. Don't play stuff off against each other. Gospel is distorted if you leave something out. Healthy churches have a balance of doing the right thing.



Slide 10

Some Key Elements

- **Getting closer to God**
- **Renovation of the heart**
- **Overview of the faith**
- **Working it out in the rhythms of daily life**

Getting closer to God – for example, transform the way you think about your work. Richard Foster – Learning to Follow Jesus – should at least make as much effort as in learning to play the piano!

How to help people get closer to God? For example, offer Seminars:- How to help people get closer to God, how to read the bible. How to spend 10 minutes with God. Then How to spend 30 minutes with God, then How to spend an hour with God.

Learning to pray is being able to say thank you, sorry, please and you're awesome. Gospel is not about going to church, it's the "aroma of life." People who worship on Sunday find it easier to remember that we're God's people, by Thursday we may remember that we're still in God's presence.

Renovation of the heart:

God loves you so much, God accepts you as you are. God loves you so much, God has no intention of leaving. Transform us so we see you as you are – be happier. Bless other people. God messes around with the way we think.

Overview of the faith:- understanding the story of scripture from creation to new creation. Look from 30,000 ft to get the big picture of redemption. Then come down to street level and what redemption looks like in my life. Working it out in the rhythms of daily life.

God says, my signature on the community when they say “see how they love each other.”

Meet together and encourage one another to follow Jesus. Too many churches look for how the community can help them rather than the other way around.

Evangelism is the primary stage in making a disciple. What would you like to see happen in the lives of the people you connect with? The vampire school of church growth – we need new blood! What are you offering that, from their point of view would be worthwhile? Kids, teens, marriage, money trouble...

What price are you willing to pay to connect? What will you allow to stop you? “I’m not comfortable with this.” Change the church from chaplaincy to a centre for missional activity.