

Lay Sunday Message October 15, 2017

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Good morning,

Our Pastor told Lois either she or I had to speak for Lay Sunday. Guess who my wife volunteered? Our Pastor is off the hook today for anything I say because she has no idea what I'm going to talk about.

If you were to ask me a year ago how I viewed the status of our church, I probably would have said we had a declining membership; 60 – 70 % had attitudes somewhere between ho-hum, dissatisfied, or simply negative. We focused on how to grow, not knowing how, and Finances. We had two things going for us: a loving congregation who cared about each other and a dedicated Pastor.

Today we still have our dedicated Pastor.

We also have a focus on making disciples for Christ and a HOPE Team enthusiastic and vocal about meeting our needs to pursue our mission. 50-60% of our congregation are making comments that they feel a nice change happening in our church. And we still have a loving congregation that cares for each other.

If you are a newcomer, these are all good reasons to be here.

In a meeting with our District Superintendent, David Kim was very complimentary with the progress we have made this year, but said to be a successful, growing church, we need to take the next step.....Make disciples for Christ.

Incidentally, David also said Pastor Monique is here for a reason: the district believes she is capable of leading us to be the growing church we want to be, if we listen and act.

So what are some of the things each of us can do to make disciples for Christ and grow our church?

First, each of us can pray for our families, church and community. When you pray about your concerns for yourself, family and church, ask God for guidance for what we can do to find solutions. Remember, you are not alone. We are praying with you.

The next two items I have talked about before but are absolutely critical for the future of any church.

First, we can continue to do our best to live the attitudes of acceptance, respect, compassion, love and forgiveness. Living the attitudes may be more complicated than you think. For example: forgiveness is more than accepting an apology. How about that person we haven't talked to in 30 years, the dear friend you are not talking to or the person in church we resent and avoid? When we take care of these issues, we are truly forgiving. The attitudes are still powerful tools to do God's work. Living the attitudes provides at least two positives besides feeling good about yourself. People around you, particularly new people, will sense you are a loving, caring person. They can be comfortable with you. This creates an opportunity to communicate, exchange ideas, and perhaps take the first step to discipleship. *Living the attitudes can also be a form of stress relief. For example, if anyone, including our Pastor or me, says or does something that offends or angers you, you have two choices.*

You could complain to someone else or try to ignore or bury the situation. But you and I know this will not make the stress and hurt go away.

If you are living the attitudes, particularly love and forgiveness, you might talk to that person. Explain how you were offended. You could get an apology. Even better, you may get an explanation that makes sense. You might part better friends than you were.

An absolute must is for each of us to continue to move away from tolerance and towards a mindset of acceptance of changes we are uncomfortable with or dislike. A prime example continues to be music. Some of us dislike praise music and love the old hymns. Others are bored with hymns and prefer praise music. I don't understand why we cannot accept both kinds when we consider both forms of music are God's message of love and devotion.

Acceptance continues to be an absolute must when we meet people; particularly new people on the street or in church. How each of us handles that meeting could determine if a person becomes a new disciple or member of our church. When we are making disciples for Christ, it does not matter if that person is black or white, young or old, rich or poor. We are all God's children. Please remember, you could

be that person's best chance to learn about Jesus so let them know you care and they are welcome here.

Next we need to let our young people know we appreciate and support them. And then we can pray some more.

There are some activities that can use your help:

The back pack program – just 2 hours one Thursday morning a month. We started with a few of us doing everything. We now have several students helping as volunteers and we just had a school secretary tell us she has scheduled her July wedding at our church. Sometimes the seed grows slowly but it is growing.

Our choir needs 5 – 6 people to sing the music as beautifully as it should be sung. Just one hour a week Thursday evening.

God said awesome things can be accomplished through group prayer. There are meetings at 1200 noon and 7 p.m. Wednesdays, again 1 hour out of your week.

We also have one – time events.

Recently Pastor Monique asked for volunteers for the neighborhood walk. We could have used more volunteers. We did have enough people including 2 of our young people to complete the task. If you didn't participate because doing something new makes you uncomfortable, well guess what, we were all uncomfortable. But God has His way of caring for you when you are doing His work. All of us said it was a good experience, we had meaningful, heart warming contacts and we believe we planted a seed with 40 area families about faith and our church.

We are having a Trunk or Treat for area kids on Halloween. The more participating, the merrier.

We also have picnics, dinners, soup contests, flea market, and more that need your attendance and support.

For most of my life I was what you might call a Sunday morning Christian. I had a million reasons to not get involved. This year I am involved and other than missing an occasional golf game, I have not sacrificed anything I enjoy. My wife and I simply reschedule our time.

If the reason is I'm too old, too tired, too busy, my favorite TV show is on, I like to exercise then ,etc. are why you are not involved, please do something for all of us. When you pray, please include a moment to ask God if there is a way He can help you free up a little time or alter your schedule so you can be more involved in church.

I've often been told not to expect more than 20% of a congregation to be involved in doing God's work. But I believe all things are possible through faith. Imagine what could happen if each of us do what we talked about today and another 10 – 20 % or more become involved. What we could accomplish!! We will be one dynamic, disciple-making church.

I would like to close with something from the lighter side. Bill has a video starring a dear friend of yours and mine.

Please enjoy.