

LESSON 8 IT'S TIME ...To Look at Who We are as a Church

LESSON AIM: To allow pupils to state who they think we are as a missional church and what they would like to see us become.

NOTE: This lesson does not have a chapter in the pupil's book. It is designed to get a feel for how the members and attendees of our church perceive the mission of this church.

SCRIPTURE RESOURCE: 1 Corinthians 12:4-13

TEACHING AID: Church Profile

CREATING LEARNING READINESS: Forty seven year old Ronald Taylor was recently released and declared innocent of a crime for which he spend 12 years in prison. Pete Williams had no idea when he was pulled over by police that he would spend the next 22 years of his life behind bars for a crime he didn't commit. But misidentification by witnesses put him at the scene of the crime. David Milgaard was freed after 23 yeas in prison and given a \$10 million dollar settlement for a crime he didn't commit. The same evidence that freed him convicted Larry Fisher of the same crime 30 years later. What was it that proved their innocence and freed them from jail and convicted the other man? DNA, of course!

DNA shows both what makes us alike but also what sets us apart. The majority of our DNA is similar to other human beings but minor differences determine our skin color, eye color, talents, and personalities. Our DNA can help us trace our ancestors, who all contributed to our gene pool and thus to the person we are.

For all practical purposes, Christian churches have DNA as well. We are all similar in our heritage, up to a point, and we can all trace our ancestry back to Jesus Christ. Each of church has its unique characteristics. Some are Baptist, some Episcopalian, some Holiness, some Catholic. To further delineate who we are, some are rural, some are urban, some are downtown. Some worship with formality; some with much informality. Some are mission minded, some are not. Some are very evangelical. Some are charismatic. Some are solemn, some are exuberant. But all are churches and all express their own personality in the way they do church, the kind of things they accomplish in God's name, the missions they undertake.

ASK: 1. There is a saying that a "leopard cannot change its spots." How does that relate to human beings?

We are all God's creation. We are all unique. Psalm 139 says, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." And if I am made by God to be the person I am, can the color of my eyes be changed? Can my personality go from introvert to extrovert? Basically we are who we are. When we try to be what we are not we suffer from stress and we do not fare well...we can even have a nervous breakdown and not be able to function at all.

ASK: 2 What's the advantage in having all these different kinds of human beings?

One person cannot be all things to all people or meet the needs of all society. Having different personality types, different abilities, allows humans beings to accomplish all the things that need to be accomplished. We are all parts which when put together make up the whole.

COMMENT: Paul states that there are varieties of gifts.

READ: 1 Cor. 12:4-12. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit: and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varies of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. To each is given the evidence of the Spirit for the common good.

To one is given through the Sprit the utterance of wisdom,
and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Sprit,
to another faith by the same Sprit
to another gifts of healing by the one Sprit,
to another prophecy
to another the ability to distinguish between sprits
to another various kinds of tongues,
to another the interpretation tongues.

All these are inspired by one and the same Sprit who apportions to each one individually as he wills. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

This is early DNA...in spiritual terms. Each one of us has different gifts. To ask someone who doesn't have the gift of prophecy to prophesy is to ask the impossible. What a shame to ask the person who has the gift of healing not to use it!

ASK: 3 If leopards and human beings are limited by their DNA so that they are not able to change their spots, how does that same principle apply to churches?

If the majority of the thinking and the missional approach of the individuals in a church goes in one direction, it is unlikely that the church can be restructured into a church with a different missional purpose. Churches have personalities just like people do. They have different abilities, different viewpoints, different approaches.

Apply what Paul says about individual spiritual gifts to the churches. Are we as a church not unique in who we are. Do we not have certain spiritual abilities as a church which maybe no other church has?

ASK: 4 What happens to the church which tries to change it's personality?

It splits or slowly dies because the act of trying to assume another personality will be as frustrating to the church as a whole as it would be to an individual who is required to become what that individual is not. The stress will express itself in discord, loss of members, loss of contributions, loss of purpose. Although individuals may express their missional purposes in different ways, the church by and large will have a point of view from which it expresses its own missional purpose. Granted it may change in small ways but it will not change who it basically is. The leopard cannot change it's spots. The church cannot change its spots.

If a church expresses its missional purpose as a door knocking, one on one, evangelistic church, it will be difficult to change it to a hands on mission type church. If a church specializes in beginning new churches in different parts of the community, it will find it difficult to support operating a soup kitchen ministry. The man power, the resources, the enthusiasm of the church is limited. All ministries are important but churches must find their missional purpose and do the best job they can there and leave the other ministries for other churches.

Think of the frustration of the pastor who comes to a church with the intention to reach other ethnic groups and mixing them within the walls of the suburban church which has its mind on starting missions in ethnic neighborhoods. Frustration and conflict are on the horizon.

Through out this whole unit we have talked about finding our missional purpose as individuals. Let's conclude this study by looking at the DNA of our church. Who are we and what do we see as our missional purpose? Knowing that may help us aim ourselves in a general direction. It may also help a prospective pastor know who we are and how we see ourselves.

DISTRIBUTE THE QUESTIONNAIRE. If time allows after the questionnaire is filled out and collected, discuss reaction and questions. The staff would appreciate a summary of those comments.

HOW DO WE SEE OUR CHURCH?

Please check the appropriate boxes:

_____ Female
_____ Male

Age Group
_____ Below 20
_____ 20-30
_____ 30-40
_____ 40-50
_____ 50-60
_____ 60-70
_____ 70-80
_____ 80 above

We define missional purpose as to how we reconcile the world to Jesus Christ...how we carry out the great commission.

Indicate the way you see THIS CHURCH carrying out its missional purpose at the present time. Place 1 in the blank opposite your first choice; 2 for your second choice; 3 for your third choice; 4 for your fourth choice; 5 for your fifth choice. When you finish only 5 lines should have a number by them.

- _____ Evangelism through personal witnessing to non-Christians
- _____ Church planting/starting new churches and missions
- _____ Large events which attract crowds where the message of Christ is presented in subtle ways
- _____ Operating "rescue" mission type ministries such as soup kitchens and homeless shelters
- _____ Working with language and ethnic groups
- _____ One on one work with persons in the community who have physical and social needs
- _____ Ministering to special needs groups such as military, cancer survivors, young mothers, handicapped persons
- _____ Small group ministries such as Bible studies
- _____ Community services such as Child Care, Music Academy, counseling services
- _____ Meeting worship needs through dynamic worship services in two different styles
- _____ Support of mission work in the state, national and world arena through financial support and personal service on the mission field
- _____ Providing quality Christian education through church activities such as Sunday School, Wednesday seminars, etc.
- _____ Providing Christian elementary and secondary school alternatives for the community.

Indicate the way you THINK our church SHOULD BE carrying out its missional purpose. Place 1 in the blank opposite your first choice; 2 for your second choice; 3 for your third choice; 4 for your fourth choice; 5 for your fifth choice. Remember when you finish only 5 lines should have a number by them.

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- _____ Church planting/starting new churches and missions
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