

Seek First

Tim Miller, Gateway Fellowship, Oct 16, 2016

Genesis 26 and Isaac's stolen wells. He's redigging Abraham's wells. But three times they are stolen. Then he moved to a new area and the first night he encounters God mightily, he builds an altar, THEN digs his well. This time it isn't stolen. In the one place he worried about his wells for his flocks and herds first. In the second location he prioritized God's worship first, and the well wasn't robbed.

Matthew 6:31-33 **31** "So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?'" **32** These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. **33** Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

What you need will come to you, but what you want you'll have to go after (Bill Johnson). What he means is clear to me. We will have food and a roof over our heads without really seeking out and praying out a life of deep purpose. But if we want to live that life that is truly life, we're going to have to go after it. We can't coast our way into that kind of life. We climb there. We explore towards it. We work for it. We woodshed with Jesus in the place of grace until we can see it, and then we pay the cost to walk out the strategies God reveals to us along the journey.

Internal Thermostat. Without an internal thermostat, the house will eventually just become the temperature of the outside world. This is also the lesson of the Salmon and the internal urge to return to the springs from which we were born to bring new life.

Join a Community -- Even a Poor One. I was reading a book by a psychologist and he was talking about the rise in depression and other such difficult to treat mental illnesses. He pointed out that we are in a culture that is losing a sense of community, place, people, and tribe. Technology is in some ways connecting us, but in other ways it is separating us. In this acknowledged crisis he gave this advice for curbing the disturbing trends in mental health: **join a community, even a bad one.** Join something. A club, a team, a moose lodge. Join a community -- even a crappy one! Because *the benefits, from a mental health standpoint, outweigh the costs.*

Closer and Further. In the book of Acts we find the times when the church numerically grows the fastest by conversions, those are also the same seasons that the group is most committed to frequent gatherings. There is, apparently, no dichotomy between commitment to gathering for community and scattering for mission. They are not opposite forces. They

actually strengthen each other like pulling a bowstring back farther actually causes the arrow to fly farther the opposite way as well. The pull to mission lends to a pull to community. The pull to Jesus-centered community lends to a mission push.

Breathing IN - Gathering - Community

Breathing OUT - Scattering - Mission

Church As Family. Family is committed. Family is responsible for each other. Family knows you better than anyone else. Family is forever.

Covenant vs Convenience. Are you here “for Jesus.” And then you leave “for Jesus?” Okay. But who is committed to us for Jesus’ sake?

Reasons You May Have Pulled Away

- You dared to dream and were squashed.
- You got hurt at your last church and would like to stay safe.
- You got hurt here and haven’t been the same since
- You don’t want anything from church but some singing and a little message.
- Sunday morning is all the church I need. No community necessary.
- “I’m too busy.” = other things are higher priority
- You don’t see the point since you don’t have many close friends here
- I worked myself to death and I’m burnt out on doing anything except veg

Burnout. We often think of burnout as coming from too much activity. I suppose that’s possible. But most people’s burnout comes from broken relationships, being too busy with the wrong activities, or letting your inner dreamer go dormant. Chances are, when he wakes back up, he’s going to be angry, afraid, hurt, or whatever he was that caused you to let him go comatose. But I need you to come talk to me. I need you awake, and alive, and in your calling, even if that means you need to yell at me about how we in leadership red-taped you to death.

An Emotional System. A church’s product is not a physical item that can be counted and quantified. A church isn’t a factory. It isn’t a business. It doesn’t work like one. It is a social system, which means that it is an emotional ecosystem. So our primary “reality” is an emotional reality. The emotion that dominates and drives most emotional systems is anxiety. That’s what Jesus is going after throughout the big chunk of Matthew 6 that “seek first” is from. Jesus is going after the false gods that anxiety drives people to serve. We can trust God and break free from the anxiety and the false gods that promise security. The false gods of stuff, clothes, career, savings, reputation. TRUST drives the pursuit of God’s kingdom and righteousness. And by the way, that stuff you need? Yeah, he’ll throw in your needs getting met too.

Reactive people focus on what they cannot change. They feel powerless. They complain. It's easy. It costs them nothing. But they are typically not all that happy, or easy to be around.

Proactive people focus on what they can change. They don't feel powerless; they take responsibility for what they can change. They problem solve and look for ways they can improve something. It takes energy, determination, and often a lot of work. But they are so much happier than reactive people!

Example Story: Kroger's at 16.

Sitting At Smith's back in 2012, considering a gal who couldn't afford to come with me on a revival weekend.

- **1 Chronicles 21:24** "I will not sacrifice burnt offerings to the Lord that cost me nothing."
- **21:26** "fire from heaven fell on the sacrifice"
- The fire only falls on sacrifice.

Cell Phone Contract Renewal Time. If you sign up here, let it be with fresh vision, fresh commitment, fresh excitement that we get to own this life together. We get to shape it. We're here on purpose, not because of habit. We're here to learn, to grow, to be friends, to weep together, to pray through and find breakthrough together, to seek and to find. We're here to do God's will, and we're here to celebrate the victory of Jesus. He's better than any of us could possibly conceive.

if you consider this your church
 now is a great time to begin again
 to plug in again
 to sacrifice again
 because there's a gospel
 a love story
 a world
 and a people called out
 to be the body of Jesus
 together