

Volunteering vs. Ministry

Love

Time with them

Relationship

Opening prayer

How many of us here today want this church to flourish, to be a place where we can come and connect with God? How many people here today want to see the power of the Holy Spirit healing people? How many people here today want to have this church survive and not just fade away? How many people believe enough in Crossroads to support the work here, both in finance and in time? How many people want to see this whole community serving Christ?

I have been with this church for a little over a month now and I hope by this time you have discovered that I am not seeker sensitive, nor am I phoney. I am a shepherd. What you see is what you get and I will tell it like it is. If a relationship does not have trust and honest communication it is doomed. I realize that it is always important to establish a relationship with people to be able to speak into their lives. Quite frankly, I have not had enough time to establish that relationship with many of you; however, you do have a long standing relationship with Jesus Christ and by that relationship and with the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, I want to speak into your lives this morning.

Too often people see pastors as loving gentle folk that have no spine. This is great for business as people are seldom challenged. Please don't miss understand me. I believe that spreading the love of Jesus is very important. I believe in real care for people. But if we want to make a difference in our communities we need to take a hard look at how we do church moving forward. As we actively pursue after God he actively pursues us.

Make no mistake people, I believe in you and I will fight for the life and success of this church!

In North America we have taken care to mean a sort of nebulous feeling of well-being towards a person. I find it interesting that a secular psychologist sums it up like this: To care for another person in the most significant sense is to help that person grow and actualize his or herself. It is the antithesis of using the other person to satisfy one's own needs. As Christians caring isn't about having a vague feeling of well-being for another, it comes down to faith in action for the benefit of another brother or sisters growth.

What I would like to speak on this morning is the difference between volunteering and church stewardship ministry and how it pertains to the life of the Church. The church is not this building it is us...

Over the years in the ministry, I have seen many of us in the church struggle to get more people to participate and “volunteer” to do what needs to be done to keep the church going. I myself have struggled here at Crossroads in the last month with this very thing.

In our churches, I have seen that it doesn't matter if it is an annual event, a BBQ, potluck, a monthly task or a weekly thing, as pastors, deacons, elders and so on we are constantly lamenting the fact that we do not have enough people “volunteering” to do all of the tasks or fill the roles that need to be done. I would propose that one of the difficulties is our focus.

The bible tells us that without a progressive vision the people dwell aimlessly. Some versions say perish. Even though I have not been chosen as your permanent pastor, I have a responsibility before God to take care of his church... remember you are the church.

I asked myself the question this week: Am I really looking for volunteers? I found that I had to answer NO. What this church needs is a greater quantity of committed stewards to fulfill a ministry before the Lord.

As many of you know I used to be a planner an analyst a business and process architect. In short, I made organizational structures work. Now I offer those skills up to the Lord both as a shepherd and a steward of his church and its infrastructure.

Since coming to Crossroads, I have looked for stewards to teach Sunday school, to sing on the worship team, to play instruments, to put the words up on the screen for us all to worship, to pay the bills, to plan the future and to deal with the accounts. I have looked for individuals to serve communion, to make the hard decisions, etc... ad infinitum.

Now I would like to sincerely praise those who have stepped up to the plate and there are quite a few of you, BUT the need is great and the workers are few...

You have been called the “dedicated volunteers”...

I want to break this paradigm this morning and humbly say: enough of the word “volunteer” it creates an erroneous non-biblical view in our minds. I would not-so-humbly submit that we are not looking for volunteers but rather stewards and ministers with a heart to serve Jesus Christ.

As this church grows, I do not envision a department of volunteerism, but a department of stewardship. If we do this right God is going to honor this place and fill it to the rafters.

Now some might say, oh you're playing a semantic or word game here.

I may hear the question: what's the difference? Or “We are all working for the church and trying to get the Job done, who cares what you call it?”

Well... In Christ there is a huge difference. It can make all the difference in the world, especially when the world we are talking about is God's kingdom. What's in a name? When we say God do we mean Allah, Buddha or Christ? I believe that when we say volunteer we don't give the Job the weight that it

deserves as a ministry before the Lord. When we say volunteer, it creates in our mindset and unprofessional, piecemeal approach.

A Volunteer Job is something that anyone can fill and so we don't take ownership of it like the ministry it is.

Are we dedicating our talents to the Lord or are we burying them?

The church is not a place to come and be entertained, it is a place to belong and be involved and participate in. The bible tells us that every joint supplies. We all have a role here, not just the pastor or the worship leader. This is the body of Christ and it doesn't function without all its parts. Feet are important, legs, ears, arms etc.

Volunteer

Let's examine this word volunteer in more detail:

Volunteer Means: Done, made, brought about, undertaken etc... of one's own accord and by free choice of pertaining to or acting according to the will.

Volunteer Defined: "a person who voluntarily offers himself or herself for an undertaking; a person who performs a service willingly and without pay"

As you can see from the definition I have no problem with the word itself, only the psychology it creates in our minds. Even Paul said in 2 Corinthians 9:7: "Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver"

Clearly giving of time and money should not be forced, but since it pleases God shouldn't we be doing it? I will not strong arm or guilt anyone into helping here at the church, but I sincerely hope that as you understand the need and Gods expectations of us, those who are not contributing to the life of the church – will

So what is this "Stewardship" and how is it different?

A steward is defined as: "a person who has charge of the household of another, obtaining needed items, directing the servants." The focus here is much different, we are not simply coming of our own free will to accomplish a task, but we are placing a significant emphasis on taking care of that which has been given to us by God.

This is and you are his Church, his property, we are bought and paid for with the price of his blood. We are his children and all kings and priests before the Lord. Jesus has "entrusted" us with it care.

In psalms 24:1 it states: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein"

Are we being effective stewards of what he has entrusted to us?

God has given us life! To be a good steward is to value the time, talents and resources that God has given us and to utilize those gifts to show our love and appreciation to Him.

Jesus said in Luke 12:42-44: "Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions"

My friends as faithful stewards of God's house we have a sacred responsibility to not simply volunteer a few spare scraps of our time, but we should, and desperately need to, humbly and joyfully offer our time, talents and resources to God. This responsibility applies to all of us.

Jesus gave us many clear examples in scripture of our participation.

In John 21:15-19: Jesus said to Peter "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? He said to him: yes Lord; you know that I love you. He said to him: "Feed my lambs, tend my sheep... feed my sheep." We are the sheep of his pasture. When asked to speak remember what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:16-17: "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! For I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not my own will, I am entrusted with a commission"

For all you teachers out there: The Greek word for commission is the same word for stewardship. You see Paul knew that he needed to do the will of the lord regardless of what he wanted, but the Lord wants us to give of our time, talents and resources cheerfully, because he loves that.

God tells us that he who is faithful in very little is also faithful in much; and he who dishonors in very little is dishonest also in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust you with true riches? And if you have been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own. Luke 16:10-12

Colossians 4:17 tells us: "See that you fulfill the ministry which you have received from the Lord"

The church is not a building. It is each one of us. We are responsible to be good stewards of each other. We are stronger together and have a common purpose. It is only if we believe in that purpose that we will be willing to cheerfully give of our time, talents and resources.

In short, this sermon is about our perspective. Are we volunteers or stewards? God wants stewards, not just volunteers. Search your heart. Do you have the right perspective today? This is your church. These are your people are you feeding and caring for the sheep that belong to Jesus in a way that he would be proud of?

I don't want to be hard, but our church really needs YOU to step up to the plate. If you are doing something great! See what else you can do, because we need you. You may be the left leg of the church and without your participation we are only hopping along instead of running.

Remember what I said about care? Let me state it again: We have taken care to mean a sort of nebulous feeling of well-being towards a person. To care for another person in the most significant

sense is to help that person grow and actualize his or herself. It is the antithesis of using the other person to satisfy one's own needs. As Christians caring isn't about having a vague feeling of well-being for another, it comes down to faith in action for the benefit of each other.

Everyone is busy... but ask yourself what priority you will place on taking care of Gods Sheep – your friends here are Crossroads.

Closing prayer