

HABITS OF HEALTHY CHURCHES

SERMON GUIDE AND SUMMARIES



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HEALTHY CHURCHES ARE PRAYING CHURCHES

01

Luke 10:38-42 (Mary & Martha)

Position ourselves so we can hear at the feet of Jesus, if too busy doing & distracted then not listening)

Acts 2:42-47, John 14:15-17

(togetherness culture & all believers have access to the Holy Spirit which is with us and in us)

02

03

John 17:20-26

Jesus' prayer for all believers

Psalms 78:23-29

The habit of being a praying church means you create and foster a culture of prayer. Prayer is an act of trust where you look for God's will and direction. Prayerful church families listen to the whisper of the Holy Spirit, seek what the Spirit is doing, and join the Spirit in that work.

04

HEALTHY CHURCHES ARE PRAYING CHURCHES

Prayer is a posture. We must be alert to the enemy and engaged with the Spirit.

Listening prayer allows us to hear the Spirit. Prayer is more than just talking to God.

Health is not the default in the church, unhealth is the default. We must listen to hear what the Lord is exposing as our unhealthy habits and patterns of being that are not Kingdom ways or values.

Listening prayer for alertness exposes the tactics of the enemy, which are to distract, demean and divide.

We must listen to what the Spirit is up to in our context, so we can join how God is already moving.

Prayer is a culture. Every church, whether realized or unrealized, spoken or unspoken has a culture with its own values, norms, language, practices, and symbols.

The culture of a church shapes its attitudes, practices, and environment.

Imagine, what would happen if prayer was more than just a prayer team and instead is the culture, part of DNA.

Culture, what is it? How does culture shift effectiveness on mission? How is prayer infused into the culture?

Listen for movement of the Spirit today, in our context & to resist the work of the accuser (distract, demean, divide)

Don't be afraid, rather resist. How are we to be alert? How are we to hear the whisper of the Spirit?

HEALTHY CHURCHES DO CONFLICT WELL

01

Matthew 18, Philippians 2:1-11

2 Corinthians 5:14, 5:17-21

Christ's love compels us
Reconciliation

02

03

Colossians 3:12-17, 1 John 2:9-11

Forgive & shed bitterness

Psalms 119: 33-40

How conflict is handled is the greatest marker in predicting whether a church is healthy. The priority in dealing with conflict is relationship and showing value to people. Conflict handled well is redemptively transformative. Matthew 18 gives us guidance on the healthy process through conflict.

04

HEALTHY CHURCHES DO CONFLICT WELL

Culture is built and conditioned by habits over time. Jesus values relationship.

Healthy process and posture shows value to one another relationally. Healthy process follows Matthew 18.

Healthy posture is humble, teachable, emotionally regulated, receiving posture. The Church ought to be a safe space to be a mess and be nurtured.

Conflict can be transformative and redemptive. Following Jesus is a growth journey. God wastes nothing..

Conflict is an opportunity for growth. Everyone deserves to be heard. All are loved and valued by God as children of God.

Healthy Process begins with prayer. Go to the Lord in contemplative Listening Prayer

Before going to the person, sit in the uncomfortability of the emotions and listen behind why you are so distressed. Do a heart check. Ask, is this a personality preference or is there a true conflict?

Listen to the Spirit. Ask, Lord, is this an issue I am to deal with or let go? Ask, is there unmet expectations? Were these expectations ever communicated or agreed upon?

Go directly to the person not gossip. Bring a 3rd person as a mediator or translator along to resolve the issue. The mediator's role is to translate and facilitate dialogue not to identify a winner or loser.

Matthew 18 Process Goal is understanding, resolution and transformation. Bring the issue before the leadership of the church.

Conflict handled well is redemptively transformative.

HEALTHY CHURCHES MAKE DECISIONS IN A HEALTHY WAY

01

Philippians 2:12-18, 1:27

Culture of striving together

1 Corinthians 1:10-13

(rebuke/warning, healthy decision making protects from similar division/dissension... protects against triangulation, manipulation, and behind the scenes politics)

02

03

Phil 2:1-11, John 5:16-28

Ephesians 4:1-6, 14-16

Churches and their people are often change resistant, especially without a clear why. With a good, clear why anything is possible. The why must first be guided by the Holy Spirit, tested against scripture, and honor the church family's heritage and denominational heritage.

04

HEALTHY CHURCHES MAKE DECISIONS IN A HEALTHY WAY

Decisions are made for the right reason to the best of our ability in faithfulness and trust. Don't do something without a good why.

Decisions ought to be rooted in our mission. Too often we focus on method rather than mission.

Our filter must be Scripture, mission/identity while considering our heritage as a church. Decisions need intentionality.

Healthy decisions require constant reflection to avoid reactivity.

Consider the culture conditioning of decisions. Ask, what is this decision communicating? What is this decision validating?

Beware of emotional decisions. Often people make emotional decisions, backfill them with logic, and justify them with select scripture passages.

Also, churches tend to be reactionary rather than intentional.

People tend to be change resistant, especially without a clear why.

The why must first be guided by the Holy Spirit. Second, the why should be tested against Scripture.

Third, the why must honor your church and denominational heritage.

With a good and clear why, anything is possible.

HEALTHY CHURCHES FOCUS MORE ON THOSE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH THAN THOSE INSIDE

01

Romans 10:14-17

We have a message to share

Matthew 4:18- 22

Fishers of people, fishermen take time to prepare their nets... health

02

03

Matthew 5:13-16

Go shine

Matthew 9:35-37, Psalm 85:8-13

“Healthy churches realized that the purpose of the church is bigger than its members and their preferences. Healthy churches realize that God has allowed them to exist in this time, season, and community for a purpose, a purpose bigger than themselves. Healthy churches know that are not a spiritual McDonalds for their regulars, but rather the bride of Christ for the sake of the world.” Pg. 134

04

HEALTHY CHURCHES FOCUS MORE ON THOSE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH THAN THOSE INSIDE

The purpose of the church as outlined in the scripture, as lived in the ministry of Jesus and his disciples, and as modeled in the early church in Acts was never to be centered on those who were already a part of the Church.

The Church exists for the good of others; for the good of the world. Church exists primarily to reach those outside the Church.

The Church is the vehicle that Jesus has chosen to bring the Gospel and the Kingdom to the world until the return of Jesus.

Mature Christians set aside their preferences for less mature Christians. Healthy, mature believers have the attitude that it's not about me.

Healthy, mature believers are willing to ask, "what are we willing to do and to sacrifice to ensure this church exists for our grandchildren and great grandchildren?"

Maturity, particularly Christian maturity, means setting aside our desires, preferences, and even needs for the good of others, for the good of non and less mature believers.

Church is the family of faith. Church is not a country club nor consumerism.

Consumerism is one of the most destructive forces in the Church. "Have it your way, right away," is not the mantra of the Church.

Church membership, like in a country club, does not have privileges. Instead, membership in a church has its commitments and sacrifices.

Unity and the fruits of the Spirit are vibrant in healthy church cultures.

Healthy churches realize the purpose of the church is bigger than its members and their preferences. They also realize that God has allowed them to exist in this time, season, and community for a purpose bigger than themselves.

HEALTHY CHURCHES VALUE PROCESS

01

Ephesians 4:1-16

Healthy process helps protect against division...
verse 4:3 = every effort for the bond of peace... cultivating a culture of peace requires intentionality... unhealthy structures and process are hidden sources of patterns of division

Romans 4:13-25

02

03

Mark 8:36-37

Isaiah 41:21-23

Process allows us to listen to the whisper of the Holy Spirit and gather the collective wisdom of those around us. Process also allows for learning before, during and after a decision or situation, which protects us from reactionism.

04

HEALTHY CHURCHES VALUE PROCESS

Churches tend to under process conflict, and over process the rest. Churches tend to focus on results rather than the process.

Process matters far more than the results. We tend to look for quick fixes. We must do what is right, not what is easy.

Churches tend to be reactionary. Healthy churches are proactive and put processes in place to protect from unnecessary conflict and mess. Process allows for learning.

Like discipleship, process is a growth journey. Process allows for growing opportunities without unnecessary conflict and drama.

Process allows for discernment. Process allows us to stop and reflect to better discern.

Process also allows us to listen to the whisper of the Holy Spirit and gather the collective wisdom of those around us.

Clear process allows for focus on mission

Policies should not be reactionary and should be limited to the most essential, legally complicated things like human resources and finance.

While there should be few policies, it is critical to have a lot of procedures so there is clarity on how things should operate and who is responsible for various aspects of the ministry..

This prevents unnecessary conflict and drama

Process allows us to stop, reflect, and better discern.

HEALTHY CHURCHES FOCUS ON ADOPTION RATHER THAN ASSIMILATION

01

Romans 15:5-7

Proslambano = welcome as a habit/life-style, way of being, receiving posture of hospitality)

How would you respond to John the Baptist or the prodigal son showing up on a Sunday morning?

02

03

1 Corinthians 3:26-29, 12:12-31

One body, many parts

Ephesians 2:11-22

Assimilation is “come and be like us.” It works like this: believe like us, then behave like us before belonging. Adoption’s message is entirely different than assimilation. The message of adoption is we invite you as you are to our family because you are loved and belong. Adoption starts with love and grace; love and grace are not conditional nor earned in a paradigm of adoption.

04

HEALTHY CHURCHES FOCUS ON ADOPTION RATHER THAN ASSIMILATION

Our identity is in Christ individually and we are a part of the collective family of God as adopted children.

Adoption culture values people over programs.

People are empowered to be their true authentic selves, while remaining connected to the group.

Individuals are free to have big emotions, struggle, wrestle with hard questions, and be diverse expressions of the image of God.

Adoption culture values this vibrancy.

Culturally, unhealthy churches have a vibe of conditional belonging.

Assimilation cultures pressure individuals to conform and do not value diverse expressions of the image of God.

Pressure to conform can be spoken or unspoken.

Cultural pressures to conform can include values, norms, language, practices, traditions, and attitude.

Assimilation is “come and be like us.”

Culturally, healthy churches have a vibe of belonging.

HEALTHY CHURCHES ARE NOT TERRITORIAL

01

Romans 12:9-13

SHARE! and practice hospitality

Acts 18:1-3

Priscilla & Aquila hosted Paul

John 13:34-35, 15:12-17

Sharing and showing hospitality is an expression of loving one another

02

03

Matthew 3:13-17

Isaiah 51:1-6

Psalms 29

Acts 10:34-43

In the church, it is not the pastor's stuff, the board's stuff, or the congregation's stuff. It is all God's stuff and is meant to be used for the good of the Kingdom of God. Healthy churches see buildings, furniture, and other possessions as tools for ministry, not items to be guarded, hoarded, or fought over. They recognize that material items are simply tools and resources for the mission and ministry of the church.

04

HEALTHY CHURCHES ARE NOT TERRITORIAL

It is common for our flesh to not want to share.

Territorialism is prevalent and is a sign of spiritual immaturity.

Territorialism as a mark of good stewardship is a myth.

Territorialism spreads unhealth. It can cause unnecessary conflict, division, and competition.

All of it is God's stuff, not ours.

Shared space is everyone's space.

Sharing in churches can be complicated, but it gives us the opportunity to live out unity and oneness.

Idolatry can easily sneak in.

Building and things worship is a common temptation.

Healthy churches see buildings, furniture, and other possessions as tools for ministry, not items to be guarded, hoarded, or fought over.

It is all God's stuff and is meant to be used for the good of the Kingdom of God.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

**Habits of Healthy Churches
Video Discussion Guide**

**Voices in the Wilderness
Podcast**

**Habits of Healthy Churches
Book Discussion Guide**

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