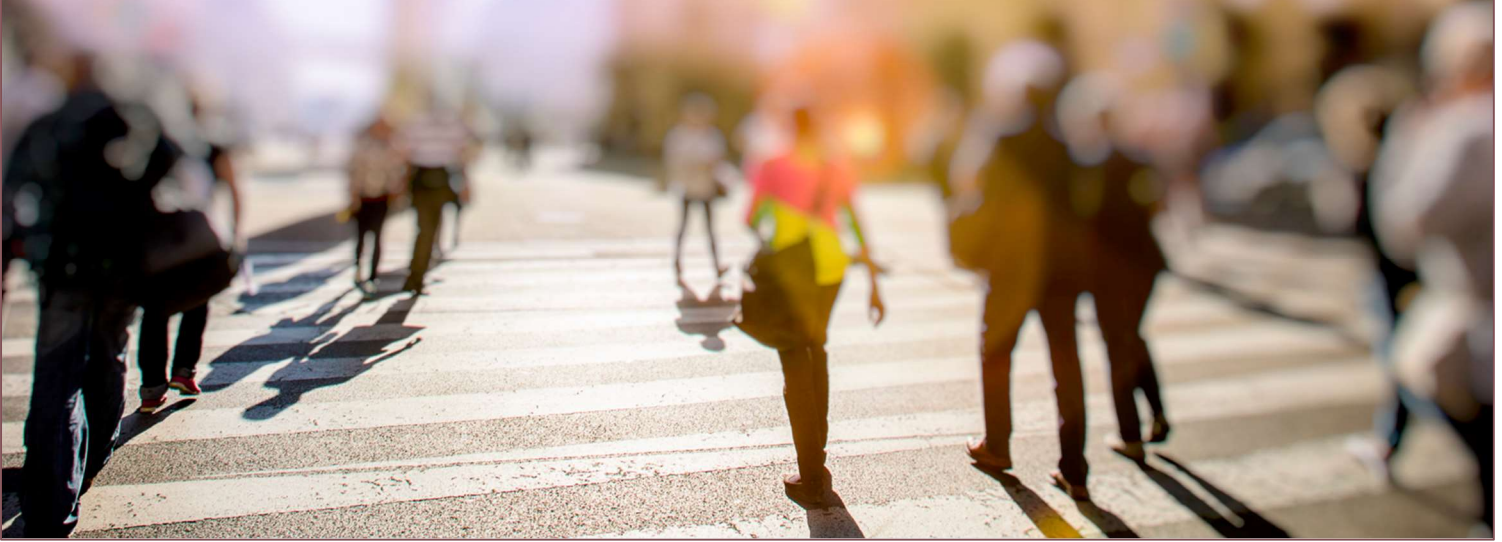


DONES & NONES

GOD'S HEART FOR THE UNCHURCHED



The following notes are a sermon given by Pastor Wayne Flowers
on Sunday June 28th at Smythe Street Church.

The Dones and the Nones - God's Heart for the Unchurched Sunday June 28th, 2020. Smythe Street Church

* I give credit and recognition to the book "Church Refugees" by Josh Packard, from which I derived both content and inspiration. I recommend this book to you.

WE ARE DOING A SERIES CALLED DONES AND NONES.

Today: **The Church No One Wants to Leave**

KEY VERSES:

"What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish. Matt. 12:12-14 (NIV)

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. Rom. 1:16 (NIV)

1) DONES

People who have left the organized religion. The DECHURCHED.
They're done with "going to church". They're tired and fed up with church.
Frustrated with the structure, inward focus, politics of the institutional church.

2) NONES

People who claim to have no religion. The IRRELIGIOUS.
In surveys that include religious affiliation, they check the "None" box.
Totally disconnected from religion. No interest in God, prayer or church.

WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT THIS?

1. GOD'S HEART BEATS WITH COMPASSION FOR THE THOSE WHO ARE DONE WITH CHURCH.

- Matthew 12:12-14 gives us a moving picture of how God feels!
- His heart for others would not let him rest easy.

2. OUR HEART MUST BEAT WITH THAT SAME COMPASSION.

- What might our response be?
- *Defensive? Discouraged?*
- Put more energy into offering more programs for the faithful?
- Can we ask God for the heart of the shepherd?

3. THE CULTURAL, SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE HAS SHIFTED IN A TECTONIC WAY.

- Faith and trust in the church as an institution have evaporated.
- Belief that the institutional church is out of touch (loss of relevance).

We cannot rest on a reputation or methodology of church ministry that is rooted in the glory days of our past!

We must do the intentional, compassionate, Spirit led work of meeting the dechurched in their context and showing them the love of God and the hope of a meaningful faith community!

In thinking about those who have disconnected with the church as we define and know it...maybe our thinking needs to change!!

THEY MAY HAVE LEFT THE CHURCH, BUT...

1. THAT DOES NOT MEAN THEY NO LONGER LOVE JESUS.

- It is not that there is no accountability to be put in place.
- We just cannot assume that love for God is absent.
- To do so would only alienate and isolate them further.

It feels spiritually counter-intuitive to even say this!

Like we are letting people off the hook.

We are not telling them the hard truth.

They will never reconnect if we do not show them the truth about their decisions!

When the community is driven by the heart and attitude of a loving shepherd, you need never worry about the eventual outcome.

2. THEY DID NOT WANT TO LEAVE.

- We could say “they made their own bed and they can lay in it.”
- Judgment, hurt, conflict, church politics...all were factors.
- They are missing something and they know it.

3. SERVING STILL MATTERS TO THEM.

- Cannot assume that they do not care about filling a need in some way.
- What if...we reached out and asked for the help of those who have become discouraged and disconnected?

4. THEY LONG FOR A NURTURING FAITH COMMUNITY.

- What if you were a key component in helping to provide that?

THERE ARE FOUR NEEDED SHIFTS IN OUR THINKING AND APPROACH...

* Every one of these has a tension to navigate.

* Each one of these points are the actual words and thoughts of people who have left the church. This is what they said.

I am going to take the side of the Dones!!!

“The Church no One Wants to Leave” looks like this...

1. COMMUNITY WITHOUT JUDGMENT.

WHAT WE HEAR...

They just want a place to belong and be affirmed without being told to live right.

WHAT IS THE HEART OF THIS...

First of all...community – a place to belong, be known, be loved and accepted trumps everything. It trumps liturgy, amazing buildings, great programs, good bands, great preaching!!!

Nothing destroys community or the hope of growing in faith like judgment!

WHAT DO WE MEAN?

Making conclusions about a person's character, love for God, sincerity, etc. based on our shallow impressions.

People will never grow into all that we would like to see them become without us loving them first of all just as they are.

How sad that people most often associate judgment with Christians rather than love, mercy, forgiveness and grace.

We are afraid that if we do not tell them the truth we will be compromising the gospel.

Loving community does not mean the absence of truth telling and transformation!

2. ENGAGEMENT WITHOUT BUREAUCRACY.

People want to serve and contribute in meaningful ways.

If church politics, red tape and leadership control become the bottle-neck, then people get discouraged.

The answer....equipping and setting people free to serve!

People want to be more than a number to be counted.

They want do more than prop up programs derived by leadership.

What is the tension?

Church needs vision! This is often set by God-ordained leadership.

But the vision must be fed by the

3. CONVERSATION WITHOUT DOGMA.

The Dones and Nones stated often that...

They wanted conversation, not an argument for your position.

They wanted dialogue not a lecture.

We see dogma as God's revealed and irrefutable truth

They see it as positions that are closed to hearing about real life circumstances.

It does not mean that they are opposed to solid Biblical teaching

This is more about our openness to listening and engaging.

Why is this important?

In conversation they feel heard. If they feel heard then they can hear.

We can...
Understand without
agreeing.
Love without condoning.

To be a church no one
wants to leave, we must
understand and address
these realities.

Mystery, doubt, uncertainty, questioning. For the people we talked to, these were central components of a meaningful faith, and they wanted the church to engage them in authentic conversation rather than provide predetermined, canned answers.

How well do we do with people who question or disagree?
If we fail here we will fail to present the powerful life changing gospel of Jesus!

Are we interested in the questions others grapple with only in the context of having all the answers, or do we really care about what people face and struggle with?

4. LEADERSHIP WITHOUT HIERARCHY.

What we hear...
They do not want good godly leaders.
They want to do their own thing.

What it really means is...
They want leadership that is
- not top-down and authoritarian.
- strong but humble.
- ready to serve.
- decisive yet ready to hear.

CONCLUSION:

Exciting opportunities await us. Let us pray!!
Talk to the gathered...Invite friends

Leadership that demands that others follow on the basis of position and authority will soon be ignored. People want leadership that invests in relationship and produces followers on the basis of example.