

**2 Corinthians 3:12-18 July 24, 2011**  
**“Transformational Church: Wildly Unpopular”**

Have you ever wondered why, when God begins to transform a church, much of the transformational changes are wildly unpopular with many of those within the church?

Example #1: “The Great Awakening,” Jonathan Edwards and “The Old Lights”

The Old lights were adamantly opposed to any visible or emotional response to the Gospel.

= Edwards fired from Northampton Church.

“The Old Lights sought rationalism in theology and substituted morality for religion”

Example #2: John Wesley and the Church of England

Clergy from the Church of England would incite mobs against Wesley preaching outdoors.

Example #3: Jesus Christ and 1<sup>st</sup> century Judaism

Religious leaders incited a mob, falsely accused him of blasphemy, beat him,

2 Corinthians 3:18 “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. <sup>18</sup> And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”

What is the freedom? = The ability to do what you ought.

Freedom in Christ enables you to:

1) Freed from religious blindness – 3:18 ‘unveiled face’

No longer looking at a system of religion but ‘beholding the glory of the Lord.’

**VISION for RMBC:**

- 1. Love Christ like we did when we were first saved – Revelation 3:15-21**

*Neither hot nor cold* v.15

*Lukewarm* v.16

*Self-sufficient* v.17

*Spiritually destitute* v.17

Q# What to do? = *Repent* v.19

*Jesus knocking on the door* v.20 = Open it by repentance

*Eating with Jesus* v.20 = picture of close fellowship

Point = I think I’ve been there in my life and I don’t want to go back.

Q# What has caused the slow fade in your love for Christ?

BIG Q# = How do I *love* Jesus?

Point = Obey Him.

**2. Love and forgive one another as Christ loves and forgives us – Matthew 6:12, 18:15-35**

Matt. 6:12 “*and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*”

Matt 18:15-35

*If your brother sins, go and show him the fault between the 2 of you...*

\*Peter’s question – *forgive up to seven times?*

Thomas a Kempis, “Be not angry that you cannot make others as you wish them to be, since you cannot make yourself as you wish to be.”<sup>18</sup>

Point = If I see MY sin against GOD as HUGELY HORRIFIC then the sin of other PEOPLE against me will seem small in comparison.

Q# Do I deserve better than Jesus?

Even bigger Q# = Do I understand “Grace”?

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<sup>18</sup> a’ Kempis, Thomas. 1420, in his work, *Imitation of Christ*, book. I, ch. 16. John Bartlett, *Bartlett’s Familiar Quotations* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1855, 1980), p. 149.

EVEN BIGGER Q# = Have I experienced “Grace”? Have I been born again? Because I cannot give something that I have not experienced.

Holding grudges is thinking much of yourself and little of Christ. One of the central differences, on a practical level, between a Christ-follower and a non-Christ follower is the ability and choice to extend forgiveness.

- A. Forgiving those who offend
- B. Holding a grudge = bitterness
- C. Gossip = deadly to the health of a church

Forgiveness = Freedom!

\*Joshua 22:1-6 Reuben & Gad fighting for the other tribes v.3 “*you have not forsaken...*”

### 3. Love the lost enough to tell them the truth – Ephesians 4:15

Or, love the lost enough to remove religious or unbiblical barriers of tradition to them hearing and understanding the Truth.

Thomas a Kempis, “Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing stronger, nothing higher, nothing wider, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller or better in heaven or in earth; for love is born of God, and cannot rest but in God, above all created things.”<sup>21</sup>

2 Corinthians 3:18 “*Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.* <sup>18</sup> *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same*

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<sup>21</sup> a` Kempis, Thomas. Perry Tanksley, *To Love is to Give* (Jackson, Mississippi: Allgood Books, Box 1329; Parthenon Press, 201 8th Ave., South, Nashville, Tennessee, 1972), p. 51.

*image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*”

What is the freedom? = The ability to do what you ought.

Freedom in Christ enables you to:

- 1) Freed from religious blindness – 3:18 ‘unveiled face’ No longer looking at a system of religion but ‘*beholding the glory of the Lord.*’
- 2) Transformed into the image of Christ – 3:18 ‘*are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.*”

The glory of Christ instead of just another boring church.

- 3) Formed by the Holy Spirit – 3:18 Formed by the loving hand of the Holy Spirit instead of living inside a little box called “Sunday church.”

***Your choices reveal the condition of your heart. We will all give an account to God for Rocky Mount Baptist Church. Choose wisely...***

Main Idea: We want to reach the lost/unchurched

Here are decisions that we will have to make before we reach them on a large scale.

\*Change – “people will only change when the pain of staying the same is more than the pain of change (Transformational Church).

Thomas a Kempis, “One day you will be separated from all, whether you will it or not.”<sup>1</sup>

\*I never want to say “NO!” when the Holy Spirit says “YES!”

\*The Gospel colliding with church tradition = *Every* church who confesses to believe the Gospel should and must hold *nothing* sacred except the Gospel.

BIG Q# = What are you unwilling to change and *why* are you unwilling to change it?

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

Drew Goodmanson “*The Future Dying Church*”

· In America, 3500 – 4000 churches close their doors each year · Half of all churches last year did not add one new member through conversion growth · Churches lose an estimated 2,765,000 people each year to nominalism and secularism

The question looms, what are all these churches going to do when they need to close their doors? I believe there are three options:

- 1) Dying Churches and Denominations can **become large REITs** (Real Estate Investment Trust)
- 2) Dying Churches and Denominations can re-invest in the Kingdom by **turning over their resources** for the purpose of Church Planting.
- 3) Dying Churches can be **replanted** through letting go of control and bringing in leaders who will get them back on mission.<sup>2</sup>

Q# How to Kill a Church?:

- 1) Maintain an unbiblical, silly tradition
- 2) Fight over non-essentials
- 3) Become inward focused instead of outward driven
- 4) Maintain a mode of operation/tradition that leads to an increasing irrelevance.
- 5) Close the doors
- 6) European Church

**AGI: Navigating the Church minefield**

- 1) **Whatever the advisory capacity, long-standing church members or degree-laden ministers “think” vs. What experienced soul-winners,**

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.goodmanson.com/church/the-future-dying-church/>  
<http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/127-twenty-somethings-struggle-to-find-their-place-in-christian-churches>

## **evangelistic pastors, and missional church members “do”**

Lie #1 Tenure equals wisdom

\*John Maxwell “Law of the Lid” – the leader is the “Lid” on the ministry.

\*“Law of the Lid” = I do not want to contain God because I want to be comfortable! I want to submit to His Word and give the helm of the rudder of my life and this church to the Great Captain; the Lord Jesus!

\*Ill – “But people may be mad!”

\*Ill – “But we may lose people!”

\*Confusing tenure and seminary degrees with wisdom and anointedness = a deadly, deadly confusion

The “You need to reach people a certain way,” mentality is like writing a treatise on “Acceptable & Unacceptable Ways to Save Drowning Persons” while on the deck of a boat approaching a shipwreck where multitudes are in danger of drowning.

Men with Faith in Finances – ‘how much does it cost?’

Men with Faith in God – ‘what is God’s Will?’

Faith & Cowardice = Faith says that God will provide for the itinerary He has given us. Cowardice thinks that God’s itinerary for the church is optional.

Men of VISION

***\*Confusing Priesthood of the believer with leadership given by people whose lives have no evidence that they are believers.***

\*We do not talk opinions...we talk texts.

= Even IF we entertained opinions about which direction this church is to go, here come the honest questions:

#1 What vibrant church have you been a member of in the past?

#2 What did you do to contribute to that vibrancy?

#3a Did the church follow your advice to achieve vibrancy?

#3b How are other churches who follow your opinion?

#4 Would you prefer to remain comfortable and see the church die or become uncomfortable and see God transform it?

Point = Long tenure as a member carries no privilege to give direction to the church. Furthermore, if you are a long time member shouldn't it be expected that whatever ministry you are a part of HAS been transformational?

Q# How does a church "get dead?" = Ultimately, it comes from the heart.

OBJ: Jeff, are you saying that you have all the good ideas?

Point = 2 Cor. 2:16b *"Who is sufficient for these things? 17 For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's Word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ."*

Point = Before God, my duty is to tell the Truth!

\*ILL – Fishing "expert" who only watches a Bill Dance video for an hour once a week...they never actually go fishing, they just occasionally hear a lecture about it or see a demonstration.

\*Football players and coaches vs. football spectators

Point = Missional Christians

Why would I listen to someone who does not organize and plan their life to do what Jesus told them to do, all the while claiming to follow Jesus?

\*Spectator who doesn't like how you are throwing the Life Saver Ring to a drowning person.

## 2) Whatever I am accustomed to vs. Whatever it takes mentality

Accustomed to & Expect:

- a. Everybody votes on everything = Q# What about leadership?
- b. Gossip about everything you vote on = Deadly...especially in a smaller, close-knit community.  
= Extinguish your church's "Good Name" in the community
- c. "Superman" as pastor & Pastor expects "Superman" members

\*Adrian Rogers – "you don't have to be a cannibal to be fed up with people."<sup>3</sup>

Accustomed to:

1. Short, meaningless, Spirit-less, passion-less, monologues, devoid of the Gospel – End at 12 noon

= Charles Finney "Preaching as if to Convert Nobody"<sup>4</sup>

Rule 2. Aim at pleasing, rather than at converting, your hearers. Aim to make your hearers pleased with themselves and pleased with you, and be careful not to wound the feelings of anyone.

Rule 5. Avoid preaching doctrines that are offensive to the carnal mind, lest they should say of you as they said of Christ, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" and lest you should injure your influence.

Rule 9. Preach no searching sermons, lest you convict and convert worldly members of your church.

Rule 19. Do not rebuke the worldly tendencies of the church, lest you should hurt their feelings and finally convert some of them.

Rule 24. Be time-serving or you will endanger your salary; and besides, if you speak out and are faithful you may convert somebody.

Rule 34. Avoid all heat and earnestness in your delivery, lest you make the impression that you really believe what you say.

Rule 35. Be tame and timid in presenting the claims of God, as would become you in presenting your own claims.

The experience of preachers who have steadily adhered to the above rules will attest to the soul-destroying efficacy of such a course, and churches whose preachers have steadily conformed to any of these rules can testify that such preaching does not convert souls to Christ. If souls are converted in congregations cursed with such a ministry, it will be by other means than the preaching.

2. Knowing everyone and a sense of "I am recognized"

\*I like a small church

\*Not feeling a part in the midst of growth. Feeling marginalized.

<sup>3</sup> Adrian Rogers, "Depression in the Ministry," (Houston: Rapha Ministries, 1989, VHS video).

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.truthmagazine.com/archives/volume32/GOT032103.html>

Point = You're not accepting Change, you are accepting People  
\*Feeling threatened by newness

### **3) Whatever musical style I am accustomed to vs. Whatever style best conveys the message of the Gospel**

HUGE! = Not a STYLE issue, it's a HEART issue  
\*Genuine heart change and musical worship =

OBJ #1: We don't want to manipulate the emotions and a lot of that new music is too moving

OBJ #2: We don't want to compromise the Gospel!  
The message does not change but the methods must.

OBJ #3: I don't like praise and worship!  
= Think about that statement in light of the book of Revelation...

Not pragmatism: Growth is a byproduct of a right relationship with Christ.

### **4) Whatever is clean, white, and middle-class vs. Whoever will may come**

\*Jesus spray

\*Genuine heart change and allowing "rough people" vs. "wanting rough people"

### **5) Whatever other dead or "status quo" churches are doing vs. How the Holy Spirit is leading transformational churches**

Looking at others vs. looking at Christ

Presupposition: "This is Church! We don't have fun here! (Why?) This is church! We're studying the Bible, not having fun!"

Point = They see God's Word *opposed* to joy! Nothing could be further from the truth.

### **6) Whatever will build our church vs. Whatever will build the Kingdom of God**

\*Transformational Church and accountability before God = I don't want to stand before God and say, "I didn't want to offend stuffy, dead to worship, church members with deep pockets with bringing in hardcore preachers/evangelists, passionate worship bands, & leading risky mission trips overseas and reaching out and accepting "risky" people.

Conclusion: How do you survive through these church minefields?  
= Find God's heart and embrace it.

How do you find God's heart? = Approach His Word with an open heart and drink in the life-giving power of what we call "God's Will." Though we may be talked about by the church community for being evangelistically aggressive, we are looking for a "Well done," from God himself.

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