

Is This It? Isn't There Something More?
“Why We Get Disillusioned With Church?”
(Part 4)

Video: State of the church

Intro: Have you ever been disillusioned with church? (Stories from many of you)
Statistically, we are a nation disillusioned with church. There has been much in the media in the last year talking about Americans church involvement and the steady decline of church attendance across America. Currently, research suggests that somewhere between 25%-40% of Americans attend church weekly. If trends continue, by 2050, this number will be 12-20%. WHY? People are disillusioned with church! Today we're going to answer this question and provide some biblical solutions. I believe God would have us reverse the trend!

I. 6 Steps To Disappointment

- We set ourselves up for disappointment by the choices we make. 6 ways that are guaranteed to make your church experience disappointing / unfulfilling /
 - A. Attend an unhealthy church
 1. Not all churches are created equal. Just because it's called a church doesn't mean you should attend / doesn't mean it's healthy / The church itself needs to share some of the responsibility for the decline across America today!
 2. Basic criteria for a healthy church
 - Bible believing / teaching – in a culturally relevant manner.

II Tim 4:3 “For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear.” (NLT) (No shortage of this today!)

- Do they have a mission that is stated and followed? So many churches today have forgotten why they exist. Social clubs rather than transformers!

*Prov. 29:18 “Where there is no **vision**, the people perish...” (KJV)*

- What is the relational climate? Don't look for perfection...remember, we're all a bunch of fallen imperfect people. (Love one another! – Are they working at this? Can you observe this?)

3. If you ever leave Foothills, please find a healthy church to plug into!

B. Embrace a consumer perspective

1. This is looking at the church like a store. You are the consumer and the church is there to provide you what you want. This consumer mentality impacts many churches.

I Tim. 6:5 “These people always cause trouble. Their minds are corrupt, and they have turned their backs on the truth. To them, a show of godliness is just a way to become wealthy.” (NLT)

2. This is the “what's in it for me” attitude. These are the folks who expect it all from churches. They want full service / children's ministry / students / multiple services –

- music – technology – programs – food and beverage...and they want it all for free!
3. They go to church with the sole expectation to gain something from church. They go to consume. Church is all about them. It's all self-centered!
 4. This attitude will always disappoint you because no church can ever fully satisfy a consumer mentality. (What happens when you finally don't like something?)

C. Never personalize the church's mission

*Matt. 28:19 "Therefore, go and **make disciples...**" (NLT)*

1. Every church must personalize Jesus' command to go make disciples in their own unique way. Every church may word it and package it with their own creativity. BUT, every church is in the business of making disciples. This is the Mission!
2. All you have to do to be disillusioned with church is NOT personalize the core mission of the church. Just believe that "disciple making" is for everyone else...or for the pastor...or the key leaders...BUT certainly not you! You never personalize your responsibility with your church to make disciples.
3. This attitude will keep your backside frozen in your chair and your mouth silent from every representing Christ. (Term – Frozen – Chosen!)
4. What's the big deal? The big deal is simply those who never personalize the mission of their church never experience the thrill / joy / fulfillment of making a difference for the Kingdom of God.
5. People like this usually cause problems in churches too. WHY? Because they have different priorities than the church. They don't care about the lost! They care about themselves.

D. Refuse to give back

Phil. 2:3-4 "Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too." (NLT)

1. This one is directly connected to the consumer mindset. If we believe church is all about giving to us, then why should we give back. The two key areas that lead to disillusionment; refusing to give financially and of your time to serve somewhere.
2. Giving of our time and money illustrates we have bought into what God is doing at a particular church. This is what we do when we begin to own the vision of the church. We care about the efforts of others and want to be a part of it.
3. To not give back in these ways will limit the amount of fulfillment we experience at any church. WHY? Because Jesus said it is more blessed to give than receive. We never experience this until we give. Selfishness is always the quickest path to disillusionment. Refusing to give back is selfish.

E. Avoid close relationships

Heb. 10:25 "And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another..." (NLT)

1. Let's face it...close relationships make life sweet. They make church sweet too!
Going to church with your friends is just a great thing!
2. Some people avoid relationships / don't talk to people / don't interact / engage / don't attend anything social / don't develop new friendships. They walk in – sit down – and promptly leave when it's over. This will leave you disillusioned with church!
3. WHY? Because the church is supposed to be experienced in the context of a loving community. This is how we grow the best / this is how we get our needs met / It's how we're designed.
4. Christianity was never to be experienced in isolation. I've heard people over the years at Foothills say things like; "My friends at Foothills are closer to me than my actual family."
5. Surveys have discovered that if new people coming to a church do not develop any new friendships within the first year will eventually quit coming.

F. Resist personal transformation

Rom. 12:2 "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think..." (NLT)

1. Just resist God changing your life and you will eventually be disillusioned with church and even God. Just keep hanging on to your old life / your old thinking / your old behavior and resist transformation and you will be miserable.
 2. The church is the environment of life change. God's whole plan is to conform us to the image of His Son. Therefore if you attend a church where the Pastor keeps talking week after week about letting God change your life when you don't want to, you'll eventually leave! That tension will get so intense you'll move in one of two ways.
 3. Transformation results in fulfillment. Resisting it leads to disillusion. The most unhappy people I have ever met in my years as a pastor have been those who resist God's plan of life change.
- It's not too difficult to be disillusioned with church. BUT God has better things in store for us and His church! He wants us to delight in His Church! I have heard people here at Foothills who say Weekend services are the highlight of their week. They look forward to it all week long! Are these people crazy OR... HOW?

II. 6 Steps To Delight

- We can set ourselves up for fulfillment as well. 6 ways that are guaranteed to make your church experience a delight / fulfilling / exciting / meaningful.
- A. Attend a healthy church
1. You are attending one. This is far from a perfect place. BUT, we are committed to

- Staying healthy and becoming even more healthy.
2. At Foothills we understand that the environment of a church is essential for growth and development. It doesn't matter how good I preach, if the relational environment of the church is not right, things don't grow.
 3. Parable of the Sower and Soils (Mark 4 - summarize)
 4. We are a bible believing / teaching church – This is why I use so much Scripture
 5. We have a clearly defined vision we are chasing after. (Slide -1000s of unchurched)

B. Embrace becoming a contributor

Eph. 4:16 "He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love." (NLT)

1. We can be consumers or contributors. It is the will of God that each part of the body of Christ contribute somewhere. By every part contributing, this keeps the church healthy, growing, and full of love. (In other words...fulfilling!)
2. By not contributing somewhere, we are saying that we believe the church exists to serve me and my needs. I'm simply here to use and consume.
3. But fulfillment happens as we use the gifts and abilities He has given us for His purposes. I can say with confidence that God brought you here to Foothills so that you could contribute somewhere. How do I know? God says it!
4. We are a growing church and we have great needs. We still need more help with our children's ministry / Student Ministry / Nursery / Hospitality / There is a place for you here!

C. Personalize the church's mission as your own

Phil. 2:2 "Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose." (NLT)

1. This only becomes a reality when we all personalized the vision that God has given this church. When every person begins to believe they are part of something greater than themselves. They are part of what God is doing.
 2. Slide: Foothills exists to reach the 1000s of unchurched people in our geographic area with the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ and to equip them to experience His presence and demonstrate His power.
 3. God brought you to Foothills so that you could be part of what He is doing. God wants to transform a geographic area. This is not my just calling / or Foothills' calling / This is YOUR calling too! This is why God brought you here.
 4. Just imagine being a significant part of God's transformation of this area? Talk about fulfillment / meaning / purpose. We're not here to play church...We get to storm the gates of hell and make a difference!
- We have more space coming / we still have chairs empty / who are you inviting?
 - In what ways are you personalizing the vision of this church?

D. Rejoice in giving back

II Cor. 9:7 "You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully." (NLT)

1. It is a statistical fact: Generous people are happier and more fulfilled than non generous people. It really is more blessed to give than receive. Jesus is right!
 2. God makes no apologies asking us to give of our time and money. He doesn't suggest it, He commands it! We walk the path of disillusionment when we say we are followers of Christ and yet we don't follow Him in the giving our time or giving our money. Who are we really following?
 3. If you have never experienced the joy and fulfillment of a generous life, I want you to know you're missing out. This is why I have asked you to read the Generous Life books. Our obedience is more significant than the goal of \$200K. WHY? You are missing out on God! God wants you to experience Him.
 4. Try to move past your defensiveness on this issue and simply embrace what God says in His word. Instead of thinking what your losing, think about what we're gaining. We get to contribute to seeing more people reached for Jesus Christ. We get to help fund the transformation of Molalla. We get to experience God in new ways!
- I can rejoice in this!

E. Move towards close relationships

I Peter 1:22 "You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth, so now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters. Love each other deeply with all your heart." (NLT)

1. The only way we're going to love each other deeply with all our hearts is being intentional with our relationships. We have to choose to move towards relationships rather than avoid them. HOW?
2. We have to choose to get involved in more than weekend attendance. I know relationships take time. BUT you can be busy and lonely or busy and supported and loved. Which do you prefer? Go to our web site – "Getting Connected"
 - Home groups
 - Serving together
 - Events

F. Let God transform your life

Eph. 4:14-15 "Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us...Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ..."(NLT)

1. It is God's will to grow us in maturity to be more and more like Christ. The greatest fulfillment we will experience in church and life is when we cooperate with this process. So many believers are miserable because they are fighting against God's maturing process.
 2. Instead of fighting it...give yourself to it! How
 - TNT Night – explain classes
 - Learn to feed yourself spiritually from the word – 201 class
 - Discover how your uniquely shaped to serve God – 301 class
 3. Why not let this year be the most amazing time in church you've ever experienced because you decided to get on board with God's growth process for your life. This year could be the year you experience the fulfillment of transformation...where you finally begin to let God change your life.
- Are you disillusioned with church or are you delighting in the Church? As we close, what changes is God prompting you to make so that you can truly experience delight here at Foothills? God brought you here for a reason. It's time to embrace it!