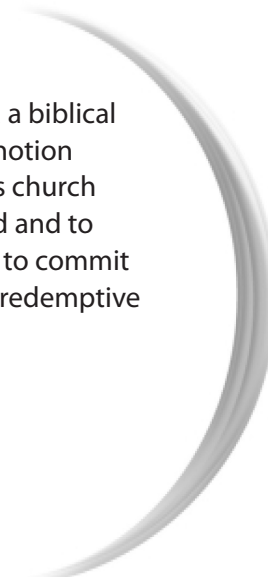


The Search



Objective: To build a biblical foundation for the notion that God desires His church to grow and expand and to inspire participants to commit to furthering God's redemptive plan.

Things that Grow

Everyone has two minutes to go outside and find something that is growing or has grown. Please bring your item back into the room with you.

Question #1: What was involved in the growth of the examples you brought back?

Question #2: What is involved in the growth of a local church?

There are a number of factors that contribute to the growth of a local church. In this session we will be taking a deeper look at one aspect of God's heart for growth: growth through reaching out into our communities.

The Search

Romans 10:14-15 states,

How then can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent?

Paul doesn't leave us very much wiggle room on this verse. It is pretty clear that God has entrusted Christians with the responsibility to search for people who are lost without Christ and we are to share the good news of what Christ has done. We are to share the good news.

In the 21st Century we have a small problem though. Listen to what author Kennon Callahan has to say:

The day of the local church is over. The day of the mission outpost has come. More precisely, the day of the churched-culture local church is over...What I am suggesting is that the way in which local churches have done business, conducted leadership, and developed administration is no longer functional in our time. Churches that cling to the old ways that worked so well in the churched culture will survive for a number of years. Their people will grow old together, and many of those churches will eventually die...the spirit of a mission outpost is one of mission, whereas the spirit of a churched-culture local church is one of maintenance.

(Effective Church Leadership, p.22-23 by Kennon Callahan)

In 21st Century North America, we can no longer call ourselves a churched-culture. Many in our culture today are not turning to the church for answers or for help. We now have an entire generation that has grown up without setting foot in our churches. That is why Callahan argues that the day of the local church is over. The world that we live in will require churches to act and think differently. First and foremost, we can no longer assume that unchurched people will come to us. Instead we have to act and think like missionaries who are staffing what Callahan calls a mission outpost.

What are the qualities of a mission outpost?

- For starters, a mission outpost assumes by its very nature that it exists for others. It is a declaration that others need to be searched for and they need to be told and exposed to the life transforming truth of the Gospel.
- A mission outpost is an expression of intentionality. Searching for the unchurched requires effort. As Paul says in Romans 10, how on earth can we expect people to hear about Christ unless we go out to them? As stated earlier, we don't have the luxury of people just walking in off of the streets like we did 20-40 years ago. That age of the church

no longer exists. We live in a day that requires us to move out into the harvest...out into the fields.

- A mission outpost exists because it is placed in a mission field. Everyone who works on the mission outpost understands that the mission field is all around them. Make no mistake, North America is one of the largest mission fields in the world in the 21st Century.
- Maintaining the mission outpost is secondary to the goal of getting the message out and searching for hungry hearts. In other words, the management of the mission outpost is not nearly as important as spreading the news.

Jesus said to Peter that the gates of Hades would not prevent God from building His church. Later in Acts, he commissioned Peter and others to go into all the world to search for souls in the harvest. He wants His church to grow through the rescuing of lost sheep. Local churches which have become mission outposts are what's needed in a culture that is no longer "churched."

Question #1: What is one thing that stands out to you as you read this article?

Question #2: What is most troubling (or challenging) to you personally about the article?

Question #3: In your mind, what has contributed to the demise of the "churched-culture" that Callahan argues for? Do you agree or disagree with his assessment?

Scripture Search Passages

Passage	Principles about Reaching Out
(1) Matthew 28:18-20	
(2) Mark 16:15-16	
(3) Acts 1:8	
(4) Romans 10:14-15	
(5) Luke 15	