

# Four Principles for a Healthy Church

## 1 Corinthians 9-10

**INTRODUCTION:** Today is what we affectionately call, ***“Family Reunion Sunday”***. On this day each year, we take some time to reminisce on all that God has done through this church family in the past. We consider where we are in the present, and we ***gaze with the eye of faith*** into what God might do in the days ahead.

Earlier we heard **Mr. Pep Whitfield** recount the past as only he can do. Now let's take a moment to look at where we are currently.

In **2019** we said that we as a staff we believe it is possible for this church to grow up to **1200** in weekend attendance on this campus. At that time our AVG weekend attendance was **628**.

- Our AVG Sunday attendance in the month of August this year was - **940**.
- That is a **341** soul gain since **2019**.

For the first time in the history of the church we broke **1,000** in attendance on a business as usual Sunday.

AND, quite frankly, we are out of room to grow.

We have plenty of seating, thankfully. We do not have plenty of **PARKING** and we do not have plenty of **SMALL GROUP SPACE**.

**ILLUSTRATION:** GROWTH can only achieve what space will allow.

- Fish will tend to grow only so big until you place them in a larger aquarium.
- Plants will not outgrow the pot in which they are planted.

Churches have a similar experience. If you do not accommodate they growth, the shoe will inevitable tell the foot how big it can get.

If we do absolutely nothing - all of those growth trends we have been experiencing will begin to correct themselves in the days ahead.

Recognizing that this space issue was coming - our deacons approved the formation of an exploratory team to evaluate the possibility of constructing an additional wing onto this building to accommodate the growth.

They have worked very hard over the past few months. They have met with all of the various ministries in the church, to consider all possible needs that need to be addressed.

They have consulted with a local builder - **Ron Flick and the Compass Group**. Compass was the builders responsible for the construction of the two new hotel properties on the North End of the Island - a Courtyard Marriott property.

Today they are reporting back to the church to show us the building they believe we ought to construct. Each family should have a copy of the floor plan and information about the building in the, "Building a Legacy" brochure. Now I want to show you an animated rendering of what the completed project would look like.

[VIDEO]

Several of the immediate questions are addressed in the brochure. You will also see the date of **OCT 12 when we will host a TOWNHALL** to answer any questions and discuss in detail all that is entailed in this project.

After that, we will come back together on OCT 26th to vote on whether or not we wish to proceed with this project.

In the meantime, notice the names of the exploratory team listed on the back of the brochure. Feel free to ask any of them about the project.

[ASK BUILDING TEAM TO STAND]

NOW, let me say a word about my approach to buildings. I believe that things work best if I do what I do best - study and preach the word... and if I leave that team alone to do what they are called to do.

So with that in mind - I'd like to preach now.

When it comes to buildings, we don't have a lot of direction in the NT. We have the Temple of God in the OT, but nothing is said about building a church.

The early church met in homes, or as it was in Jerusalem public property like Solomon's Portico.

It was nearly 300 years before church began to own property and build buildings. Consider these shifts in church over the last 2000 years.

### **Early Church:**

- There was a single Church every about 100 miles that distance expanded the further it moved from Jerusalem. In some places the head of the household would venture into an area when the church was located once a month, worship and return.
- Churches did not own property
- Christianity was a "new" thing that people knew they didn't understand completely

- While there was much that outsiders didn't know about the church (i.e. eat his flesh, drink his blood - cannibalism). They knew the claims of Jesus, but church was odd.

### **Modern Church:**

- 1000's of churches within 100 miles (in the bible belt) - People have options. When they disagree with a church, well there are 5 more I pass on the way to this one. There are 34 Churches, just on Amelia Island.
- Church owns multi-million dollar campus's
- We are officially, "post" Christian. When I was a kid and someone said they were an atheist - it was the Christian God they did not believe in. Today - they don't have a good understanding of the christian God.
- Outsiders have a false understanding of the gospel - i.e. works or incantation. They know very little about the story or the claims of Jesus Christ.

**WHILE MUCH HAS CHANGED, those things which make a church healthy have not.**

**CONTEXT:** In 1 Corinthians 9-10 Paul takes a bit of an excursus from his Question and Answer rhythm, as he addresses the key principles that serve to make a church function as it ought. These are the same principles that will make or break our church in the days ahead.

*First he teaches us to...*

## **1. Know Your Rights, But Do What is Right**

### **1 Corinthians 9:1-6 (ESV)**

1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? 2 If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

Remember, one of the reasons that the church was divided over various preachers was because, Paul's Apostleship was called into question. This still happens today, you will find people who question the writings of Paul since he was not one of the 12 disciples who walked with Jesus first hand.

Well he did meet church face to face, where? The Damascus Road. He alludes to it here in verse 1, Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?

The story is told in detail 3 times in detail in the book of Acts. Now, as as Apostle Paul had certain rights and authorities.

3 This is my defense to those who would examine me. 4 Do we not have the right to eat and drink? 5 Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?

For our friends in Roman Catholicism, see in this passage that celibacy was not the practice of the Apostles, neither should it be expected of all Pastors and Priests.

<sup>6</sup> Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? <sup>7</sup> Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?

So Paul is saying that he has every right to take a salary from the churches he served. He even indicates that the rest of the Apostles did so. But then look what he says...

### **1 Corinthians 9:15–18 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing these things to secure any such provision. For I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting. <sup>16</sup> For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! <sup>17</sup> For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but if not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship. <sup>18</sup> What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.

So Paul sets the example for us of NOT demanding his rights... but rather doing what is right for the sake of the Gospel.

#### **This attitude is that of the:**

- Staff Member who is a team player even when things don't go their way.
- The Senior Saint who support new and innovative ways of reaching the lost.
- The Deacon who faithfully serves behind the scenes and allows others to get the credit.
- The Small Group leader who is willing to share his space with a school so that young people may learn and grow.

#### **This is the attitude of Jesus as Paul writes in Philippians 2:5–8 (NASB95)**

<sup>5</sup> Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

If anyone deserved better it was Jesus. Yet he left his royal throne where cherubim perpetually shouted His praise, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty!"

- He traded the Capital city of Heaven for the little town of Bethlehem.
- He who built and fashioned the entire Universe took up a carpenters trade.
- Though many diadems had crowned his head, he wore a crown of thorns.

Why? Because He loved you! Now you too, take up the servants towel and basin.

*Know your rights, but do what is right...*

## 2. Err on the Side of Reaching the Lost

### 1 Corinthians 9:19–23 (ESV)

<sup>19</sup> For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. <sup>20</sup> To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. <sup>21</sup> To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. <sup>22</sup> To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. <sup>23</sup> I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

Perfect balance is an illusion. It is an illusion in life and it is certainly an illusion in church.

- If we sing one song that you like, someone else is frustrated.
- If the auditorium is too hot for some, it's too cold for others.

**ILLUSTRATION:** I heard about a Pastor who was new to town and he was out driving around one day and he passed Mrs. Jones, one of the ladies from his church, out working in her yard. She dressed sort of revealingly so the Pastor acted as though he didn't see her and just passed by. Later he discovered that people were saying he was stuck up and unfriendly. So the next time he passed her he made sure to roll down his window and say, "Hi Mrs. Jones". Well, word began to spread that the new Pastor is such a flirt.

Balance is an illusion.

Paul would recommend we pursue balance, but if we are going to err... err on the side of reaching the lost.

In other words, if you need to make a decision and you are forced to decide between that which will keep the saved church member content or that which will challenge them, yet enable us to reach more of the lost world, err on the side of reaching the lost.

**General George S. Patton said,** "*Never let me hear someone say that we are holding our position... Always we must be progressing. Never ever stand still.*"

*Know your rights, but do what is right...*

*Err on the Side of Reaching the Lost...*

## 3. Wage War on Enslaving Idols

## 1 Corinthians 10:14–22 (ESV)

14 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. 15 I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say.

### Then he gives 2 illustrations:

- **Communion** - 16 The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?  
17 Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.
- **Sacrificial System** - 18 Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar?

19 What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20 No, ***I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God.*** I do not want you to be participants with demons.

We talked about this Wednesday but for the sake of those who were not here, let me explain...

**The Greeks and Romans had dozens of idol gods...they were typically the same god just called by different names whether you were roman or greek.**

- APHRODITE or VENUS the goddess of Love and Lust
- DISPATAR (GR. PLUTO) the god of wealth
- BACCHUS the god of wine
- FAMA (Pheme is the Greek) the goddess of fame

Today people don't worship those idols anymore. But the demons behind those idols are still around.

How do you think people worshipped Bacchus the god of wine? They got drunk. Do you know what a temple to Bacchus looked like? It was a wall with shelves of wine and mixed drinks. Basically, a bar. Do people still worship at the temple of Bacchus? You better believe that do.

How about FAMA the the goddess of fame. Do we pay homage to Fama? No, but how many spend hours on social media, jealous because someone got more likes than they did?

You see, the same demons who the Corinthians were worshipping are tempting us today.

If we are going to be a healthy church, we must wage war against these idols.

## Galatians 5:1 (ESV)

1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

*Know your rights, but do what is right...  
Err on the Side of Reaching the Lost...  
Wage war on Enslaving Idols...*

## 4. We Must Exist for God's Glory

*Paul sums us this section in verse 31...*

### 1 Corinthians 10:31

<sup>31</sup> So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, **do all to the glory of God.** <sup>32</sup> Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, <sup>33</sup> just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved.

The Presbyterians blessed the CHURCH Universal when they gave us the Shorter Catechism... and that wonderful first point: *What is the chief end of man? The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.*

At the end of every day - the chief question that must be answered is not,  
Did I gain more followers?  
Were people at school nice to me?  
Do I have more money that I did yesterday?

We may ask those questions.... But Heaven is asking - did you Glorify your Creator with this day?

That is the ultimate measure of any church service.  
AND that is the chief question we must ask as we decide whether or not to build on to our current campus.

WILL THIS GLORIFY GOD AND HELP PEOPLE TO ENJOY HIM?

- If the answer is NO, then may we not successfully lay one brick upon another.
- If the answer is YES, then may we sacrifice our personal comfort for the sake of that which glorifies our Lord.

Will it cost? Yes... somewhere around 6 Million I'm told. But friend, life is expensive.

**CONCLUSION/INVITATION:** All three of our kids have been home this weekend.

- We've bought a condo in Gainesville for the older two so that they can attend the University of Florida. I get very little use out of that Condo, but I pay for it.
- They have to get around so we are helping them pay for vehicles. I never drive those vehicles by the way.

- Our youngest participates in literally every event they have at Fernandina Beach High-school. I get up most days around 5AM to get her to cross country practice, or escapades, or lip-sync. Yesterday, Julie and I drove to Jacksonville to watch her race. I could have been hunting or fishing... but instead, I was at Bishop Kenny watching a race.

These kids cost time, they cost money, frankly they cost us emotionally.

By the way, there was one other. We miscarried just over 15 years ago. That child would have their driving permit now and adding to the excitement. But that child has not cost us a single cent.

Life is expensive... death is not. I prefer life with all it costs.

There are 380,000 churches in our Nation. Most of them barely exist. We are fortunate to have a church that is alive. Rather than get too concerned about what it might cost us, let's...

*Do what is right...*

*Err on the Side of Reaching the Lost...*

*Wage war on Enslaving Idols...*

*Do what we need to do, to bring Glory to our Lord...*