

**The Trouble With Christianity**  
***Church***  
**May 1/2, 2010**

Good morning everyone. Today, as Shannon said, we're concluding our series, "The Trouble With Christianity," and we're going to look at what some people believe to be the greatest trouble of all: *the church*.

Of course, we've *already* talked quite a bit about the church in this series as we've focused on some of the *other* troubles with Christianity, but today we're going to turn the spotlight directly on to the church itself. And, as we begin, I think it's worth asking:

How did something that seems so simple – a man, Jesus of Nazareth, dying on a cross saving the world – how did something that seems so simple become something so *institutional* – with churches and denominations, statements and beliefs, and all that goes along with that?

Part of the answer is that it's not as simple as it seems because the idea that Christianity "comes down to a man dying on a cross saving the world" is correct as far as it goes, but it doesn't go far enough. The full picture is that, as much as Jesus came to do *that*, Jesus also came to create a *community of those* who have been saved by his dying on the cross and rising from the dead; a community (called "the church") whose members would love and care for each other so well that *others* would want to become part of it.

I could go into lots of detail as to why that's true, but I'll keep it simple ...

**... and just point out that Jesus said:**

*"I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."*  
Matthew 16:18 (NIV)

**And that Paul echoed that same idea (about Jesus' intentions with the church) when he wrote:**

*Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. (Paul uses the feminine here – the church is the Bride of Christ). He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish.*  
Ephesians 5:25-27 (NLT)

Of course, that's the problem isn't it? The church, as most of us have experienced it and continue to experience it, isn't always holy and clean. There are lots of spots and wrinkles and blemishes.

The result, as we heard in the song, is that sometimes the church – which ought to be the glory of the gospel, the *shining example* of what the gospel can do – gets in the way of the gospel. And that's what we want to look at today.

But before we do, I need to tell you that this particular message is a little more personal for me than the others in this series, and not just because *I work for the church*. It's personal because *I love the church*. I fell in love with the church long before anyone thought it might be worth it to pay me to work for the church; many years ago when I was a teenager and it was the church that introduced me to Jesus and his community and it was the church that helped me find clarity and purpose for my life. I fell in love with the church then – 36 years ago – and I love it still.

And because I love the church, it pains me that so many people perceive the church to be part of the trouble with Christianity. But it pains me even more that a lot of what people perceive is true of the church.

So, what I want to do first in this message is to look at what a lot of secular people see when they look at the church and try to give

a response to some of the most significant ways in which it's often more of a problem for Christianity than it is a positive. And then I want to talk about why we have some of those problems; some of the reasons why the church is not what the church is intended to be or could be.

## Problems

So, here we go. What are the problems that the church creates for Christianity, especially from people who are outside of it, from their perspective? And, we've already heard some of the criticisms and talked about a few in this series:

- The church is full of hypocrites.
- The church seems to be all about rules.
- The church is judgmental.
- The church is irrelevant.

All of those are true to some extent, but they're small potatoes compared to what many people see when they look at the institution of church. In fact, several books have been written in recent years (including the two to which I've been referring in this series, *The Reason for God*, by Tim Keller and *UnChristian* by Kinnaman and Lyons; we have these in the book store if you would like to go deeper in to this) ... several books have been written in recent years which have spelled out three big problems with the church.

The first problem, and probably the one that's cited most often as a reason to reject Christianity is that ...

### **1. The institutional church is responsible for great evil throughout history.**

The institutional church, as you look back through the history of the world, is responsible for great evil. And, typically, when people talk about this they mean everything from the Crusades of the Middle Ages right down to the sexual abuse scandals of our day, particularly in the Roman Catholic Church. And the thought is, "How can Christianity be valid, how can it be worth it, how can it be true if that kind of evil is the result?"

Good question. One answer is to say that although great evil *has* happened (and it has), a much greater good far outweighs it. For example, the rise of modern science and medicine, the value education for all, and the idea of basic human rights (all of these things we take for granted) all of these things have their roots in the historical church.

But I think the question needs to be answered more directly and part of the answer, as we talked about in the first week of this series, is that the plain fact of the matter is that Jesus came for sinners. He didn't come for the righteous. He came and he called sinners, so guess what, the church is made up of sinful people, and guess what, when you have sinful people you ought to expect some evil at some level.

In fact, Keller, in his book, gives a great explanation of how that reality accounts for, at least in part, for what happened in the Crusades.

When the Anglo-Saxons first heard the Christian gospel, they were incredulous. They couldn't see how any society could survive if it did not fear and respect strength. When they did convert, their conversion was far from consistent. Their behavior was far from consistent. They tended to merge the Christian ethic - which says put the needs of others, the feelings of other, the property, everything of others first - they tended to merge that with their older ways.

**So ...**

They supported the Crusades as a way of protecting God's honor and theirs. They let monks, women and serfs cultivate charitable virtues of Christianity, but those virtues weren't considered appropriate for men of honor and action.

### **In conclusion, Keller writes ...**

The shortcomings of the church can be understood historically as the imperfect adoption and practices of the principles of the Christian gospel.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, the answer, as we've mentioned several times in this series, isn't *less* Christianity but *more*. The answer is for Christians and churches to be *more* Christ-like not *less*.

And, as much as I like that answer and think it rings true, there's something about it that seems a little hollow when applied to institutions. I mean, hypocrisy and evil at an individual level is one thing; hypocrisy and evil at an institutional level is another beast altogether. In fact, as we learned last fall in our series on economics, evil tends to magnify and multiply as structures get larger and larger and, eventually, it begins to take on a life of its own. Its power eventually far exceeds the sum of its individual parts.

... which raises a really good question: why not just get rid of the institution of church altogether if this is what happens as things get larger and larger? Why not adopt the mentality of the gal in the video who said "I believe in more of a spiritual one-on-one relationship with God. It works better just to do my own kind of thing."

After all, as one of the other gals said, "You can believe in God and not have to go to church."

And that's what's happening in large numbers these days. In fact, "the rise of the free-range Christian," writes one commentator calls it, "along with the attendant cynicism towards all things institutional has been one of the big stories in the religious world in recent years.

In his book, *Revolution*, researcher George Barna describes many younger people, especially, as ...

"... a generation choosing from a proliferation of options, weaving together a set of favored alternatives into a unique tapestry that constitutes *the personal 'church' of the individual.*"<sup>2</sup>

See what he's saying – the personal church of the individual. People are saying, I'm just going to put together my own church because the institutional church is so messed up. And the reason people would opt for the personal church, as opposed to the regular institutional church - that's the the second big problem that people have with the church:

### **2. The assumption that the institution of church actually tends to stifle authentic faith and community instead of enhancing it.**

And there's no doubt that that can be true and is true in many cases. It is highly possible to get so focused on the business and organization of the church that you forget that Christianity is about *relationships*: it's about a relationship with God through Christ and it's about relationships with other people.

In fact, about four years ago, I remember feeling that way about NHCC. Our pastors were looking at our ministry structure and trying to figure out exactly what we should do and it was hard and we didn't have clarity, and we spent a whole day working on this, and worked into the evening, and I remember driving home that night, thinking, "Why can't we just go back to the way it was in the very beginning; back to when Christianity was an organic movement that spread from person to person, house to house and community to community? This building thing, this money thing, the staff thing, the volunteer thing ... it seems so far removed

from the simplicity of the gospel.”

Now, I don't know if you're aware of this or not, but there is actually a movement in Christianity these days called “house church” where a lot of Christians have decided to do just that: to get away from the institution and back to the organic simplicity of the faith. And I had the thought that night (and I'll just confess this because I was kind of depressed) that maybe I should quit (and get a real job) and just start a little house church in my neighborhood.

So, I decided to look into it – you know, Google is your friend – and so I Googled “house church” and I started reading the blogs of some of the guys who were doing house church and what I learned was very interesting ... a lot of the stories often went like this:

“I kind of got fed up with the institution of the church, so I quit and decided to do my own house church. I invited a bunch of my neighbors to my house and we had a bible study. There were about 15 people there and we had dinner together. We sang, read scripture and prayed for each other, and it was great. It was like God was right there in the middle of the room. So, the next week we had it and the neighbors started bringing their friends from work and then there were 20 people in my living room, so I had to figure out what we were going to do with all these kids that people were bringing. So, the next week we asked Sally if she would volunteer to take the kids down in the basement and watch them. Then, the next week, these people brought 10 more people and since we couldn't all fit in the same house we took our group and split it in half, and people didn't like being split in half but we did it anyway because it was the right thing to do. So we put them in this other house over *there*. And eventually more and more people came and then we had about 10 houses meeting all through this neighborhood. Then the people said, ‘we don't like being separate like that – could we meet together sometime?’ So we rented the clubhouse and had a big worship service once a month. And now we have 40 kids and have to *pay* Sally to watch the kids in the basement of the clubhouse.” And, it just went on and on and on.

And, the lesson: *successful organic movements eventually require organization if they are going to continue having success!*

Of course, that's exactly what the organic church of the first century discovered as well.

Acts, Chapt. 6 says:

*As the believers rapidly multiplied (the house to house, person to person thing), (it worked, but guess what?) there were rumblings of discontent. The Greek-speaking believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food. (In other words, the church has this plan, we're going to be a family – a loving, radical generous family – but our widows are not being taken care of. What's wrong with our church?)*

“because of great success, authentic faith and community were in danger.”

So what did they do? They organized. It says,

*The Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, “... select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility (of taking care of the food; of organizing this process). Then we apostles (will keep doing what we're supposed to do) praying and teaching the word (teaching about Christ).”*  
Acts 6:1-4 (NLT)

They created an organization to deal with the problems that came from success at doing what they were called to do.

See, it's simplistic thinking that sees organization and *organizations* as the enemy. It's simplistic thinking that says it's an either/or proposition: “either you get Jesus or you get the institution of the church. Can't get both.” Truth is, some of the most organized churches are highly effective and deeply spiritual. And some of the most “organic churches” are highly ineffective and cold as ice.

The challenge for Christian leaders is to figure out how to get the best of both worlds: to create the kind of organization that enhances authentic faith and community instead of stifling it. Truth is - Sometimes we do that well; but a lot of times we don't.

-----  
OK, let's look at one more problem that many people have with the church and keeps them away from Christianity ... and it's a *huge* one these days.

### **3. Many people believe that the church (both institutionally and locally) is too political.**

By institutional I mean, higher than a local church (though obviously local churches, or individual congregations, can have political agendas) – but like denominations sometimes take on a political agenda. There are a lot of para-church organizations (they don't have church services) but a lot of Christians flock to them and give money to them and they have a political agenda. And, many people on the outside of the church look at them and say, "that's just too political."

And, both Keller and Kinnaman deal with this issue at length in their books, so I won't go it other than to say that I agree with the criticism.

I will also say that *I didn't always agree*. There was a time in my life when I thought that part of the job of the church was to keep our country on the straight and narrow. I don't believe that anymore (for reasons that will become apparent shortly) ... and I also realize that not everyone would agree with me on this. The "political involvement question" is a tough one and it's been that way ever since Jesus uttered the immortal words:

*"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."*  
12:17 (KJV)

Mark

It's difficult, especially in our day and age, because we live in a culture very different from the people who first heard Jesus say that. Now, first century Jews and even the Romans they didn't have a democracy. We live in a *democracy* where we're allowed to participate at some level, and Jesus didn't cover how to do that in the Sermon on the Mount. So, each of us has to discern, based on what Jesus taught and on the principles of the gospel, what we think it means to be both a Christian and a citizen in a representative republic at the same time.

For me, personally, I've come to the conclusion that, as Christians, we're called to act as fully-engaged citizens; we are free to do that and we are to be as involved as we want to be and have time to be; *but we're not called to be a voting bloc or a special interest group*, like every other special interest group in this country, clamoring for "my way, my way, my way, because it's the right way." I don't think it serves Christ and the world well for the church to organize itself to power up at the ballot box or in any other way.

Don't hear what I'm not saying. I'm not saying that I think individual Christians shouldn't vote or shouldn't try to influence others politically or the process politically. I'm not saying that. What I'm saying is that I think *for the institution of church to do that* – right now, in this culture, at this point in time – *is not a helpful thing*. I don't think that was true 40 years ago, and it might not be true 40 years in the future. But, right now, I think that is counterproductive to what we're trying to do.

### **Reasons**

Now, as to *why* I have concluded that ... well ... that leads into the second thing I want to address in this message: some of the reasons *why* church has become part of the problem for Christianity; some of the things that cause the church to not be what the church is intended to be.

Here's the first one – and it's just huge and it addresses this political thing.

#### **1. The church falls short of what God intends it to be because pastors and ministry leaders substitute**

## **other agendas for the agenda of Jesus.**

And I can say this without pointing fingers because I've done it. I *regret* that I've done it. But I have done this as a pastor.

Let me explain what I mean by that.

Remember what Jesus had as his primary agenda, the main thing that he came to do? I'll give you a clue: it wasn't dying so that we could all accept him and go live in Heaven on a cloud for all eternity when we die (though we do get to live again – forever – after we die if we believe).

### **Here it is (Jesus' main deal):**

*"The time has come," Jesus said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"* Mark 1:15  
(NIV)

In fact, can we all read that together, out loud? "The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

That was Jesus' whole agenda ... the Kingdom of God becoming real in the lives of people right here and right now (not at the end of time, although it will become physical and literal at the end of time). He wanted people to see that the Kingdom is *right now* – through the repentance of unbelief. That was the message. That was the cause. That was the agenda.

But it's not the agenda of a lot of pastors and church leaders. A lot of us have substituted other agendas – not-so-good ones like politics, moralism, legalism, and – dare I say it – our own personal ego.

But we've also substituted some really good ones, too, like green or world hunger or right-to-life or human rights in general or family or, dare I say it, worship, bible study, theology. I'm not saying they those kinds of cause are unimportant; it's just that, for the church, these are supposed to be the subtexts, not the main text. They're supposed to support the main agenda, not be the main agenda. But in many churches and in groups of churches, they have become more important than the person of Jesus and his agenda.

And I think a lot of pastors and ministry leaders have missed this. I know I missed this for many years as a pastor. And, I think I probably did some damage because I missed it.

So, what I think a lot of us need to do in the church is to follow the example of the Apostle Paul. And, it's kind of a slap to the ego if you're a pastor to do this. But this is what Paul wrote to the church at Corinth:

*When I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.*

In other words, I didn't come to you trying to convince you of how smart I was or what I thought was important in this world, and how you ought to get on my program or my agenda. What he said was ...

*For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.* 1 Corinthians 2:1-5  
(NASB)

I tried to keep it simple, Paul said. Keep it focused on Jesus and what he did for you and this whole world.

### **Paul later expressed the same attitude to the churches in Galatia:**

*May I never boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of that cross, my interest in this world has been crucified, and the world's interest in me has also died.* Galatians 6:14 (NLT)

Interesting thought: “my interest in this world has been crucified.”

Paul is not saying that “I don’t care about the world any longer.” On the contrary, Paul was giving his life to the world so that the world could know Christ and be redeemed.

Instead, what Paul was saying was that “all the issues that the world thinks are so important; the issues that the world debates and argues and fights about; stresses over ... winning those battles? That’s no longer my motivation. I’ve been crucified to that. My motivation is Christ and his cross and what that means.”

And, I think, practically speaking, in our day and time, it means that pastors and leaders need to help Christians and non-Christians understand that regardless of whether a country is socialist or capitalist; regardless of whether it goes “green” or not; regardless of whether it turns to the left or right or has a Tea Party; regardless of whether any hot button issue like abortion or gay marriage is “solved” (according to our definition of “solved”) ... what we need ... what’s most important ... is the heart transformation that comes from saying “I am part of the problem here. I am far worse off than I would ever believe in my sin, but I am far more loved and accepted in Christ than I can ever imagine.” It means that no matter what the subtext or sub-agenda, the main text and main agenda is always people coming to Christ crucified, risen and coming again ... coming to Jesus over and over ...

... and then creating communities of people (churches – house churches, small, medium, large, mega churches, whatever attracts people) – communities who live out of that gospel and who invite others to be part of it. As I mentioned last week, that’s how the early Christians – who not only had zero political power and who were persecuted to the death for their faith – turned the world upside down. The agenda of Jesus was their agenda and it changed the world. I think we need to get back to that because when pastors and church leaders move away from it, the church falls short of what it’s meant to be in the world and the world suffers for it.

There’s so much more I would like to say about this, but we need to move on to other things that are causing the church to be less than what it was intended. And we’re going to move quickly through the next two, so don’t blink. ☺

## **2. I think the church today suffers from “just pray the prayer” evangelism that overemphasizes individual salvation ...**

... and doesn’t make clear to people that when we come to Christ and when we do pray the prayer (because we do need to pray the prayer, “I’m a sinner, I need a savior, Jesus is the savior...”), but what we’re doing is not just having a personal transaction between us and Jesus, but we’re becoming part of the community; we’re becoming part of the Kingdom. As one author puts it so well, so tactfully ...

“The Gospel isn't about the individual getting his or her own rear into heaven but about the creation of a Community, a Body, a Bride.”<sup>3</sup>

See, Just-pray-the-prayer evangelism cripples the church from the get go because people think in terms of me & Jesus, instead of me & Jesus & the People of God ... which means then that the church becomes superfluous, unnecessary and then unsupported by the people who God is counting on to reach other people with the Gospel. It’s a vicious cycle when it happens, when it all comes down to pray-the-prayer evangelism.

And really, if you want to talk about getting back to organic Christianity, that’s not how Christianity worked at the beginning. There was no pray-the-prayer evangelism because you did not become a Christian without becoming part of the community of

faith. You became a Christian by joining the community of faith that believed this about Jesus. And, the way you join that community is through baptism.

People ask me this all the time, “Rick, I love your church, how clearly you preach the gospel. You invite people to receive Christ, but you never ask people to walk the aisle, why is that?” Because it ain't in the bible. (Not that churches who do it are wrong. Oh gosh, this is what happens if I go off my notes!) It's fine if they do that. But biblically, the marker of a person coming to Christ, is when they step into the water of baptism and say, “I'm in.” Literally, “I'm in.” And, not only are they in, it's a sign of saying millions of other believers throughout the history of the church have done this and I'm standing in the water with them. I can't see them but I'm part of this community now. I'm part of this local community that has baptized me. That's why we emphasize baptism so much. That's why in two weeks we're going to do baptism as part of this service. That's why some of you, who have come to this point of hearing all this stuff, and you've been here for awhile, and you're going, “I need to buy in. I need Christ in my li fe.” You should be baptized. It would be one of the best things you'll do in your life, if you do.

OK, let's move to the third reason the church has problems.

### **3. The church is weak because of its members' unrealistic expectations.**

And, I'm going to step on some toes here, so get your feet ready. I think what happens is a lot of us, when we first come to Christ and become part of this church, and we go, “I can't believe these people love God, love Jesus and the world so much that they would do this whole thing so I could find out about Jesus. This is just so wonderful. Oh Jesus, I can't wait until you come back.” But what happens though is reality sets in, because remember who Jesus called to be part of the church – sinners. And, so what happens is people let you down. People mess up. And, because of our unrealistic expectations, we don't understand what is going to happen – a lot of people just walk. They just walk and say, “Well, if that's how it's going to be, I'm just out of here. I'm going to go do my personal church of the individual,” like George Barna wrote about. And as a result, the church is weakened, isn't able to do what it's supposed to do in the world. But not only that, they themselves miss out.

I love how this author explains this, he said,

#### **Quote:**

I've often wished I could write off church. But, if I truly understand the Gospel ... I just can't. In spite of all the inherent frustrations, and more often than not through them, God intends to form me through my participation in the community of Christ followers.

I need to know what mercy and grace mean, and I can't think of a better place to learn it, both the giving and receiving of it, than in the community of people trying hard, but often failing, to live life in the way of Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

I love that attitude. I love it even more because it was written by a pastor! This is something we *all* have to realize – that our unrealistic expectations, from the pastor on down, have this problem of weakening the church and ourselves.

Ok, one final reason ...

### **4. The church is hindered because many Christians think that its ministry “just happens.”**

Here's what happens in churches (and we've talked about this as a leadership team several times) ... that if you do anything well, people look at that and go “man, they have their act together.” They come in here and hear the band rockin' this morning and go, “man, the music program at this church has got it together. They surely couldn't use any more help.” Or, you take your kids back to Adventureland and you go “my kids come out of there and they're singing songs and quoting bible verses. They're more spiritual



than I am! Man, they must have it together back there.”

And, we come in and “the lights are on; it’s cool in here – they must have all the money they need.”

Let me just tell you a little secret: It looks better than it really is. In every church, it looks better than it really is. Because the truth is ... that band that’s up here, some of those guys are tired. They could use other players. The people who are in Adventureland ... I had a meeting with the Adventureland Coordinators last night – do you know what they told me – “We’re tired. We could use some help.” Not that they want to quit. Not that they don’t have good people on their teams already, but we need more people. We need more people because week after week we’re turning more people away from Adventureland. Or week after week, we’re having substitute volunteers work every week, working more than some of the regular people, as substitutes. And, there is just this thing we have in our heads that “it looks like it’s going well so they must not need anything else.” But the truth is, churches cannot have the impact that they need to have if it’s all up to the staff people and a handful of committed volunteers.

**And, in fact, that’s really not even their job. Paul wrote,**

*These are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers.*

And, most people who are part of a church where those positions and offices are in place will say, “Amen, and aren’t we lucky, because all those people help us grow in our faith. They help us make sense of our lives. Yay God!”

**But Paul goes on to say,**

*Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.  
Ephesians 4:11-12 (NLT)*

Their responsibility is to get all the people who are sitting in the auditorium to take a share, take a part in what’s going on, because, if they don’t, the church is weaker. The church is not able to do what it’s supposed to do. Do you realize so much more could be done through North Heartland. And I have to be careful about this because I don’t want to make anybody feel guilty and I’m not trying to pound the pulpit to get people to give or serve ... but goodness gracious, so much more could be done through our church. Just Adventureland, on a peak day, they have 115 kids back there. That is the most they can handle. We could have as many as 200 kids back there if we do some reconfiguring and we have more volunteers. But we don’t have the volunteers to even do that.

-----  
There are so many more things that could be done ... okay, I better be quiet. The point is ... here’s the reality of our church – it’s not as good as it looks. *It’s not.* And, we could use some help. So, when you hear, “hey, we need some people for Adventureland for the summer.” When you look around and you go, “that guy up there is running the camera; he must really be happy about sitting there through three services this weekend, and he’s back next weekend and the next week and the next week ... maybe I could run a camera.”

Okay, I could go on and on, obviously. Bottom line: church would be so much better, so much more of what it’s supposed to be if:

- Pastors and leaders remained focused on the agenda of the gospel and the Kingdom.
- Evangelism was more than “pray the prayer” and emphasized *belonging* to the community of faith – the church.
- Members had realistic expectations and understood that part of their growth was dependent on learning how to deal with the gap of “what is” and “what should be.”
- Every Christian believed he or she is a critical component to the success of what God wants to do in “the church.”

It wouldn’t solve all the problems; it wouldn’t change all the perceptions, but things would be so much better. The church would be

so much more effective at being and doing what it's intended to be and do.

And ... we would each grow. We would benefit from it. Paul writes:

*All glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. (That power can produce) Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.*  
*Ephesians 3:20-21 (NLT)*

Glory to him in the church – what I want for some of you, I want you to experience this glory, not just on the receiving side of it, but on the contributing side of it. Whether it's financially contributing or contributing in serving, you can be part of the glory that God wants to create in the church. And, I pray that you will; I hope that you will.

Of course, we always have to come back to the same thing that, yeah, we can be part of the glory but the truth is, the trouble with Christianity being the church is that *we're* part of the problem, starting with me. Every person in this room – we're part of the problem. And, so again, we need to come back to Christ and repent, believe the gospel - that we're loved more than we can ever imagine even though we're far worse than we can ever imagine.

### Communion

So that's what we're going to do right now. I'm going to ask the band to come up and we're going to close this service with a time of Communion. And, Communion as you know is just a reminder of the gospel - reminds us of what Jesus did, reminds us of who we are, reminds us that we are loved beyond belief in Him. And today as we do this, when you come up to the table, I want you to notice that when you take a piece of bread out of here, it's not just one piece sitting on the table. This is not just between you and Jesus. And, when you dip your bread in the juice, everybody else is going to dip their bread in the juice too because we're all in this together as a community of faith. This is the People of God called North Heartland Community Church. So, as we do this, ask God, "What does this mean, that I'm sharing my bread with everyone else in this room? How do you want me to be involved?" And God might say to some of you, "You don't need to be involved right now. You just need to sit and learn." But, I think God might say to some of you, "You say you love me ... how about loving my bride, the church."

### ENDNOTES

---

<sup>1</sup> Keller, pg 61-62

<sup>2</sup> <http://bobhyatt.typepad.com/bobblog/2010/03/from-the-archives-why-im-not-done-with-church.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://preachermike.com/2010/03/31/they-like-jesus-but-not-the-church>

<sup>4</sup> <http://bobhyatt.typepad.com/bobblog/2010/03/from-the-archives-why-im-not-done-with-church.html>