

HIGHLIGHTS – JOAN GRAY’S SPEECH AND SEMINAR

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Today’s Churches faces the same issues as businesses do.

LIABILITIES – what’s working against us from within?

- We’re operating “as if” we’re still in the 50’s – and they are NEVER coming back (God is working on “a new thing”).
- We’re not embracing technology
- Print is wavering, though we still use it as a major communication tool
- We’re “change averse”
- Presbyterians have one of the lowest birthrates among Christian denominations
- Presbyterian “passion” is “lukewarm”
- Change can equal pain (but between panic zone and comfort zone is the “stretch zone,” which is what we need to aim for

THREATS – what’s working against us from outside the church?

- Young people are NOT joiners, they are “institutionally averse”
- Today people consider themselves “spiritual” (whatever that means), not “religious”
- We don’t “own” Sunday’s any more – competition from Sunday newspapers, golf, kids’ sports, etc.
- Traditionally, we are geared to offer our very best on Sundays, but now people don’t show up
- Belonging to a church is no longer considered a mark of “respectability
- Today is a religious marketplace, not just Christians and Protestants
- Young people give financially to what they are PASSIONATE about, not just loyal to church or single cause any more
- Our culture no longer supports churches

ASSETS – what to we have to offer from within?

- We are people who have been called to be blessings to others
- God is never “finished” w/His church
- Realize WE won’t/can’t bring kids in anymore, but we can find kids in the church who will bring new kids in. Then empower them and let them lead – for REAL.

*NOTE: Remember that kids want religious **experiences** through deep-seated relationship w/God and others. They DON'T just want academic encounters with Biblical facts.*

OPPORTUNITIES – what to we have to gain from outside?

- More people today than ever who are “spiritual seekers” to invite into the Body of Christ
- More ways to connect through technology (ex. Speaker described young congregation with no “brick and mortar,” but sends out weekly Facebook about where following Sunday’s service will be.)
- Culture is crying for transformation (ex. Japan)

WHAT KIND OF CHURCH ARE WE: ROWBOAT OR SAILBOAT?

- Rowboat churches try to “go it alone,” rowing like crazy in whatever direction they “think” God wants them to go.
- Sailboat churches open their “sails” to God and allow themselves to be directed by His winds of change. (Doesn’t imply “laying back,” there’s much work involved on a sailing crew.)
- Church leaders today must be part of the crew and keep our cool as God moves things along in different directions.
- Example of new direction – electronic giving (How about producing a patch that reads “I give electronically” to wear at church. ☺)
- A sailboat church engages people rather than just “using muscle” to row; let go of being in control and agendas. (Example: think of “long range planning” as spiritual preparation/finding direction, not just hiring, budgets, etc.)
- Consider “taking the passion/spiritual temperature” of our church (can be done w/graphics?) Be PASSIONATE about God, it inspires growth and giving.
- Church was meant to be a God-powered sailboat; an adventure; a movement
- In Post-War America, we became rowboat churches, with lots of “baggage,” maintenance, etc, because “we could”...we had the resources.

TWO WAYS TO REACT TO CHANGE:

- Merely “rearranging deck chairs” – superficial (i.e. changing personnel, processes, etc. – doesn’t “cut it” any more)
- Allow something new to ERUPT into our comfort zone and put us into the “stretch zone” – MUST DO TO SURVIVE

WHAT’S NEXT? – START WHERE WE ARE

- “What did God say to me today?”
- What do I want my church to become?
- Pray (we don’t have to be gifted speakers – just “show up and listen”)

- Give thanks, pray *powerfully, honestly*; prayer is like a doorknob that opens the door to God's wind that blows the sails; God's calling is like advance information of where to go/what to do
- "Leaking out" – an unconscious energy from leaders that affects others
- Think, "I was called to this role to 'be myself' and use my strengths and talents."

ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

- Witnessing – What have we seen and heard?
- What does God want us to be doing NOW?
- Ask Pastor to bring SPECIFIC questions to Session.
- Leaders ask each other, "Who's agenda are we working?"

TENDING THE FIRE

- We need *higher spiritual passion*
- Focus: transform people's lives through community; Consider using church building as a community center (one church in attendance at seminar numbers approximately 70 members and has 7-8 outside groups DAILY using the building.
- When praying, don't talk "about God" like He's not in the room; talk TO Him!
- Small churches are leading the way (because we HAVE to, to survive)! "God loves "small."

IDEAS GLEANED FROM OTHER CHURCHES

- For sessions – report "God Sightings" at each meeting – what have you witnessed God doing in you life/community since last meeting? Find a Bible verse that represents what was witnessed and use it for Session until the next meeting
- One church created a visual "Communion Guide" to make preparation easier for visual learners

- Conflict management – those involved in misunderstandings actually visit each other to discuss, rather than ignoring the dispute.
- Use session meetings primarily as a worship service, not a business agenda process.
- Consider candle-lighting at session meetings.
- Have a clipboard in the welcoming area with stationery (love notes) and pen that can be used to send notes to college students. Pass through congregation?
- New trend – smaller sessions, more event oriented, rather than policy
- Leaders' roles are increasing – clergy and lay people ordination are EQUAL – each member is a “minister.”
- Important to offer people relevance.