

Traditional Churches Responding to Busy Lives

Discipling Busy Adults
A Travel Free Learning Article

By

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Our world is filled with microwave ovens, mobile phones, TIVO's, personal digital assistants, and smartphones. Younger generations communicate via texts, Tweets, and status updates to Facebook more than they speak face-to-face with friends or families. A walk through a college campus or high school brings the awareness that many have their attention on texting or responding to texts every few moments. Many business establishments have 24/7 schedules and show little if any regard to keeping the Sabbath day holy. We watch news, sitcoms or other TV shows or movies at our convenience of time and place thanks to TIVO, Netflix, Hulu, and mobile devices.

The world is more connected than ever and increasingly smaller. Yet amidst this loneliness, emptiness of soul and isolation are rampant across the world. What's a church to do? How do we fulfill the command to the church in such a busy world filled with time-poor people of all ages?

Busy Lives Challenge Churches

Many people, regardless of age-group, are pressed for time today. You see people of all ages, genders, and ethnicities driving beyond the speed limit while talking on a cell phone, eating and drinking, and often styling their hair! I've seen it and you have too. In fact, if we were honest, we are part of this juggling act.

Now we can't have a meal or conversation without phone calls, texts, or emails demanding our attention. For some reason we believe it is imperative we respond as soon as the message arrives. Such attention to the immediate leaves many craving relationships, community, and intimacy that are often sought online rather than person-to-person. Where will this phenomenon lead us?

Families are rarely together in the home at the same time, much less the dinner table or even the church class. We seem to all go our separate ways, communicating with our preferred styles and enjoying music and writings for our own generation. How do we experience and build community in this kind of world? How can we be family and community in a hectic-paced world? Where do the busy find and experience worship? Where is Sabbath in a 24/7 world?

Church Responds to Busy Lives

As a way of acknowledging cultural shifts might we follow the teaching and model of Paul's ministry? Responding to others is not a compromise of values or beliefs for Paul, as much as a way of meeting people where they are in their spiritual journeys. Paul changed his language, diet, schedules and dress that he might be able to minister to all; particularly those that were not of his tribe and lineage.

If Paul as a major force in the establishment of the New Testament church needed to do this, what about those of us who now find ourselves in a culture very similar to the culture in which the New Testament church was founded—secular, busy, anti-Christian, and pluralistic beliefs and a variety of traditions.

What's the possibility that rather than condemning or competing with the busyness of culture and family the church seeks new ways to disciple busy adults? Consider these:

- Chasing Sabbath by learning to create sacred space, place, and time to create Sabbath when it is needed and possible?
- What's the possibility of creating convenient, efficient avenues for giving, tithing, sharing talent and expertise?
- What if tithing became a multiple lane avenue for affirming, celebrating ministry acts rather than just perpetuating a building or staff?
- How do we provide worship experiences as you go?
- How do we honor the Spirit in the moment of life and celebrate that powerful presence as a spiritual formation experience and exercise?
- How do we create or generate online downloadable learning and personal worship tools for the business commuter or student that is part of the pod people generation?
- What does scripture study and reflection look like for the iPod and Facebook generation?
- How do we use technology to save time, build community, and honor a variety of learning styles by those who are part of the church and are seeking to connect faith and daily life?
- How do we create times of rest and reflection for the busy? What might this look like? What would happen if we could create and bless this created and protected Sabbath?
- What does spiritual formation and Sabbath look like for the unemployed? For the employed? For the new unemployables? View <http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=7361548n&tag=contentBody;featuredPost-PE>
- What if there were focused, brief, transformational worship experiences offered for variety of groups throughout the week, in a variety of settings and times?

Lessons to Consider:

1. Meeting people where they are rather than where we would like for them to be is a Biblical model that is tough to practice for many in their church culture.
2. Options are available, but just not often the focus and intent of many churches.
3. Technology can be our friend rather than the enemy of the church if we step up and innovate, experiment, and create from the chaos.
4. Empower the younger generation to create and innovate new, sacred space and place for worship, reflection and spiritual formation.
5. What else?

Resources for the Journey

- ***Spiritual Leadership in a Secular Age*** by Edward Hammett
- ***Making Shifts Without Making Waves*** by Edward Hammett and James R. Pierce
- ***Reframing Spiritual Formation: Discipleship for an Unchurched Culture*** by Edward Hammett
- ***Faith Coaching*** by Chad Hall, Bill Copper and Kathryn McElveen
- *Tools to Help People Grow Forward in Faith and Online Teaching Tools and Listing of Online Congregations* and other reading lists available at www.transformingsolutions.org

Important Things to Know

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