



DEXTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Extreme Home Makeover: Homequakes

September 27, 2009

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Matthew 7:24 – 27

SERMON NOTES. “*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*” Why are our homes in such a state? (& I’m not talking about Michigan, not that we’re not “in such a state” right now. (BTW, poor State - MSU). You heard the stats of Christian homes last week from Steve. Many of our *own* home lives are in a mess. As families, it’s like we’re getting “frayed around the edges.” Out of control schedules, no time for love & caring, the TV running the kids, kids running the house, unsustainable expectations, and very little communication happening. Statistically, the church in North America is doing a lousy job of passing on the faith to the next generations. (Because, as we saw last week, God never *designed* the church to be the main ones to do it.) Andy Stanley points out a major contributor to this mess stems from a certain, deeply held, *false* assumption. Here are some points he makes that show how we’re making decisions based on this one assumption right and left. And it’s time we examine it. Are you ready?

We think **God takes attendance**. That’s it. This assumption drives religious behavior, (and anti-religious behavior.) My Grandma Hoos never went to church, because when she was 8, she and her sister were ostracized by the Sunday school teacher for wrecking their perfect attendance record. How sad. We assume each Sunday God is asking “Are they in church today?” Is he in church today? Is she in church today? Wendy Biggs...and there’s Ethel...and Hannah Montana didn’t show up...Bob Squarepants...it’s so silly, it’s embarrassing to have to talk about it. But here’s why this is a big deal: many of you quit because many of you grew up in a home where you were dragged to church as a child. You’re dad didn’t want to go, your mom was driven by guilt, your brother hated it, your sister hated it. You endured church, because we grew up thinking God was happier with you because you were in the building. Nobody learned anything, and that became the sum total of what we thought about Christianity: God takes attendance. When I put it that way, we *know* it’s absurd, but for many, this becomes the sum total of our spiritual paradigm. *We begin to measure our success with God based on these false foundations*. This drives families. And it’s not just the Christians, but other religions as well.

Today I want to be clear: If you think God’s like that, you’re messed up. This is the reason people quit. Not only did it not draw anybody closer to God, but when the kids finally got an opportunity to choose, they said “Ain’t gonna do it.” And here’s the thing: they didn’t only abandon attendance in their *minds* and *hearts*, they abandoned *God*, they abandoned the *Bible*, and their value system.

This might be *your* story. Not only is it *not* the litmus test for your relationship with God, this assumption could actually drive people away from God. **Attendance is not the main thing**. Believe me, I’m not anti-attendance! I love church attendance. I believe the church is the hope of the world and we’re *called* to worship God publicly together. But the danger is: God taking attendance distracts from what’s *really* the main thing. Do you know who knows what the real focus of Christianity should be? Non-Christians, because many of us grew up with this subculture of

“Attendance. (check). Brought your Bible. (check) Stayed to the end. Silenced your cell phone. Invited your neighbor. Went to confessional. S.A. (Stayed awake!) ☺.” We got all wrapped up in it. I’m NOT discounting the value of any of it. My main point is THIS AIN’T THE MAIN THING.

Our non-Christian friends would say “The reason I have a problem with Christians, the reason I have a problem with Christianity, is *not* because of how consistently they attend on Sunday, but because of how *inconsistently* they treat me on Monday. (Amen?) And that could include *your kids and mine*. We know intuitively the real issue, the bottom line is *not* where we attend on Sunday, it is how we behave on Monday. *That’s* the real deal. That’s building your house on the rock foundation. Please understand: I’m not talking about salvation or God’s love. Nothing you *do* will make God love you more. Your salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ alone. But Jesus says our faith is for abundant living today. God’s kingdom is at hand, thanks to Christ alone.

Here’s what’s so odd. Some of you grew up in homes where Mom and Dad had you in the building every Sunday, yet none of the values transferred *to* your home. Your dad was a real disconnect. And you love your dad, but his lifestyle and behavior in no way reflected what Christianity was about. Maybe your mom was the same way.

The tragedy is we live in a non-Christian culture that measures our faith and faithfulness and our belief in God *not* by how we do on Sunday. And the New Testament is so clear on this. **It’s not what you know, or what you heard on Sunday, it’s what you do on Monday.** The DOING of Christianity, the living out of our faith makes the biggest difference in *us*, and in the world around us. You can get a sticker by your name every day, and have no clue what it means to have a relationship with your heavenly Father.

Now let me tell you a secret: Do you know why Christianity, and probably in every other religion in the world, placed such an emphasis on “You gotta *be* there and you gotta attend”? Because *this* is where we take the offering. Seriously! The more people you get *into* this part, you can pay the bills, and the economics and the financial organization over time just becomes a driving factor. And again, it distorts our view of what Christianity is and who God is. But Jesus said it’s about what you do on *Monday*. Sunday is about *inspiration, and information*, but Monday through Saturday is about *application*, and if you do what the Scripture says, it doesn’t make any practical difference in your life.

I’ve heard people say “But I’m in church every Sunday” and you think there’s inherent value. And I want to give you a heads up: **The value of attendance is not measured on the day you attend, but on the next day, by what you do with what you’ve heard.** By the storms of life you may be facing. Doing makes all the difference practically. Not eternally, but practically. Jesus said so. One day Jesus told this parable. (SONG) A wise man built his house about a rock, and the rain came pouring down. “The rain came down and the flood came up” And the house on the rock stood firm. The foolish man built his house upon the sand, and the house on the sand went splat! And we were kids and we all went “splat.” (That pretty much describes some of our lives right now, doesn’t it?)

Listen to what Jesus says. “*Therefore, everyone who hears, (in church) and puts them into practice, is like a wise man who built his house upon the rock.*” Jesus said “Thank you for attending my Sermon on the Mount. You get a sticker. Now, if you want there to be value, if you want your life to hold up, based on what you just heard me preach about, then you have to go out and DO what I just told you to do. Because the value of attendance isn’t about what happens when you attend, it’s what happens with what you do after you attend.”

Years later, James the brother of Jesus said it too. James 1:22 “*Do not merely listen to the Word and deceive yourselves.*” And think “Wow, I’m a better person!” In church culture there are people

around the world who are bored, asleep, angry, or watching the clock, and they're thinking "God loves me, look what I've just endured." And then James says "*Do what it says. 23 those who listen to the Word and do not do what it says are like people looking in a mirror, and they go away and don't remember what they look like.*" Think of your mirror in the morning. (Scary thought!) ☺ You stay in front of that mirror until something changes. (The older I get, the more difficult that change is! ☺) James says you don't get any credit for looking in the mirror if you don't fix your face or your hair or whatever needs fixing! ☺ When we gather (on Sundays), it's like looking in a mirror. **The Bible is a mirror**, and we look and we go "Wow. I need to work on that!"

Like Jesus, James says you don't get any credit when you just look in the mirror and go away unchanged. It's only when you *do* something about what you see. The value in attending is not measured on the day you attend. It's based on the next day, based on what you do with what you've heard. 25 "*but those who look intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continue to do this, not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.*" God blesses your activity, not just your showing up. Jesus says "put it into practice." That's the foundation of it all. It's when you go home, and you become a better father or mother, or you get your morality in line, when you start living your life in a different way, you become a bless-able person.

So consequently, attendance *is* a first step. You gotta hear the Truth. But because of where the blessing lies, *this* church decided we would not be content with people just attending something. We're not going to allow finances to drive everything. We want people to *do* the things the Bible teaches. We know that no matter how exciting Sundays are, at the end of the day, the thing that makes the difference is what happens Monday through Friday.

How? Feed & be fed. You need to find a place to help other people (feed). And find a place where you're growing, (being fed). To begin, we want to do everything we can to get you plugged in to a small group here, and get the faith that saves you and changes the world in your home. You can sign up today to be a part of a group, so you can do life together. From Sunday School classes, Bible studies, mission teams, to small groups. We laugh together, we pray together, we hold it together, and sometimes we don't. I've been in a group like this longer than I've been in ministry as a career.

You might be thinking "I'm doing more with what I've heard than I ever did before. It's enough." But it's *not* enough, because, like Jesus said, the storms are going to come: rock or sand. You need some rocks in your life who have the spiritual resources to see you through. If you had a small group, now's the time: get on the phone. If you had a "bad experience," I'm so sorry. You better give up and never try it again. Just kidding! Try a new group. Sign up in the back. If you're new, join a class! Join a group!

One more thing: imagine how different your family might have been growing up, if your father and mother had met with other men, other women, other couples, talked about the things of God, and talked about how to live them out in business, community, addictions, & *at home*. Imagine how your upbringing might have been, if your parents hadn't simply "gotten you to church" but somehow were able to sit down with a group of people and talked about what they heard and how they could apply it in your life as a kid, living it out. Imagine the extreme makeover that would have been!

We're *so* glad you're here. We're really not trying to run anybody off! This is so vital. But it's not the main thing. So if you're not in a group, get in a group. If you're not living faith@ home, look at this tool: "The Faith 5." Monday—Saturday, may God be God in your home.