

STONE HARBOR

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Dear Readers,

What follows is one man's weekly attempt to know the truth of God's Word and bring it to His people for their good and ultimately for His glory. Please regard these only as notes belonging to a busy pastor uploaded as they stand (for better or for worse, complete or incomplete, almost always with grammatical errors, and always with room for refinement in content, structure, presentation...) to support the ongoing study of God's Word. I firmly believe that the community of faith which is the body of Christ can and should bring their gifts to bear for the good of the rest of the body and that any one teacher can be taught by the others with an understanding of the truth. Therefore, should you have insight that would sharpen any of the thinking expressed here, know that I would be pleased to receive it. Clearly, the input that is most welcome and most helpful is that which is more concise than verbose, Biblically grounded and expressed with the goal of displacing misunderstanding and apprehending the truth of God's Word. Your thoughts of that nature are most welcome, certainly appreciated and will be thoughtfully considered. You are invited to send those insights to me at johnny@stoneharborchurch.org.

In pursuit of truth and growing a shepherd's heart,

Johnny

Transformation Card

This page provides an overview of the message and resources for individual and group study.

Date: May 9, 2010
Series: The Church of God's Intention
Part: Part 1 – What God Intends the Church to Be
Section: Action Points
Topic: Integrating Biblical Truth Regarding the Church into the Church Life
Message Title: **Being the Church of God's Intentions**
Short Title: Being the Church
Text: Various
Key Words:

Message Outline

- Being the Church of God's Intention – 4 (Deb, use in sideways heading.)**
“Being the Church” (Deb, use as heading of the Outline above the three points.)
A. As the New People of **God** we will be...
B. As the Church of **Christ** we will be
C. As the Church of the **Spirit** we will be

Related Scripture

1. James 1
2. Philippians 3

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. Since the Church is the New People of God, what will it be in relation to God?
2. Since the Church is the Church of Christ, what will it be in relation to Christ?
3. Since the Church is the Church of Spirit, what will it be in relation to the Spirit?

Memory and Meditation Verse

But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.”
James 1:25 (NASB)

B. Being the Church of God's Intention

[This message is the second pause in the new material of this series so that that we can integrate what we have discovered to be God's intentions for the church.]

James 1:21-25 calls us away from our default mode regarding Biblical truth: we hear, forget most of it, and go on with our lives as if that truth were not true.

- I don't see this as sinister on our part or even intentionally rebellious. I do see it as understandable due to our natural limitations and inclinations. I also see it as indicative of our fickle wimpy tendencies to avoid all-things-difficult unless we see clearly that those difficulties yield greater benefit than if we did not endure them. It is just the way we are – at least it is the way we were born according to the fallen nature of the first Adam.

Most of us live in a sub-reality of actual reality. We are not aware of many things that are (real and true); and we are convinced of some things that aren't (real or true).

It is a peril each of us face that we can wind up:

- Living a lie – Living as if reality were one way when it is in fact another. Sometimes this is intentional and other times completely unbeknownst to us.
- Three Ways We can Live a Lie
 - Live in denial – Living as if something were not true when you know it is. Foolish.
 - Living in ignorance – Living without knowledge of something that is real. Vulnerable.
 - Living in deception – Believing something represented to you as truth to be true. Others can deceive us and we even have it in us to deceive ourselves. Deceived.

To the degree we live in a sub-reality of the truth which God has revealed, we are deceived, ignorant or foolish regarding these things. And that fact that the things of God are matters of life and death affecting us for eternity calls us to take seriously the acquisition of this body of truth. We do not want to reach the end of our lives only to discover that we had been deceived, ignorant and foolish about the things that matter most.

So we should, and in this body of believers we do, give ourselves to the pursuit of God and His truth in the pages of Scripture, in our personal study, at our gatherings on Sunday's and during the week. We sharpen each other and bring what we know to the community of faith that we might build each other up by helping each other know the truth.

But what do we do when we apprehend this truth. We certainly don't want to be the forgetful hearers of James 1. We would much rather be the effectual doers, right? But if we race to **doing** bypassing **understanding** we run the risk of getting the cart before the horse -- and in matters pertaining to Christ this can translate to doing Christian looking activities without allowing that truth to increase our knowledge of Christ.

Knowing Christ must be first. Paul said, "...I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and

count them but rubbish so that I might gain Christ, and may be found in Him..." (from Phil 3:8-9)

So we are looking today at how to integrate the truths we have learned in the last several weeks regarding the church into our lives and our church, but we will try to do so resisting our natural tendency to rush to doing without having first gleaned how that truth helps us to better know Jesus.

We have seen over the past three months that the church is new people of God (NPOG), and that the church is the church of Christ and that the church is the church of the Spirit. I'm asking that we now take these three truths and begin to integrate them into our lives and our church. First...

3. As the New People of **God** (NPOG) we Are...

a) **Defined by God**

Who we are is really who God says we are. He is the one who created us. He is the one who redeemed us. He is the one who re-created us causing us to be born again and making us alive out of the death into which we were born. He has adopted us and therefore given us our identity as His sons and daughters of God.

I concede that it is true that we can be immature, ignorant, even rebellious sons and daughters of God, but we are His, we are what He has created and redeemed us to be. We are...

(6) His People

- (a) **Created by Him**
- (b) **According to His Design**
- (c) **For His Purposes**
- (d) **Redeemed by Him**
- (e) **According to His Grace**
- (f) **For His Glory**

We are the clay; He is the Potter. We are defined by Him.

b) **Dependent on God**

(6) Not just for our provision

Roof, food and job...

(7) But for our very life

- (a) **Not only life as in existence**

(b) But true life as in intimate communion with God

We do not even live (by God's definition of life) apart from Him. What people do who so called 'live' apart from God is exist in estrangement from Him and the function for which they were designed – they are like the camel that thinks it's a porpoise, the fish out of water, the son with no father, the wife who is widowed.

Life, according to God, is intimate communion with Him! It is impossible to live (truly live) disconnected from Him. We are dependent on Him.

As it is for each of us independently, likewise it is so corporately. We, the church, depend on God. Church life is only life in our intimate communion with Him. As we are individually temples of the Holy Spirit, we are corporately the temple of God – His dwelling place by His choice in His creation.

The life of Stone Harbor Church is defined by God and dependent on His presence. If God is not with us, we are just a stone wall in an abandon field soon to be overgrown by weeds. If God is with us and in us we are the very temple of the Lord – the meeting place of God with man. And that is what we are. In addition, as a church we are...

c) The Dwelling Place of God

If we are to be the church of God's intention we will recognize and celebrate that we are the NPOG and, fitted together, the very substance of the final temple that is the dwelling of His ultimate choice. Fitted together alongside Christ and His apostles and the prophets He has chosen us collectively as His dwelling place -- His final dream house perfectly suited to serve His purposes.

This is a sacred assembly. We are the NPOG gathered by Him in His presence. In every sense, this church is God's!

And you thought you were just a group of people who decided to come to church.

The reality, whether we recognize it or not, is that we are not just a group of random people gathered on Sunday to sing some songs and listen to the preacher; rather we targets of God's creative, redemptive, transformative love, we are the raw materials of His building project, but not cheap lumber and sheetrock, rather precious, hand hewn stones personally selected by God Himself to be a part of His temple. We are fashioned, shaped, fitted together according to the Master Builder. But all analogies fall short of the reality as we are even more precious than that. We are living **beings** created in the image of God uniquely capable of knowing God and living, truly living, in meaningful relationship with Him. The dwelling of God is not built of static materials, but of living beings capable of loving relationships with God and man.

If we are to be the church of God's intention we must think differently about the church!

It is not a gathering of men and women according to their plans. It is the NPOG, who He has gathered and who are accomplishing His purposes for His glory. Thankfully His purposes include our best. Thankfully also our lives are most rewarding to us when He is glorified through them.

What would I have you do in regards to the truth that the church is the NPOG? I would have you think differently about it than comes naturally. Do not start with yourself, but with God. *We are a part of God's plan, even though we naturally want to make Him a part of ours.*

God corrected my own thinking this week. I re-read some of my past notes from this series and I found this phrase, "I'm hoping that today we can put a few things in our backpacks so that we can have them to use as we build Stone Harbor Church." As we build Stone Harbor Church? As if we could build the church of God's intention. This is the type of change of thinking I want us to embrace. We don't build the church, at least not the church of God. Jesus said, "...I will build My church..." (Mt 16:18).

[Psalm 127:1](#) – "Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain."

The church is the church of God. God builds the church. He is the subject. We are the objects. Yes, He uses us and with the indwelling Spirit we become agents laboring with Him. But see the difference between natural and spiritual thinking. Natural thinking asks, "What can we do to build the church?" Spiritual thinking asks, "What has God done and what is God doing to build His church?" And then only secondarily, "How would He use me to accomplish His purposes?"

In the bottom right corner of your TC is the question, "What is the Holy Spirit leading you to DO?" I wrote that question. It is not a bad question but it is a risky question because we naturally jump quickly to doing and we can get all caught up in our own doings of our own ideas. Cross it out. Don't feel bad for me. Write instead, "How is the Holy Spirit causing you to think about these truths?"

Here, we have been presented with a truth: the church is the NPOG. How would the Spirit have us think about this? Since the church is the NPOG... you fill in the blank...

That is more than a little harder than you would like it to be isn't it? What I want naturally is for someone to tell me: Take these steps and do them 3 times a day for 21 days and you will get the results you are looking for. But the danger of rushing to doing is that we can slip so easily into thinking it is our doing that makes us good and acceptable to God – it is the trap of the false doctrine of works righteousness and it masks the reality that we are in God's good graces only by

God's grace and His mercy. We can so quickly be caught up in the doing that we sacrifice the knowing of Jesus.

We must say with Paul, "...I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ..." Phil 3:8

Let's see if we can think about the truths of Scripture with the mind of Christ in regards to the truth that we have considered that the Church is the Church of Christ.

4. As the Church of Christ we Are...

a) All about Christ and precious little about us

He is the beginning and the end and the center of all things with or without us. And in regards to us: He is our source, our life, our destination; He is our fulfillment, our peace and our rest.

John 15 records Jesus teaching us, apart from Him we can do nothing; nothing that comes close to the life of God's intentions. Sure we can do a lot of human activity but it would just be a teenage boy spinning his tires on his parents station wagon stuck in the sand and going nowhere with a lot of noise and dust. Not that I ever did that.

Honestly, apart from Christ, what can we bring anyone of eternal value? I'm sure there has been much philanthropy done by unredeemed man and that that giving has done physical good. I know God can certainly use that. But the good apart from Christ brought to even a child who's life is saved and who grows to an adult and then lives the natural life that we know to be death in that it is separation from God, that good calls out to eternal good for help. "Help" even the rich man's soul still calls or will call. And even if it is true that the unregenerate man is so dead to the spiritual matters that he does not even know he needs help, at least the actual truth remains -- apart from Christ we are all impoverished in the things that matter in eternity. All the riches of the world and the ease of life and the relationships that bring some value in our temporality pale in comparison to the immeasurable goodness of knowing Christ.

Paul says in [Philippians 3:8](#), "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,"

Why?

In Him/Christ is life! In Christ and in Christ alone is the life of intimate, eternal communion with God.

[John 1:4](#) – "In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men."

[John 8:12](#) – "Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, 'I am the Light of the

world; **he who follows Me** will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”

[2 Timothy 1:10](#) – “but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,”

Jesus Christ is the life giving God-Man of surpassing value!

(6) The Church is the result of Christ's activity

That Christ is the builder of the church. (Mat 16:18)

- He redeemed us from our bondage to sin
- He reconciled us to God
- His Spirit regenerated us
- His Spirit transforms us
- He is the head of the church – the King of the Kingdom of God
- In Him we are vice-regents in the KOG

(7) The Church belongs to Christ

That Christ is the owner of the church. (Mat 16:18)

- God has entrusted all things into His hands including His Church (Mat 11:27; 28:18; John 17:6, 2)
- You are not your own! (1 Cor 6:19)
- You, and every member of His Church, has been bought with a price and that price is the blood of Jesus (1 Cor 6:20, Mark 10:45)
- You are His. The Church is His! But far from restrictive or oppressive His ownership of you has set you free from bondage and brought you into the family of God as co-heirs with Christ and the privileged children of Abraham. “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Gal 3:29.
- The Christ to whom we belong is life-sacrificing life-giving God-Man of superlative value who uses His greatness for our eternal best.

(8) We are members of the Church only in our relation to Christ

That Christ is the one to whom each of us is joined making us:

- members of His Church – for who is a member of Christ’s body but the ones who are joined to the head of that body
- branches abiding in Him the vine
- His Bride -- intimacy
- His adopted brothers and sisters in the family of God – strength of family ties

Here, we have been presented with a truth: the Church is the Church of Christ.

How would the Spirit have us think about this? Since the church is the Church of Christ...

Here is what I came up with:

How can we even make a decision on what songs to sing, what prayers to pray, what message to preach, what help to extend, what words to share with our families and friends in the name of Jesus if we do not know the man Christ Jesus?

Since the Church is the Church of Christ, first and foremost we must know Christ!

The rest will follow.

Let's see if we can think about the truths of Scripture with the mind of Christ in regards to the next truth that we have most recently considered that the Church is the Church of the Spirit.

5. As the Church of the **Spirit** we Are...

a) **Formed by the Spirit**

Stone Harbor Church is a non-profit religious corporation formed in the State of California and recognized by the United States federal government as a tax exempt 501 (c)(3) corporation. I am the CEO, Dennis is the CFO and Dave is the Corporate Secretary.

That has nothing to do with being the church according to God. We could have done that strictly in our own human effort. There are lots of religious organizations formed by men and recognized by human authorities that have nothing to do with the Church of God.

The Church of God is an 'other-worldly' institution. Its head is Christ and its members are those joined to Him by the indwelling Spirit.

It is not formed by men, but by God; and more precisely, by the agency of God's Spirit.

b) **Informed by the Spirit**

The Spirit reveals truth to the Church about Jesus through the Scriptures via personal study, pastors and teachers, brothers and sisters in Christ.

The truth we know about God has been revealed to us by His Spirit.

What does this call for? It calls us to look at what the Spirit is revealing, to listen to what the Spirit has to say.

c) Transformed by the Spirit

The Spirit is transforming us into the likeness of Christ by means of God's Word and His Body causing spiritual growth in us both as individuals and as the Church body corporately.

God's Spirit changes us!

We are formed, informed and transformed by the Spirit causing me to conclude that the church is the church of the Spirit in every way. What does this truth call for if we think about it with the mind of Christ?

Michael Horton advises us to process God's truth by asking what it means with respect to God's redemptive plan? We live in the time of history when God is gathering people into His church by the power of the Spirit, informing them of who Jesus is by the power of the Spirit, and transforming them such that Christ is formed in them by the power of the indwelling Spirit. This is what God is doing. He is doing it with each of us individually and He is doing it with us as Stone Harbor Church and He is doing it in the world wide church universal.

At the very least this means that if we are to be the church of God's intentions we will recognize, yield to, depend on and delight in the Spirit's role in the church. He will lead and guide us into the truth regarding Jesus. He works through the Word and the body, therefore we must receive from Him via the Word and the body.

Conclusion

I do not want you to think that I'm advocating a passive Christian life of just reading the Bible and letting the Spirit transform you. No, I'm calling you to an active Christian life of reading the Bible and letting the Spirit transform you.

The truth is, truth transforms. It transforms our thinking and in the hands of the Spirit it transforms our very nature. So transformed, with the mind of Christ, seeing things in the context of God's grand plan of redemption, with zeal and in loving obedience to Jesus who first loved us we pour ourselves out for the glory of God and the good of others.

Know Jesus first! Let's be the Church of God's intention by first knowing Jesus. He is God the Son. He is the eternal Word of God. He does explain God to us. As we know Him we will know God's intentions for His Church from the inside. Know Jesus first!

Could it be that simple? I'm beginning to see that it is.

But simple does not mean quick and easy. We must know Jesus as the Spirit reveals Him in the Scriptures rightly understood from "In the beginning..." to "...Come Lord Jesus..."

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