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## “E-Team E-Zine”

A “Leader’s Toolbox” of Encouragement to  
Equip You for Evangelism  
That Extends the Kingdom

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### “Church For The Unchurched”

George G. Hunter III  
Abingdon, 1996

Is it possible for an evangelical, Bible believing church to actually act in ways that block evangelism from happening? Actually, it happens all the time in North American church ministry, a tragic oxymoron of reality.

George Hunter’s book “*Church for the Unchurched*” meets the issue head on. He begins by doing a comparison of what he calls “apostolic” and “traditional” congregations, which differ in “at least fifty ways.” (p. 29)

Here are his ten distinctive features of apostolic congregations:

1. They take a redundant approach to rooting believers and seekers in Scripture...they find as many ways to constantly connect people to the Word as possible!
2. They are disciplined and earnest in prayer, and expect and experience God’s action in response.
3. They understand, like and have compassion for lost, unchurched, pre-Christian people.
4. They obey the Great Commission—more as warrant or privilege than mere duty. Indeed, their main business is to make faith possible for unreached people.
5. They have a motivationally sufficient vision for what people, as disciples, can become.
6. They adapt to the language, music and style of the target population’s culture.
7. They labor to involve everyone, believers and seekers, in small groups.
8. They prioritize the involvement of all Christians in lay ministries for which they are gifted.
9. They receive regular pastoral care. They are in regular spiritual conversation with someone who is gifted for shepherding ministry.
10. They in engage in many ministries to unchurched non-Christian people. (pp. 29,32)

In contrast, Hunter notes these “goals” of traditional congregations:

1. Some simply want people to “*be religious,*” not necessarily have a real relationship with God. As long as they claim to believe, almost anything will do.
2. Some want people to “*believe like us,*” focusing on their particular theological bent.

3. Some want people to “*behave like us*” according to their clear and often numerous moral rules.
4. Some want people to have “*an experience like ours,*” whether emotional or cultural.
5. Some want people to “*become like us*” culturally...to look, dress and sound like us.
6. Some want people to “*be good citizens,*” linking patriotism and citizenship with discipleship.
7. Some want churches to “*share our politics,*” whether peace, pro-life, pornography or other issue.
8. Some want people to “*support the denominational church,*” which focuses on perpetuating an organization through membership and financial giving.
9. Some focus on “*preparing people for heaven.*” Once a person is ready for heaven, not much other discipling is needed.
10. Some have “*sacramental goals*” for people...baptism, confirmation and communion for “high” churches or Bible reading, prayer and other devotional activities for “low” churches. (pp. 36-41)

His diagnosis is devastating in its implications. The beliefs and behaviors of what Hunter calls “traditional” churches actually work against bringing people to a vital relationship with Jesus! Hunter spends the rest of the book making strong arguments for overcoming cultural barriers, developing healthy, evangelistic need-meeting small groups and empowering lay people for active ministry in order to reach secular people. He takes a look at such strong apostolic congregations as Willow Creek and Saddleback, Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church, Hope Presbyterian Church, Community of Joy, and some others to illustrate his principles.

Hunter concludes with 10 pioneering principles of outreach in apostolic churches and 10 ways apostolic churches communicate the gospel. As with most of his writings, Hunter’s style is clear, concise, Biblical and practical. If ministry leaders will heed what he has to say, they can lead their churches into ministry that build bridges to secular people rather than continuing to block their way into the Kingdom... and what had been a tragic oxymoron will become tremendous opportunities!

***Next Edition: “How to Ask Great Questions”***



***As always, please feel free to pass along editions of these “E-Team E-zines” to others. If you’d like to have people added to this mailing list, contact me. If you have insights, feedback or questions, I’m glad to hear them. God’s best to you!***