

## I. RoadVision: Come as You Are

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- A. In a marriage, you tend to make your big anniversary celebrations in multiples of five. Not that all anniversaries shouldn't be a big deal.
- B. In terms of birthdays, we tend to celebrate certain years as rites of passage.
- C. In April, CrossRoad Church will be celebrating its 13<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- D. We are becoming a teenager!
- E. One of the great joys of being a part of CrossRoad Church has been how quickly we have grown.
- F. One of the great challenges has been how quickly we have grown.
- G. When our daughter Hannah was a toddler, she was verbal and outgoing and was, until she was in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, off the charts in her height! We thought she was going to the WNBA.
- H. We learned that just because a child is tall for their age, or walks earlier than others, or is real verbal doesn't necessarily mean they are any more mature or smarter than other kids; they just look older and like to talk.
- I. If you think of the age of CrossRoad in a human context, we are just entering our teenage years.
- J. I think that often people have expected more of us as a church because we grew so fast and there were things that we did very well.
- K. We know how to lead inspiring worship services, we know how to draw a crowd, how to build a building, a lot of great things, but people have often come to us because their first impression was CrossRoad has really got it together, when in reality, we are just entering Middle School.
- L. As we prepare for our teen years, our Ministry Team began to see the need to set in ink the Vision of CrossRoad Church and to begin preparing for our Teen Years.
- M. I would love to tell you that I had some big Mission and Vision for CrossRoad that was well written and set in ink when we began to launch CrossRoad in 1996.
- N. I didn't. I wish I had! I wasn't trained to do that. People launching churches are much better at doing that.
- O. Over the 13 years, however, there has been a Vision that has guided me in the early days and has attracted you to come along side us and to join.
- P. For those of us who have been here for a long time, this is going to be a chance to refresh your understanding of the vision.
- Q. For those of you who are new, we hope that it will clarify who we are and where we are going.
- R. Our plan is to also use these teachings and give them to all who will be joining CrossRoad Church, so they can be absolutely clear about the kind of Church that we desire to be.
- S. So that brings us to the first part of our Vision.

## II. To be a church that invites you to "come as you are."

- A. Lloyd H. Alhem in *The Covenant Companion* (Aug. 1986). *Christianity Today*, Vol. 32, no. 7. We live out interesting paradoxes. We announce blatantly to the world that we have answers to the human sickness. Then we press for lifestyle conformity and doctrinal orthodoxy codified into stale axioms that stifle the very ideas we pronounce as divine. The creative Christian life and thought scares the jeewillingers out of Bible college deans and popes alike. Kenneth Scott Latourette says that once Christianity became legal in the Roman Empire the faithful got doctrinal, conformist, and creedal and sent the church into 1,000 years of uncertainty. ... Martin Luther got the movement unstuck when he rediscovered grace. Then conservatives codified God and liberals deified humans and gummed it up again.
- B. Rick Yamamoto, an elder at Mosaic and strategist with the Mosaic Alliance, put together a chart comparing traditional churches and more missional churches.
- C. *Traditional Churches (Inward)* (Believing comes before Belonging)

1. Mission is flexible. Mission is ONE of the reasons the church exists.
2. Boundaries are fixed. Clear line between insiders and outsiders.
3. Love becomes exclusive. Love is the context for SOME mission.

D. *Missional Churches (Outward)* (Belonging comes before Believing)

1. Mission is fixed. Mission is why the church exists.
2. Boundaries are flexible. Line between insiders and outsiders is blurred.
3. Love becomes inclusive. Love is the context for ALL mission.

E. In order to be a Missional Church, it is key that we be a Church that welcomes and accepts people as they are and invites them to come as they are.

F. Mr. Lindsey Phillips inviting me to be an usher when I was in high school and using me in college when I was far from God.

### III. People are not Good or Bad, they are Dead or Alive!

#### IV. Inviting people to come as they are represents an important New Testament Truth that *People are not Good or Bad, they are Dead or Alive!*

A. They are not one skin color, one particular language group, one level on the socioeconomic scale, one style of clothing.

B. *(Eph 2 NRSV) You were dead through the trespasses and sins {2} in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. {3} All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. {4} But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us {5} even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved-- {6} and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, {7} so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

C. There is a stigma that many churches unconsciously foster that people have to meet a certain standard before they are acceptable to God and to the Body of Christ on Earth.

D.-- John Claypool, "You Don't Have to Be Good to Come to Christ," Preaching Today, Tape No. 83.

A friend of mine named John Rogers used to teach at the Virginia Episcopal Seminary, and late one cold night he got a call from the bus station in Washington. It was a young man who had grown up in a parish that John had served years before. He once had been an acolyte. His family had been very active in the church. The young man told Rogers that he'd gotten into the drug culture. He had lost touch with his family and was out of work, out of money. Could Rogers, his former rector, give him some help that night?

Acting with compassion, Rogers told the young man to stay right where he was.

Rogers got into his car, drove through the snowy streets, found the lad-- emaciated in body, broken in spirit--and took him home. As the young man ate supper, Rogers tried to get some kind of understanding of his condition. He asked the lad if he had ever asked Jesus Christ to be a help to him in his troubles, and the young man said no. It had been too long since he had even thought about those things. Then he brightened, and said, "You know, when I get myself together and start coming back to church, I am going to ask Christ to help me."

"My friend," Rogers said, "it will never happen that way. If you think that you have to get yourself together on your own and then come to Christ, you will never do it. You're going to have to come to Christ as you are at this moment, and then he will give you the strength to start getting things together."

E. Our Vision for the Church is not a place where good people become better, it is a place where dead people are given life, hopeless people find hope, helpless people get help, broken people find a path to redemption, and once you are on that path, you go out and find your broken family and friends and bring them.



*whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; {22} in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.*

**VIII. Is the Church dusting pews or protecting people from the storm?**

- A. My cousin John Meacham, gave me a book he has recently published, *Is Your Church Heavenly?*
- B. He describes a visit he made to the Holy Land.
- C. He discovered a little church that was traditionally known as the oldest church, built on the site of the House of Simon Peter who lived and fished in that area.
- D. As he was praying, a Nun entered, made the sign of the cross and began dusting the pews.
- E. He asked if there was a local congregation that met there.
- F. She responded, only Jews live Tiberias now.
- G. John discovered that it was just a tourist site that people visited and could even rent for special occasions.
- H. He kept praying and she kept cleaning when the doors opened and fourteen priests and about 30 tourists filed into the pews.
- I. One of the priests delivered a message from John 21 when Jesus appeared to the disciples on the shores of Tiberias where this chapel was built.
- J. The disciples had fished all night without any success; as they returned, a man on the shore told them to go out again and to try casting on the right side of the boat.
- K. Though they were tired from fishing all night when it is the best time, they went one more time.
- L. This time they pulled in 153 fish.
- M. This story is one of those that inspires us to continue to throw out the net.
- N. As the service went on, a thunderstorm swept across the lake and during a pause in between the rolling thunder, John heard knocking at the door.
- O. The Nun went to the door where a group of rain soaked tourists were urgently requesting shelter.
- P. John writes, "The nun incredulously told the visitors that they could not come in because a service was in progress. She escorted them back into the downpour, then locked the fence gate behind them.
- Q. It is real easy for pastors, churches to become holier than thou, just dusting the pews but running off the people. *Is the Church Dusting pews or protecting people from the storm?*
- R. But as a Church our Mission is fixed: To bring all people near to God through the Cross of Jesus Christ.
- S. At CrossRoad, we try to remove all boundaries so people can draw near to God. Race, Economics, Past Failures, Brokenness...

**IX. Our Love is inclusive.**

- A. Our Vision is Clear: ***To be a church that invites you to "come as you are."***

**X. Invitation**