

# The Road to Transformation - Who Builds the Church

INTRO: Consider this mission statement of a well-known university at its founding: "To be plainly instructed and consider well that the main end of your life and studies is to know God and Jesus Christ." Founded in 1636, this university employed exclusively Christian professors, emphasized character formation in its students above all else, and placed a strong emphasis on equipping ministers to share the good news. My 10th time great grandfather was in the first graduating class from this university. Every diploma read, *Christo et Ecclesiae* around *Veritas*, meaning "Truth for Christ and the Church." You've probably heard of this school. It's called Harvard University.

Harvard's founders were unmistakably clear in their goals: academic excellence and Christian formation. Today, they do something very different from the school's founding purpose. What happened to Harvard is called "Mission Drift."

Only 80 years after its founding, a group of New England pastors sensed Harvard had drifted too far for their liking. Concerned by the secularization at Harvard, they approached a wealthy philanthropist who shared their concerns. This man, Elihu Yale, financed their efforts in 1718, and they called the college Yale University. Yale's motto was not just *Veritas* (truth) like Harvard, but *Lux et Veritas* (light and truth).

Today, Harvard's and Yale's legacy of academic excellence are still intact. But neither school resembles what their founders envisioned. At the 350th anniversary celebration of Harvard, Steven Muller, former president of Johns Hopkins University, bluntly stated, "The bad news is the university has become godless." Larry Summers, the former president of Harvard, confessed, "Things divine have been central neither to my professional nor to my personal life."

TRAN: We, like Harvard and Yale, have drifted from our mission. We have a mission statement as a church which is undergoing revision. However, we draw that statement from what God told us in His Word. Before we get to our biblical mission, we need to deal with a couple of other things first to set the stage.

- I. We start in Ephesians 5:23 (p. 1176)
  - A. There is a statement there that sometimes either gets glossed over because of other battles about this verse, or has become cliché
    1. Christ is the head of the church
    2. This verse often gets so embattled in roles of husbands and wives that this important part can get lost - Christ is still head of the church
    3. He is in charge
  - B. This verse speaks to Christ's authority
    1. Keep reading the verse - "As the church submits to Christ..."

# The Road to Transformation - Who Builds the Church

- a) It cannot be more plain
  - b) Christ is the head and we, the body, the church, submit to Him
  2. It is not some arbitrary and unreasonable lordship over the church
    - a) Verse 25 - Christ loved the church and gave Himself for the church
    - b) Christ's authority and rule over the church is a loving direction of the church
      - (1) He guides the church where it needs to go for its best interest
      - (2) He is not a dictator, but a loving leader
  - C. There is even more from this analogy
    1. The human body is dependent on the mind to direct, and to sustain
    2. The church is dependent on the head, which is Christ, to direct and to sustain
    3. If the church wants to be effective for Christ, it must be submitted to Christ
  - D. This may seem like a "no-brainer" that Christ is the head of the church, but too often we don't treat Him that way
    1. Rather than having prayerful dependence on Christ, prayer is our add-on, or our last resort
    2. Rather than seeking the mind of Christ on ministry or direction, we trust our own selves to guide us
    3. It shouldn't just be knowledge in our minds that Christ is the head of the church, we need to trust in that fact with our lives
- II. I set us up at this point because the passage that follows is then critical
- A. Matthew 16:18 (p. 983)
    1. Again, this is a passage that gets so bogged down by people fighting over some details of the verse that we lose the beauty and the message of the verse in many ways
    2. The message that often gets lost is: Who builds the church?
      - a) Before we shout out the Sunday School answer and move on, think about it
      - b) Who builds the church?
  - B. Jesus builds the church - that much is obvious
  - C. In an age of building programs, new ministries, multi-staffed churches, and Pastors that are more like CEO's - who builds the church?
    1. For one thing that question betrays a couple of bias's too many in the church community have
      - a) First, bigger must be better
        - (1) That church has such a big church, and lights and three worship bands - God must be blessing them!
        - (2) Bigger is not always better

# The Road to Transformation - Who Builds the Church

- (3) Creflo Dollar has 30,000 plus members in his church - he is a prosperity gospel preacher (meaning if you give to God, God will bless you), and he is the one that tried to buy a 60 million dollar airplane for his ministry, asking each person in the church to give \$300 or more for the cause
- b) Second, it betrays the bias that more activity equals more blessing of God, and more building of the church
  - (1) More activity can be exactly that, more activity
  - (2) Now some activities can be fruitful and helpful to humanity
    - (a) Churches can go out and feed and cloth the poor, help build houses for the homeless, dig wells in foreign countries, and go on medical mission trips
    - (b) But has that activity built the church?
    - (c) Before you answer, let me get to the final bias that statement betrays
- c) The third bias the statement betrays is not understanding what the church that Jesus refers to actually is
  - (1) We narrow our view too far when we only think of our church building and the number of people sitting in it
  - (2) The church is far wider than a building, its people or the activity inside it
  - (3) The church is made up of people that are followers of Christ
    - (a) Unfortunately there are too many people that delude themselves week in and week out that they are following Christ when they really are not - I pray you are not one of them
    - (b) People sit in churches and have no relationship with Jesus
    - (c) Scariest verses in all the Bible - Matthew 7:21-23 (p. 972)
      - i) To paraphrase, "Lord, did we not give food to the pantry in your name, and in your name help on church clean up days, and in your name sing to the best of our ability ever Sunday we were in church?"
        - (1) Those are all great things
        - (2) However, that is not a relationship with Christ
      - ii) And that is what Jesus' reply implies - relationship
        - (1) "Depart from me, I never knew you."
        - (2) That knowing is more than cognitive understanding - its relationship
    - (d) So you can have the biggest church, you can have the most active church, but those things do not necessarily equal being in the true church Jesus is building

# The Road to Transformation - Who Builds the Church

- (e) The church He is building is the one true church - the church universal
  - i) The members of the church are just like the sheep of John 10
  - ii) “The sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me”
- 2. So please consider this a wake up call to anyone here thinking these ways
  - a) If you think the church that Jesus is building is merely bigger, more attendance, or more activity, please understand He is building a community that listens and follows Him
  - b) This is even more important: if are here and you do not know the Savior’s voice
    - (1) If you claim to be a follower of Jesus but are not living the life
      - (a) You live in sin but try to ignore or justify it
      - (b) You know that your behavior really is not a part of God’s plan, but it’s okay because...(and you list off your reasons why God’s Word does not apply to your life)
    - (2) If you think that you are safe because
      - (a) You come every week
      - (b) Or you said a prayer when you were five
      - (c) Or you were baptized
      - (d) Or you took a confirmation class - therefore you must be okay
      - (e) Please, I beg you, understand that there will be far too many well intentioned people in hell
        - i) Enter into a relationship with the Savior today
        - ii) A relationship that is active, alive, and makes a difference in your life
- D. Now - back to my original thought and where I want to steer us today: Jesus builds the church
  - 1. It is not our job
  - 2. No amount of clever scheming will ever build the church
  - 3. No amount of the best preaching EVER, by the best looking preacher ever, will build the church
  - 4. No amount of friendliness, coffee hours, visitations, or hugs will build Christ’s church
    - a) Those are all tools to be used for His glory
    - b) Tools that help build the church - but make no mistake
  - 5. The job of building the church is reserved for one Person only - Jesus Christ

# The Road to Transformation - Who Builds the Church

- E. Incidentally, He is a far greater architect than we will ever be
  - F. We just have to keep the roles straight
    - 1. Because Jesus did not take on every job in this church building endeavor
    - 2. He has a job for us, and this is where we (not just our church but thousands of churches) have drifted from our mission
      - a) Churches have tried to take over Jesus' job by using man's methods and it has not worked
      - b) Yet we keep exercising the definition of insanity over and over again - trying the same method and expecting different results
    - 3. I'm going to suggest to you that if we would follow Jesus' plan, the Church, and our church would be much stronger for it
    - 4. So, who builds the church? [Jesus]
- III. Jesus role is to build the church, our role is to make disciples
- A. We are going to watch a quick video to introduce this idea for us.
    - 1. The video is geared toward teenagers
    - 2. The truths are still the same for us as adults
    - 3. Listen for some of the common themes around the idea of making disciples
  - B. VIDEO:
    - 1. "Jesus has entrusted us with the authority to make disciples"
    - 2. We have the power to embrace the teachings of Christ and spread the gospel
    - 3. It is by His Spirit that we have the boldness to share Jesus
    - 4. We meet people right where they are
    - 5. Our mission is to make disciples!
  - C. Here is where the church's problem has come in over the years
    - 1. Instead of focusing on making disciples
      - a) Which is a messy, slow process
      - b) It involves one on one contact
    - 2. Most churches have tried to take on God's role and "build the church"
      - a) How can we attract more people?
      - b) How can we get people to stick around?
      - c) The answer to those questions is actually found in the role Jesus gave us - so let's look at Matthew 28:18-20 (p. 1000)
- IV. The role of making disciples
- A. The first thing I want you to notice in these verses is Jesus opening words
    - 1. "All authority has been given to me..."
      - a) In other words, "I am in charge"
      - b) "I got this. No need for you to worry"

## The Road to Transformation - Who Builds the Church

2. So there is not one thing that God does not have control over or is not ready for because He has the ability to command it all
- B. The first word of verse 19 is imperative - "Therefore"
  1. I have told you many times - when you see "therefore" ask what its there for
  2. Jesus has all authority - therefore, go make disciples
    - a) Jesus, out of His authority is giving us our task - to make disciples
    - b) We do not run the church, nor do we build the church - we make disciples
    - c) We are the folks behind the scenes helping to build the church
      - (1) We have a role
      - (2) We need to stick to that role
      - (3) However, it is Jesus that builds the church
  3. ILL: Matthew Eldridge has appeared in numerous high-profile movies, but you'll never see his face or hear his voice. That's because Eldridge serves as a "body double." Recently his hands, feet and body were used as stand-ins for the actor Jason Bateman in the film *Identity Thief*. Eldridge doesn't mind that Bateman gets most of the attention and fame. Here is how Eldridge sees his role:
    - a) Bateman has become a household name, growing up as a child star and moving on to lead roles in a variety of TV shows and movies.
    - b) You have probably never heard of me, Matthew Eldridge, though you have seen my hands on screen.
    - c) How many of us know the names of anyone behind the scenes in Hollywood - the cameramen, the gaffs, sound techs, special effects, painting, props, etc. That is just the production department.
    - d) While close to 100 crew members work tirelessly for 15 hours a day so Jason Bateman can shine, They have an understanding that their work will be under appreciated and likely go unnoticed by those watching the show. But they do it anyway. Why? Because they love being a part of the creation process. There's something magical about creating something collectively larger than ourselves.
    - e) That is how it is in building God's kingdom. The kingdom is built with the hands of capable individuals who may never receive recognition for the work they do. They do what they do for the glory of God. Their satisfaction comes from knowing they help build something beautiful for God's kingdom.
  4. That is us! God gives us the task of making disciples
    - a) It can be slow going
    - b) It can get messy many times

# The Road to Transformation - Who Builds the Church

- c) However, as we see how God pieces our efforts together to build His church, we see the beauty of it all
  - d) All the glory goes to God for building His church
  - e) We know, that we had a hand in that
    - (1) That we joined together with God for His mission to save souls
    - (2) Joined together to find more people that belong in the kingdom
    - (3) Joined together on God's mission to make disciples
- C. Contrary to what may have been taught in the past, making disciples is FAR more than just sharing that Jesus died with someone
- 1. I know that this comes as a pushback in some ways against my Baptist, conservative upbringing, but I have ALWAYS hated the term soul-winning, soul-winners, etc.
    - a) I understand that it comes from Proverbs 11:30 in the KJV
    - b) However, it makes it sound like a competition
    - c) It makes it sound like we don't care about the soul, just that we won them
  - 2. What Jesus is teaching is that we help make devoted followers of Christ
    - a) That takes time - it is not a conversation, a prayer, and praise Jesus, you're in the kingdom
    - b) It is walking with a person through life, and according to Jesus, "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you"
      - (1) The keys here are teaching
        - (a) That is a time consuming endeavor
        - (b) It is a compassionate, working through of not just understanding, but believing
      - (2) The other key is obey
        - (a) They are to obey what Jesus commanded
        - (b) They are not just to have their head filled with what Jesus commanded, but obey those things
        - (c) Hence, the idea of a follower of Christ
- D. What this means is, as followers of Christ
- 1. That is a key statement
    - a) We may be imperfect followers of Christ
    - b) But we have to be followers of Christ
    - c) You can't give out what you don't have
    - d) You can't reproduce the life of Christ in someone else, when you don't have the life of Christ in you
  - 2. As followers of Christ, we are seeking to reproduce the life of Christ in others

# The Road to Transformation - Who Builds the Church

3. This should change the way we share Christ with others, and the way we walk through life with them
  - a) In a future series I am going to highlight new approaches that need to be added to our sharing Christ
  - b) With the mindset that our world has, it takes much more “pre-evangelism” than ever before
    - (1) That means building a relationship
    - (2) That means taking time
    - (3) And when you don’t have the time, like speaking with a person on an airplane, you trust the Holy Spirit will use the seeds you planted into their life
4. It also changes our processes here at the church
  - a) The leadership is working on a new mission statement
  - b) Along with that mission statement will come a process
  - c) The process is really the flow for making disciples
    - (1) A new person enters the flow, and as a church, we all understand the next step we would like the person to take
    - (2) And after they have taken that step in faith, and grown and matured along the way, we understand the next step we want to encourage toward spiritual maturity
    - (3) And all of us are working toward helping others grow
  - d) Not only are we helping others through the process, but we are still in process ourselves
    - (1) We never stop growing either
- E. As the mission statement takes shape, and the process becomes clearer to the leadership, we will be rolling that out to you
  1. For the church to truly transform, we all need to understand the process
    - a) Where we are in the process ourselves
    - b) And how we help others through the process
  2. All of it starts by understanding: Who builds the church? [JESUS]
  3. What is our role? [MAKE DISCIPLES]

PRAYER CHALLENGE: Father, help me to find myself in the process of spiritual growth. Give me a heart to pursue you. Give me a heart to help others to follow this process of spiritual maturity. I want to fulfill my role in Your plan for the church. You build the church, Lord. Help me make disciples. In Jesus name, Amen.