

# STONE HARBOR

**P.O. Box 4049  
Monterey CA, 93942  
831.655.5800  
[www.stoneharborchurch.org](http://www.stoneharborchurch.org)  
Pastor Johnny Potter**

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](mailto: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: Jan 10, 2009  
Series: The Church of God's Intention  
Section: Series Introduction  
Topic: The Church  
Message Title: The Church of God's Intention, Introduced  
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Text:  
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### ***Message Outline***

The Church of God's Intention, Introduced

- I. **Reasons** for Listening to God about the Church
- II. What we are Shooting for -- **Goals**
- III. How we'll be Getting there -- **Methods**

### ***Related Scripture***

1. Psalm 119
2. John 5:39
3. 2 Tim 2:15
4. Mat 7:13-23
5. Mat 25:31-46
6. 1 Peter 2:1-12
7. Eph 5:23

### ***Questions for Thought and Discussion***

1. Why bother study God's word about the church?
2. What is God's intention for the church?
3. How do you know that?
4. Who should determine the goals and operations of the church?
5. How do we give ear to that person?
6. What are some of the dangers of understanding church according to man?
7. Will you give careful consideration to God's word on God's church?

### ***Memory and Meditation Verse***

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”

2 Tim 2:15 NASB

# The Church of God's Intention

## A Careful Listening to the Voice of God in the Pages of Scripture

### I. Introduction to the Series

#### *A. Some May Not Be all that Interested*

##### **1. My Neck**

I had no real reason to think about it until I had a problem with it and then it became ... well, a real pain in the neck. With the fairly constant headaches in the back of my head, then that neck I never thought about all of a sudden became very important to me -- something I very much want to work according to its original design -- something I'm more than willing to spend some resource on in order to make sure it is in proper working order.

##### **2. The Church**

The same can be true for our thinking on the church. We typically don't think about it if it is basically what we know it to be. It is just the church, that thing we go to the Sundays we can make it. I think it starts about 9:45...

Given the understandable lack of active intentional thinking about the church, I recognize I need to give you some good reasons to think or think again about the church.

##### **3. My Hope**

My hope is that these reasons would compel you to be interested and therefore willing to give careful consideration to God's voice in the Scriptures so that we might know God's intention for the church. My hope is that these reasons would stimulate interest in answering:

- a) What is the church of God's intention?**
- b) What are its goals?**
- c) Who is its leader?**
- d) Who are its members?**
- e) What is its God given mission?**
- f) How is it supposed to carry it out?**

Let me give you some...

## ***B. Reasons for Listening to God about His Church***

(Why Bother Studying This?)

### **1. If God said it...**

#### **a) Argument for Knowing all of Scripture**

If God said it, it is worth our time to carefully listen to it!

Who God is and the supremacy of His wisdom and the greatness of His authority and the demonstrated reality of His perfect love for us in Christ... all add up to make God's word of inarguable value and therefore worth listening to.

##### ***(1) Scripture on the Value of Scripture***

- [Psalm 119:103](#) -- How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!
- [John 5:39](#) -- You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me;
- 2 Tim 3:16-17 -- All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.
- John 17:17 -- 17"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.
- [2 Timothy 2:15](#) -- Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

This is the "If God said it..." reason we should listen. This is close to the same as saying...

#### **b) God is worthy...**

##### ***(1) Argument for Listening to Everything God has Said***

God is worthy of our thoughtful response to all He has revealed in the Scriptures.

##### ***(2) Argument for Listening to God on His Church***

If He has expressed His intention regarding the church (and He has) we can **NOT** turn a deaf ear to His instruction and still be the people He has created, redeemed and reconciled us to be.

##### **(a) Who are we?**

We are His new covenant children. This identity and this relationship both demand our humble, submitted devotion as a devoted son to a perfect father.

That we are His children adopted and redeemed at great costs means that unless we live as devoted children listening to Him then we are more rightly regarded as rebellious teens ignoring Him.

When a young teenager turns a deaf ear to his loving and wise father who has his best interest in mind, and ignores the his father's instruction and instead busies himself with other matters of greater importance in his estimation, then it is self evident that this relationship is not as good as it could be and the teen is setting himself up for the coming lessons in the school of hard knocks.

The perfect love and perfect wisdom of our perfect Heavenly Father who is brining about His perfect plan argues that we should listen to all He has given us to know of Him, including what He has to impart to us regarding His church.

If God has said it, it is worth our careful consideration! The second reason I offer, as to why bother actively engaging in a careful study of God's intention for the church, is that...

## **2. The Church is of Central, not Supplemental, Importance to both God and Man**

### **a) The Church is the Heart**

When it comes to the whole of all the parts of God's revelation in the Scriptures, the church could be considered the heart. I can still function if I were to loose a finger or a hand or even my whole arm, but I would not be able to function or even live without my heart.

### **b) The Church is Necessary**

If God's plans are to be realized, the church must be the church of **those** plans.

The church is **NOT** a painted finger nail, or a pretty earring, a tattoo, an accessory meant to adorn...; rather the church is central, necessary and at the heart of God's intention.

So, another reason we should take the time to thoughtfully consider and understand the church according to the Scriptures is because it is of central, not peripheral, importance to God and His plans related to us. We'll unpack exactly how that is so in the weeks ahead. The third reason we should listen to God about His church and lean in to understand His revelation regarding it is that...

### 3. The Church is Misunderstood

#### a) Common Misunderstandings Re: the Church

*(1) The Church as a Building*

*(2) The Church as the Center of Our Devotion*

It is central it is not THE center!

“To be sure, if the church rather than Christ becomes the center of our devotion spiritual decay has begun.” Clowney p.15

*(3) The Pastor as the Head of the Church*

*(4) The Board as the Head of the Church*

*(5) The Successful Church is the Big Church*

*(6) The Successful Church is the Small Church*

*(7) It Doesn't Matter What We Believe, Just that We Believe*

I believe it is fair to say that we live amongst a general populace that does not rightly understand the church of God's intentions. But I'm afraid it is not just a little refinement in our understanding that we need, rather many of us need a major remodel maybe even a complete redo. Bring in the bull-dozers and wrecking ball!

Lori and I like that show Extreme Home Makeover. It's so cool seeing these hard luck families get a completely new, well designed, professionally constructed house all in a few days while they are on vacation. In the shows I've seen, the house is not worth saving and it is easier for them to just scrape it right down to the dirt and start fresh.

The state of our understanding of the major structural elements of our house – our understanding of the church -- is so compromised as to warrant an effective scraping and rebuilding.

I'm hoping that together we can share a willingness to wipe clean the board of our current thinking of the church and start fresh, listening to what God has said about His Church.

What is God's design? Let's discover this together. Let's own this. Let's be a part of His church according to His plan.

### **b) Overcoming the Hurdle of What We Know**

Now as soon as I say this I'm aware of a hurdle to get over: We have to be willing to let God be the designer. This means that unless we want to find ourselves arguing with God, we will have to let go of our plans for and our understanding of the church. We so want what we want and why not? We have just as much a say so in this matter as anyone else don't we? Right? Well, no! Not if we buy into the understanding that the church is **God's church**.

I sure hope that we would defer to God's ideas and not take on the role of church-designer when God has already taken that role for Himself. I think that we would all agree that the thought of pushing God out of the picture is not a pretty picture. So let's let go of our ideas – the ones that don't have clear Biblical warrant. You will experience the natural desire to hold on to what you know. But I encourage you, be willing to let go! It's alright. Let's just listen to God on this. Let's rebuild our understanding of the church based on His design.

If we can NOT accept God's design we can still build a 'church,' but it will be one with the sun room on the north side of the house and the seniors resource room in the crows nest at the top of the little spiral staircase...

So let's get over the hurdle of what we know and just go with God's design for the church. We will find that it is by far the best design of all.

## **4. A Misunderstood Church is a Dangerous Church**

### **a) The Misunderstanding Church Members Misunderstand their Relation to the Church**

When we misunderstand the church we have...

#### ***(1) Pastors thinking more highly of themselves than they should***

##### **(a) Procedure of the King**

##### **(b) Spiritual Abuse**

(i) Lording it over rather than serving under

#### ***(2) Members thinking less highly of themselves than they should***

"I'm really a nobody, I just attend services..."

#### ***(3) Pastors and members filling roles God never intended them to fill while leaving vacant other roles that He did***

## **b) Church Life is Managed According to Wisdom of Man apart from the Wisdom of God**

### ***(1) Goals: set according to good business practice***

**(a) But not considering God's big plan**

**(b) Not exercising faith in God**

A former church's budget process. The budget was not set responding to God's intention for the church, but responding to the so-called church leaders' intention to preserve their endowment fund.

### ***(2) Methods: employed common to man***

**(a) But foreign to God's intention**

(i) Slick presentations of week content

### ***(3) Leaders: selected based on worldly qualifications***

**(a) When the church is other-worldly in nature**

**(b) And God's requirements clearly are at odds with man's**

**(c) Saul vs. David**

### ***(4) Pastors: dish out their best advice***

**(a) Informed by their life experience**

**(b) But separate from and often in conflict with the word of God**

### ***(5) Discipline: managed according to corporate HR policies more concerned about minimizing the risk of being sued than implementing the mind of God***

**(a) When God's standards and clearly different than man's.**

### ***(6) Where is the Danger in All This?***

**(a) A misunderstood church becomes the church in name only. It is the church according to man and not according to God.**

**(b) Mat 7:13-23**

13"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. 14"For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

- 15 "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.
- 16 "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?
- 17 "So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit.
- 18 "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.
- 19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.
- 20 "So then, you will know them by their fruits.
- 21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.
- 22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'
- 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

This is a frightful passage! Similarly...

**(c) Mat 25:31-46 (Correction on TC: Not 26, but 25)**

- 31 "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.
- 32 "All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats;
- 33 and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.
- 34 "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.
- 35 'For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in;
- 36 naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.'
- 37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink?
- 38 'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You?
- 39 'When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'
- 40 "The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'

41 "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;  
 42 for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink;  
 43 I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.'  
 44 "Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?'  
 45 "Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'  
 46 "These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

**(d) Who is Jesus talking about if He is not talking about those who considered themselves a part of the people of God, the church.**

(i) The Danger of False Assurance

False assurance of membership in the church of God is like the false assurance a climber places in a rope that was designed to look like but not actually be a climbing rope – one where the label reads, “Not intended for climbing or for loads of greater than 15 lbs.”

(ii) A Strategy of the Enemy

Talk about a ‘good’ strategy of the Devil: make them think they are members of Christ’s church when they are really members of something less – a counterfeit church handing out false assurances. May we not fall victim to that deception. If that sounds impossible to be so deceived or overly judgmental, consider the Pharisees of Jesus’ day.

(iii) Error of the Pharisee:

They had confidence in their pedigree that proved to be unfounded.

Why lean in for an accurate understanding of the church according to God? Because, a misunderstood church is a dangerous church. Why else?

## 5. Many Benefit from a Properly Understood Church

### a) You Will Benefit

#### *(1) Benefits of Engaging in this Careful Consideration*

##### **(a) The benefit of being who God has redeemed you to be living in the community God intendeds**

###### (i) The benefit of receiving

You will be built up in Christ Eph 4

###### (ii) The benefit of giving

You will experience the joy of being used by God for other's ultimate best. Eph 2:10

###### (iii) Mutual benefit of being a part of a healthy body

You will get to be a part of the community of God's intention.

##### **(b) The benefit of focus**

###### (i) Less in Less & More in More

By focusing in on the smaller subset of God's intention rather than getting bogged down in all the good ideas we can come up with that the church should be and do we will be able to achieve the benefits of focus. Like the magnifying glass that focuses the power of the sun to yield a greater result, so honing in on God's design will allow us a greater success in accomplishing God's purposes.

We will be able to have less of our limited time and energy invested the in the less meaningful and more invested in what truly matters most.

###### (ii) Simplicity

There is greater peace to be found in focusing on who God has designed you to be and what God has called you to do, devaluing the myriad of other ideas to a lower priority.

### b) Others Will Benefit

#### *(1) Unbelievers will come to know God*

When the church functions as God intends it to function those who do not know God come to know Him. God uses the church to proclaim the gospel and bring hope to the hopeless and knowledge of God to those ignorant of Him.

**(a) Abrahamic Promise of Blessing Fulfilled**

Being the church communicates the knowledge of God and thereby blesses all those everywhere. See Gen 12:3

**(b) The church of God's intentions bears witness of God**

The light on the hill beckons the sojourner through darkness (Mat 5:15)

**(2) Believers will be Transformed Unto Christ-likeness**

Those who know God will come to know Him more completely.

When the church functions as God intends we build each other up and participate in the Spirit's work of transformation unto Christ-likeness.

**c) God Will Benefit****(1) When we run with our ideas we get the glory****(2) When we run with God's ideas, He gets the glory!**

All we can do is claim that we have run the race which God called us to and which He has already won for us.

So those are my reasons. I hope some of them compel you to actively engage in this pursuit of the church of God's intention. With the reasons for the study let me put before you ...

**C. What We are Shooting For – Series Goals**

This is intended to be a very practical study. My goal is not theological discussion for discussions sake; but rather careful consideration so that Stone Harbor Church (SHC) will exist and operate according to God's intention. I'm too old to muck around with the good ideas of men. I'm definitely too old to chase down any of Johnny's 'good' ideas. Am at the point where if it is not God's idea, I can't be bothered. So what are we shooting for?

**1. That SHC would DISCOVER the church of God's intention****a) It's identity – Who God intends us to be****b) It's purpose – What God intends us to accomplish****c) It's mission – What God intends us to do****d) It's structure – How God intends us to operate****(1) It's head****(2) It's members****(a) Leaders**

(b) Led

*(3) It's organization*

## 2. That SHC would BECOME the church of God's intention

### a) That SHC would BE who God intends

*(1) Letting go of our conception of the church*

*(2) Grabbing hold of His concept of the church*

### b) That SHC would DO what God intends

*(1) Letting go of things we do apart from what He has called us to do*

*(2) Grabbing hold of what He has called us to do according to the Scriptures*

### c) That SHC members would:

*(1) Gain and share a common understanding of the church of God's intention*

*(2) Be committed to it's head (that's Jesus not Johnny) and it's members (that's us)*

*(3) Express our commitment to our Lord and the local church assembled in His name at SHC via formal membership*

(a) A statement of "I'm in!"

(b) Unnecessary in First Century because of higher community identity

Example of 1<sup>st</sup> Century church where everyone was so aware of their common bond in Christ and their sufficiency in Him that they were pooling resources and sharing as any had need.

(c) Made necessary in 21<sup>st</sup> century by our cultures pervasive independence and non committal aloofness

We spend more time trying to figure out how the first century sharing of resources was culturally dependent and couldn't possibly be normative for today.

We stand to benefit from a formal way of expressing commitment to Christ and each other that the first century church seemed to do naturally.

### **3. To Lay the Foundation for Future Stone Harbor Membership Process (Class, Covenant...)**

That we might have a concise explanation of God's intention for the church that has defined who we are what we do and how we operate so that we might lay it out to those interested in joining with us.

That's what we are shooting for. How are we going to get there?

#### ***D. How We are Going to Get There -- Methods***

##### **1. Our discovery of God's intentions will be from the Scriptures**

###### **a) The church is what God says it is; not what we think it is.**

*(1) "What you 'know' may not be so" - Kit*

###### **b) Not looking for passages that support my opinions**

###### **c) But listening to God express His design**

*(1) As He has revealed it in Scripture*

**(a) Biblical Theology approach**

*(2) Particularly in the context of God's grand plan of redemption and reconciliation*

**(a) How He has revealed it in redemptive history**

**(b) How the church fits into God's plan to restore Sacred Space**

**(c) How the church fits into the Gospel**

So the first method employed will be a discovery of God's intention in the Scriptures. The second method will be...

##### **2. Sunday Messages**

###### **a) Three Main Parts of this Series**

The sequence we will follow in this series is born out of the self evident logic that we can't really know what the church is to do or how it is to do it until we know what the church is in the first place. Pastor Kit Culver asks, "...how can the church know what it is to be about if it doesn't know what it is?" Kit Culver May 2009 Seminar at SHC p.14.

*(1) What God Intends the Church to Be*

*(2) What God Intends the Church to Do*

*(3) How God Intends the Church to Do It (Operate)*

**3. Transformation Cards**

a) **Individual Devotions and Study**

b) **Community Group Discussions**

**4. You -- Your Engaging in this Pursuit and Discussion**

a) **Think about it**

b) **Talk about it**

c) **Own a Biblical understanding of the Church of God's intention.**

***E. Intended Results at the End of this Series***

**1. The Church**

That SCH would be the church of God's intention

**2. Membership**

That those God calls would become formal members

**3. Core Values**

That we would have clarified and clearly expressed Stone Harbor's core values

**4. Membership Course**

That we would have laid the foundation for future members to know what we are all about and join us

## ***F. Concluding Call -- "Further up and Farther in"***

"Further up and Farther in" is repeated several times in the last chapter of C.S. Lewis' "The Last Battle".

It is the wonderful picture of the unending progressive revelation of heaven. Good gives way to beautiful gives way to glorious gives way to awesome. In a similar way we have all tasted some of the good of the church, but it has just been a taste there is more further up and farther in.

I'm excited about the process that lies ahead during this series. I possibly have most to let go of and most to grab hold of. I do not come as one with all the answers wanting to convince you of my view. Rather I come as a fellow discoverer who wants Stone Harbor Church to be the church of God's intention – nothing more and nothing less.

Would you pursue this with me? Would you agree to listen to God in the pages of Scripture and based on what He has said about the church let go of your good ideas that are not the same as His and grab hold of His ideas that you may never have seen?

I know there is a baby in the bathwater of this local church and the other local churches in our community. I am not under the deception that we are the only church doing it right. In fact, I am absolutely convinced that we have much to learn. But I want to learn it. I want to be a member of a church that is being the church of God's intention.

I'm asking you to apply yourselves to this pursuit with me? I'm asking you to come to church every Sunday. If you **have** to miss either download the sermon off our web site or call the office and get one from Leslie on CD. Would you be an active learner leaning in on Sunday during the message and then checking the Scriptures to see if it is so accepting what is and challenging me on what is not. Would you take the time to use the Transformation Cards and process the Scriptures and discuss the questions asked?

If we do this, we will come to an understanding of God's intention for the church and we can participate in that church and that church is sweet and powerful and humble; that church is an instrument in the hand of the almighty God, that church is worth being a part of.

Dave is going to come up and close this service in prayer.

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