

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: Feb 28, 2010
 Series: The Church of God's Intention
 Part: Part 1 – What God Intends the Church to Be
 Section: The New People of God
 Topic: The Church
 Message Title: **4 Actions to Integrate God's Intentions for the Church**
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Message Outline

Series Setting

The Church of God's Intention
 Part 1 What God Intends the Church to Be
 God Intends the Church to Be The New People of God

4 Actions to Integrate God's Intentions for the Church

- I. Engage in Careful Study of God's Word
- II. Regard Ourselves as God has Designed and Created Us
- III. Grieve the Brokenness of the World apart from Christ
- IV. Endeavor to Be the Redeemed New People of God

Related Scripture

1. Gen 3:1-13
2. Mat 4, 7:13-23
3. 1 Peter 5:8
4. Ex 19:6
5. 1 Pet 2:9

Memory and Meditation Verse

But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY. 1 Peter 2:9-10 NASB

Questions for Thought and Discussion

If we are to be the church of God's intention...

1. What action is called for by the fact that we have an enemy in Satan that can deceive us?
2. What action is called for by the fact that God designed and created us like Him to live in communion with Him and to make Him known in all the earth?
3. What action is called for by the fact that God has worked redemptively with His people at every point in history but only fully in Christ Jesus?
4. What action is called for by the fact that the church is the new people of God today?

Four Actions to Integrate God's Intentions for the Church

This message is a pause in the new material of this series so that we can integrate God's intentions for the church that we have discovered so far.

Nathaniel and I enjoy the TV show Man vs. Wild with Bear Grylls. Bear puts himself in survival situations and brings his viewers along instructing them as to how they could manage it if they were in this situation. One thing he always does is pick up things along the way that might be helpful for him later. One episode he found an old chain that looked like it must have weighed over 20 pounds and he stuffed that into his back-pack and used it later to help him climb up a bring that ostensibly helped him get to safety. 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.

God has designed and created and redeemed us to be His people, yet with all that determining initiating activity, He does not call us to be passive recipients of His work on us only, but also the active participant in His work through us. So, today, with the desire to respond to God and be the people He has designed, created and redeemed us to be, we will look at four ways we can participate with God.

I will be following the rough format: We have seen... and discovered the truth that... and concluded that based on this if we are to be the church of God's intention we must... and hold this value...

1. Engage in Careful Study of God's Word

a) Topic

Reasons to engage in a careful listening to the voice of God in the pages of Scripture

b) Truth

We can be deceived and even live in false assurance of salvation. Satan deceived Adam and Eve (Gen 3:1-13), he tried to deceive and control Jesus (Mat 4:1ff), and Peter warns us that he still works against the people of God (POG) picturing him like a roaring lion on the prowl looking for people to devour (1 Pet 5:8). Jesus warned us that what presents itself as genuine may not be, even when it comes to inclusion in His church. (See Mat 7:13-23 and Mat 25:31-46)

c) Action

In order for us to be the church of God's intention, we must... **engage in careful study of God's word.**

We should be like a good lead climber – Nathaniel likes to rock climb. He does in mostly at the gym in a controlled and relatively safe environment. But when people climb outside on natural rock the potential for serious injury and death are high. The first person up a face is called the lead climber. And that person must care for themselves and the others who will follow. They must know what they are doing and set a course of anchors on the face that will be safe to follow. Interestingly that course is not

always a straight line between where they start and where they are going. They have to set anchors that will hold themselves and their buddies in case of a fall. If the lead climber does not do a good job he or she is putting themselves and those who climb up after relying on his work in danger.

We need to be like a good lead climber in that there are very real dangers regarding our church life. Not the least of them is that we have an enemy that is trying to deceive us and cause us to buy into an understanding that is harmful or even fatal to our spiritual life.

The Bereans of Acts 17 give us a helpful example of carefully engaging in the study of God's word. Luke says of them in verses 11-12, "Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believe, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men." May we follow the lead of Bereans and examine the Scriptures daily to see whether these things are so. What things? Things concerning God that people say and that we think to be true.

d) Core Value

At Stone Harbor Church we value the personal, intentional, humble, ongoing pursuit of God's truth in His Word and the subsequent integration of that truth into our lives.

2. Regard Ourselves as God has Designed and Created Us

a) Topic

God's purpose and the first creation

b) Truth

God, being triune and relational in His nature, purposed to extend Himself into His creation in such a way as to be glorified and enjoyed by mankind who He created in His image and likeness and capable of and for the purpose of knowing Him and living in relationship with Him as a devoted son to his loving father.

c) Action

If we are to be the church of God's intention we must... **regard ourselves as God designed and created us, not as the world presents us to ourselves.** The world encourages us to be self centered, self actualized, self starters, independent from others including God.

Do you remember the mean kid from the Pixar film "Toy Story"? The toys all feared him because he would rip the heads off toys and stick the head of one toy on the head of another and he would strap explosives to them and leave them out in the rain... The toys did not want to fall into the hands of the mean kid fearing what he might turn them into.

Well the world apart from God and the prince of this world, our deceptive enemy, have played this type of dress-up with us making us think that the self oriented us is the true us. It is time to stop playing dress up with the devil and grow up regarding ourselves as God has designed and created us to be!

How? By believing what God has revealed about us in His Word, by listening to His voice and not any others, even if the other voices are easier to hear and more appealing to what we want to hear.

d) Core Value

At Stone Harbor Church we value regarding ourselves and each other as God has purposed and created us to be: much loved devoted children of His living in intimate communion with Him and making Him known to others and thereby glorifying and enjoying Him forever.

Pastor Wayne Cordero from New Hope Church in Hawaii once shared a message where he tried to get people to see themselves as ministers. He said that we are not really a group of school teachers, construction workers, business people, administrators... but we were ministers disguised as those people. Further that our disguises allow us to meet our colleagues where they are with the Gospel of Christ. Stealing his illustration I argue that we are what we do only in as much as it is an effective disguise serving the purpose of us being who God has actually designed and created us to be. Jack and Dennis may look like business consultants, but they are really devoted sons of God in disguise so they can best carry the message of the truth of Jesus and our redemption in Him to the people they consult with. Russ is a meteorologist by day but is really a devoted child of God on mission to make God known...

3. Grieve the Brokenness of the World apart from Christ

a) Topic

Estrangement and redemption (In promise, prototype and anticipation)

b) Truth

Being deceived by Satan, man rebelled against God resulting in estrangement from Him; but God initiated redemption promising it (Gen 3:15) in what amounts to a reversal of that estrangement and the re-establishing of intimate communion and the goodness of His purposed and created world. This redemption was then accomplished IN PART in the lives of Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and the nation of Israel as we have seen over the last several weeks.

c) Action

If we are to be the church of God's intention we must... **grieve the brokenness of creation and the partiality of our redemption in everything shy of the final redemption which is to be found only in Christ.**

I have been in Hawaii this past week visiting my family. What do you think of when you think of Hawaii? Oh poor guy suffering in paradise. Many think do think of paradise when they think of Hawaii – warm days with a soft ocean breeze, palm trees swaying, friendly people, easy pace of life... Well it is paradise but that paradise is only a thin veneer over the brokenness of the world that is the global condition. I went to Kewalo Basin and found a plot of land that had newly been made into a pretty little park right on the ocean front. It is a place where I used to surf as a kid and thus it surfaced some fond memories. I was taking in the view and doing some preparation for this message when I observed a couple who interaction turned from that of lovers enjoying themselves in friendly talk into a lovers quarrel complete with pushing and shoving and the man forcing himself on the woman and then the woman slapping him in the face. Not wanting to get involved but feeling I was being forced into it I stood up and moved towards the couple at the same time another onlooker was doing the same. Thankfully, the tension between the two dissipated. Paradise is only skin deep.

Our family home is on a beautiful mountain with a great view looking out over downtown Honolulu. It is always a joy going up the winding road out of the heat of the lower elevation into the cool of the mountain air. I have always considered myself fortunate to have grown up in such a place of beauty. But this time when I traveled that road I noticed how un-kept and run down it was with overgrown shoulders of invasive grasses and pull-outs at the viewpoints uglified up with trash and graffiti. Paradise was the victim of budget cuts and people who just didn't care.

But the solution isn't cutting the grass it is Jesus Christ and the redemption that is to be found in Him.

d) Core Value

At Stone Harbor Church we value: Grieving the brokenness of the world and taking great hope in God's promise of redemption, displayed in part in God's working with His people throughout history and realized in full in God's work in His Son Jesus Christ.

4. Endeavor to Be the Redeemed New People of God

a) Topic

The church as the New People of God (NPOG) today.

b) Truth

The church is the POG today with the same nature, relational intimacy, privileged status and responsibilities that God has always intended for His people.

c) Action

If we are to be the church of God's intention, we must... **endeavor to be the new people of God redeemed by Christ**. This is what we are but we don't necessarily live with this as our practical identity. So maybe it is better to say that we must

appropriate our redemption that Christ has already received – the redemption of God's people allowing them to be all they were originally designed and created to be.

Who we are in Christ is informed by who we are a part of. We must remember that we are people with a heritage – one that traces back to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, the nation of Israel and most importantly Jesus Christ. We are people defined by God's past creative and redemptive acts most ultimately the acts of Jesus; people carrying a charge for the present to be His witnesses; people with a hope for the future of His return when He will bring to final culmination all that He has already accomplished.

So far in our series we have really only looked at the few men in the first two books of the Bible. And even in their lives we have seen that God has always worked with a special sub-set of humanity – the POG – lead by one man. As we look at each of these men's lives we come to know God and His purposes a little bit more completely. We see that although the particulars of God's redemptive work change, God and His purposes don't. Redemption progresses from part to full. Each part contributing to the fullness of that full. Each part necessary and with its valuable contribution. Yet not every part presents itself as important.

Imagine the next plane trip you take. Your aircraft has just undergone scheduled maintenance and the service manager sees a bunch of parts kicked to the side of the hanger. A technician who serviced the landing gear assures him they are not important and that the landing gear is good to go. Now if that was your plane you will be pulling for the service manager to stop the role out and make sure that the plane is assembled with all its parts. We are aircraft service managers – people entrusted with the knowledge of God. We are a kingdom of priests (Ex 19:6; 1 Peter 2:9) implying our responsibility to represent God to others. We don't want to be on a plan or in a church that can take off but not turn, that can go up but can't be guided down, that can fly in fair weather but doesn't have the parts onboard to fly in bad weather for there are storms in our skies and trials in our lives. I'm not saying that we need to become aero-space engineers or metallurgists or electronics experts... but that we need to appreciate, whether in aviation or redemption, that each part is important. The cost of not valuing the parts in aviation is death; the cost of not valuing the parts in redemption is spiritual death. And I would argue that the latter is more important than the former.

The action point here is that we would be the redeemed people of God today and this requires that we know what the POG have always been and how God has worked with them in redemptive history. With each person God has dealt with in redemptive history He has revealed more and more of who the true and ultimate POG are. We have learned from Adam, and more from Noah, and even more from Abraham, Moses, David and the nation of Israel. We don't look back and see to be like the POG of Noah's day only. We look back and see what God intended His people to be IN PART, understanding that the parts served the greater full and that full is realized only in Christ.

d) Core Value

At Stone Harbor Church we value being the new people of God, people who have been fully redeemed by Jesus; not those who picture a redemption still to come in association with another person or event, but those to whom the final redemption has come in Christ Jesus and His work on the cross and the outpouring of His Spirit.

This of course raises the question: How do we be that church? In order to be the church of God's intention we need to know what His intentions are. Fortunately God's Word records God's intention. Unfortunately God's intentions in His word are not always stated in 8th grade level fact statements, but often in the record of how God has worked with His people. Therefore, we need not a quick skim, but a careful study of God's Word as we have already mentioned.

Additionally, for this careful study to bear fruit we will need to let go of beliefs not grounded in Biblical truth and grab hold of what is. Good teachers help. Bad teachers hurt. And to confuse the issue, good teachers can look bad and bad teachers can look good. Not all teachers are of equal value in helping us come to know the truths of Scripture. Not all teachers are worth listening to. This places before us the task of discerning which of all the thousands of teachers out there are worth listening to and which are not and then letting go of the bad and grabbing hold of the good.

Conclusion

Let me conclude by just opening a discussion on how we can identify good teachers for ourselves. Here are a few suggestions which I look for in the people I consider my teachers:

- They will have a high value of the Scriptures regarding them as God's revelation of Himself and His will as well as the authority for their life and practice.
- They will have a humble view of themselves and an awareness of their own limitations.
- They will have a method of Biblical interpretation that takes into account the whole canon of Scripture and does not examine any part without regard for its place in the whole.
- They themselves must somehow demonstrate their own patience and persistence in personal study of God's Word over the course of many years. This is acknowledging the fact that a good understanding of Biblical truth is not gleaned with a quick read of some of the Scripture but with careful study of the whole Bible over many years.
- They must somehow demonstrate their submission to and dependence upon the Holy Spirit to reveal truth recognizing that the natural mind can not without the Spirit's help comprehend supernatural truth.
- They will be ahead of me in their walk with the Lord.

I have benefited greatly from the teaching ministry of Dr. G.K. Beale, and Dr. Haddon Robinson, both professors I was fortunate enough to learn from at Cordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and both meeting the criteria I have described above. Each is well published and their books you can find on-line. Those looking for scholarly and detailed treatments will find Dr. Beale's publications excellent and those looking for more accessible writings especially regarding preaching and teaching (though he has written on many other subjects as well) will benefit from Dr. Robinson's works. Of late I have gleaned tremendously from Christopher (Kit) Culver, pastor of Sovereign Grace Community Church in Littleton, Colorado. In my 30 years of being a Christian, he has brought perhaps the greatest contribution to my ability to understand the large story of Scripture which in turn provides the key to understanding each individual part. He has reintroduced me to the essential field of Biblical Theology and has done serious students of God's Word a great service in his book, *Speak Lord, Learning to Listen to the Bible*, as well as in His sermon series, *Sacred Space: God with Us*. Neither of these are causal reads, but both are accessible to the disciple who will give them their focused attention. He too has demonstrated the rest of the characteristics that I described above of a good teacher worth listening to. I have also benefited greatly from Pastor's Timothy Keller, John Piper, and D.A. Carson. None of these last three men I know personally, but all of them have seemed to survive the test of time and I can recommend them to you as worth listening to.

Who has gone ahead of you with integrity, wisdom, scholarship and humility; who brings Biblical truth carefully interpreted within the whole context of the Scripture? Listen to those teachers! If you have teachers who tickle your ears and say things you like to hear but who don't preach the Gospel of God's redemption demonstrated in the course of history and realized most fully in the person of Jesus Christ you will be well served to let these go so they do not drown out the softer voices of those teachers worth listening to.

May God guide you as you select for yourselves teachers called by God, joined by faith to His Son, submitted to His Spirit, skilled in Biblical interpretation and like Christ in character. And may you find guidance in Paul's exhortation to Timothy.

"I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."
(2 Timothy 4:1-5)

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