



“The Vine”

Growing Together in Christ

Newsletter for New Hope Christian Fellowship

Reclamation?

Assimilation?

Mentoring?

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Reclamation?

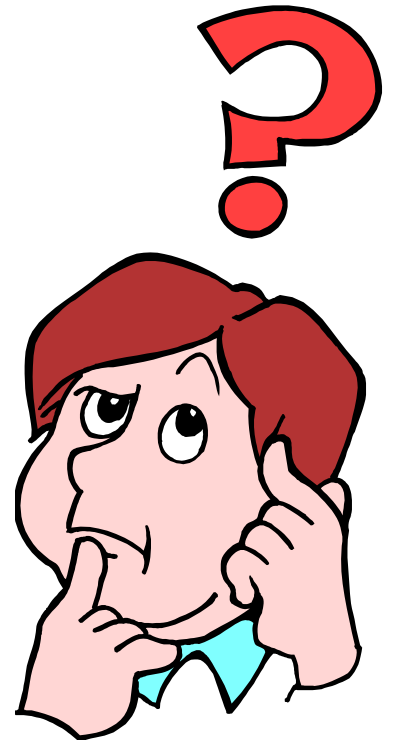
Mentoring?

Reclamation?

Assimilation?

What Do They Mean?

And What Do They Have To Do With Me?



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From Pastor Dennis



“Who Are We Anyway?”

Sometimes a member will ask me, “Who are we anyway? How do I describe our church to my friends when they ask?” The simplest answer is we are a Christian church. We worship Jesus Christ and recognize Him as our head (Colossians 1:18).

Most of us like to categorize individuals or groups for our own convenience. Some ask, “Are you Catholic, Protestant or what?” We are Protestant because we support the Protestant Reformation and agree that the 16th century Church needed major reform, because some of its doctrines and practices had become corrupt. This differentiates us from the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church.

Here is an on-line dictionary definition of Protestant: “A member of a Western Christian church whose faith and practice are founded on the principles of the Reformation, especially in the acceptance of the Bible as the sole source of revelation, in justification by faith alone, and in the universal priesthood of all the believers.”

Others may ask, “But what kind of Protestant are you?” Several terms are used to identify Protestant churches and movements: mainline, evangelical, charismatic, Pentecostal, fundamentalist, etc. Mainline churches are those which have been around awhile - Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, etc.

We are evangelicals and our denomination belongs to the National Association of Evangelicals. This is a growing movement in Protestantism. The word is derived from a Greek word, translated gospel or good news. Evangelicals believe Jesus calls his followers to be his witnesses (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8) and to share his good news with all people in the world.

Evangelical is often distinguished from “fundamentalist” – a term that originally meant Christians who believed in five major fundamentals of the faith, but eventually came to be associated with ultraconservatives who were against scholarly studies, new translations, anything new. Some of the more opinionated fundamentalists gave conservative

Christianity a bad name, and in the 1950s moderate conservatives began to call themselves “evangelical” to distance themselves from their right-wing cousins. (from “What Is an Evangelical?” www.wcg.org)


Charismatics get their name from the Greek, ‘charismata’, which refers to the gifts of the spirit. For many years they were identified as non-Pentecostal Christians who had these experiences. But in the mid 1960’s, some lay persons and ministers in mainline churches also began experiencing the manifestation of spiritual gifts, so charismatic is now known as a movement that has influenced most churches and denominations.

Pentecostals are an evangelical, charismatic movement that began in the early 1900’s. They believe that the experience of the 120 believers on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) - the gift of tongues - should be a normal experience for all Christians.

Denominations are associations of congregations that share a common heritage and common goals and services. We belong to the denomination, Worldwide Church of God.

So who or what are we? We are New Hope Christian Fellowship, a congregation in the denomination, Worldwide Church of God. We are evangelical Protestants. But most important, we are Christians who belong to Jesus Christ and our church is a Christian church. Now aren’t you sorry you asked?

The Vine
Growing Together in Christ



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Strategic Plan

Mentoring, Assimilation and Reclamation - Oh My!

If you've been around New Hope Christian Fellowship during the last year, you may have heard one or more of these words discussed. And if you're like some, you may still be wondering, what exactly do they mean.

Last September, NHCF introduced its 3-year strategic plan to the congregation. Part of the plan included the formulation of three new ministries -- Mentoring, Assimilation and Reclamation. While the names of these ministries may sound awkward, all three have been used of late in the Christian community to describe ministries that can be valuable to a local church.

In a nutshell they can be described this way. *Assimilation* equips people to make new members feel welcome and included. *Mentoring* builds mature believers. And *Reclamation* reaches out to welcome old friends back into the fold.

They are ministries guided by Jesus -- "under his (Christ's) direction the whole body is fitted together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love." (Ephesians 4:16) As we implement these ministries, we are carrying out our mission to be: a family of hope for all people.

Assimilation: I must admit this is probably the most cumbersome term of the three to, - well, - assimilate into memory. It conjures up images for the "Trekkies" among us of the "Borg" who constantly sought to "assimilate" all in their path. But in terms of our congregation, its focus is on attracting and taking new people into the body and life of the church and helping them feel like they belong.

One church's website says of their Assimilation ministry, "the process of incorporating individuals into active life within the body of Christ...by providing opportunities for Christian fellowship, encouraging Christian adult education, and encouraging service to others."



It's a deliberate attempt to facilitate member involvement in the work of the local church in a greater way than they may be doing right now. It's done with the intent to benefit the members individually and the church as a whole.

If you feel you would like to help members become more involved in the life of NHCF see John Siston to be part of the assimilation team.

Mentoring: According to our strategic plan, "Mentoring takes individual members to the next level of character, service and spiritual maturity." While you can mentor or have a mentor in just about everything, in the context of the local church the focus is on the spiritual.

"A mentor is a wise & loyal friend and coach; teacher, advisor; a spiritual role model. A mentor will demonstrate by example, spiritual values of love, faith and hope and enhance the spiritual growth of his or her friend."

The mentoring ministry was started to encourage members to select someone to be a mentor in his or her life. It also gives

assistance and advice to anyone interested in participating in a mentoring relationship. A mentoring relationship is a one on one relationship between the mentor and the mentoring partner. The ministry can help get the relationship started, and if help is needed, provide any assistance along the way. From there, the relationship will take on its own unique direction, based on the partners involved. Should you have any questions about becoming a

mentor or being mentored by someone please see Fred Stevens or Jeb Egbert for more details.

Reclamation:

Why use the term Reclamation? Again it's a term we've inherited. Generally reclamation refers to a restoration, as to productivity, usefulness, or morality. Church wise it can refer to bringing back someone into the family who has left or helping to bring back former members back into the fold of the church. A scripture at the heart of reclamation is the parable of the lost sheep. (Luke 15: 3-6) See Strategic Plan on Page 6

...ministries exist in a local church to help members grow & to edify the Body of Jesus Christ

Heart

It's All About the Heart - Part 2

In part 1 we saw through a series of Scriptures that God had intended Israel would develop a heart relationship (one of intimacy, love and humility) with him. But unfortunately, the covenant people had a heart of stone - that is they resisted God in their hearts.

Because of this condition, God condemned Israel and Judah through his prophets. "The LORD says: 'these people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me'" (Isa. 29:13). Even though the Children of Israel had knowledge about God and his requirements of them and had even praised him with their lips, they refused to have an intimate, heart-felt relationship with him.

And when God spoke to them through the prophet Zechariah: "They refused to pay attention; stubbornly they turned their backs and stopped up their ears. They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the LORD Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. So the LORD Almighty was very angry" (Zech 7:8,11-12).

So as we have read, the fault of the people wasn't a lack of knowledge of what God required of them, it was their heart. That's why God prophesied in Ez. 36:26-27, "I will give you a new heart and put a new Spirit in you; I will remove from you a heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws."

And that's exactly what happened. The "new heart" that God promised would be the result of the work of the Holy Spirit in us. The Holy Spirit's role is to transform us to have a heart (a desire and willingness) to follow and obey the will of God in our lives.

It was Jesus Christ, himself, who promised the coming of the Holy Spirit in John 14-16. And Paul wrote in many of his letters

about the impact the Holy Spirit had on Christians.

"You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (2 Cor. 3:3). The OC law was external - written in stone and ink. The NC law is internal - written in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. It's the Holy Spirit that directs our attitudes and actions and gives us an intimate relationship with God.

Paul again wrote about how the Holy Spirit is working in us to transform our hearts. "A man is a Jew if he is one inwardly, and circumcision is circumcision of the heart by the Spirit, not by the written code (the law)" (Rom. 2: 29).

"He (God) saved us through the washing of rebirth & renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:5-7).

The NT emphasizes the importance of the heart

in believers. It's the gateway to our spiritual life. In the heart of Christians dwells Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the love of God.

(Eph. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; Romans 5:5).

Scripture tells us that the natural heart, without the Holy Spirit, is corrupt and the seat of all sin. Jesus warned us, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what makes a man 'unclean'" (Matt. 19:20-21).

Yet we know that it takes a miracle from God to change and cleanse our hearts. "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled (clean) from an evil conscience" (Heb. 10:22 NKJ). As we have seen through the OT examples, a detailed knowledge about God isn't enough. Rather it's all about the heart. **See Heart on Page 5**



Reflections

The Secret H Factor

Have you ever tasted a dish so delicious you asked for the recipe and were told it's a secret? Restaurants, cookie makers and homemakers sometimes closely guard their recipes and won't reveal the secret ingredients to anyone.

Well, some might, for the right price. I saw an auction on eBay for a steak seasoning recipe. The asking price was a million dollars. I couldn't find out if it actually sold for that amount, but the seller promised it would be worth it.

What would you pay for a secret recipe that could change your life? Would you pay a million dollars? More? If you saw an item on eBay guaranteed to help you get along with everyone and have no more arguments, fights, unhappiness or people problems of any kind, would you bid? Or would you say, that's impossible. Nothing can do that.

I'm going to let you in on the secret, and you don't have to place a bid or get out your credit card. I'll tell you for free, although it's not free. It's called the Secret H Factor, and it's found in Philippians 2:3 to 5: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus" (NIV). The price for the Secret H Factor is laying down the self and giving up pride and self-centeredness.

I could have called it the missing H factor as it seems more and more scarce. It's missing at the dinner table when families get in arguments. It's missing in the classrooms when students disrespect teachers and other students. It's missing in relationships when pride keeps people from apologizing.

Where is humility in politics, the media, sports, shopping centers -church? It's gone missing and it is sorely missed. Just like salt in soup, a little humility can go a long way toward making life better.

The IVP New Testament Commentary calls humility the cure to "the ills that beset our Christian communities--including that most fragile of institutions, the Christian family."



It is neither false modesty nor falsely considering others better than ourselves. "Rather it has to do with a proper estimation of oneself, the stance of the creature before the Creator, utterly dependent and trusting. Here one is well aware both of one's weaknesses and of one's glory (we are in God's image, after all) but makes neither too much nor too little of either. True humility is therefore not self-focused at all but rather, as further defined by Paul, considers others better than yourselves" (IVP New Testament Commentary, Philippians 2:4).

Humility comes from the mind of Christ, which is beautifully described in Philippians 2:5 to 11, also called the Philippians Hymn. And his mind, a mind of wonders and unimaginable grace, holds the secret and missing ingredient of harmony and peace. If only laying down the self and giving up our pride were as easy as getting out our credit cards. - *By Tammy Tkach*

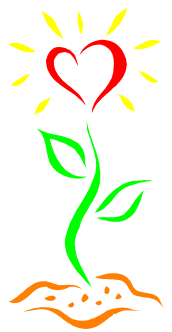
Heart from Page 6

Of course the heart and the mind work in conjunction with each other. That's how God made us. But from God's perspective, it's the heart that's the most crucial.

Unless we surrender our innermost being (our hearts) to God, he can't change us. We will continue to be stubborn and resist his love and grace. We need to surrender our hearts to God so that the Holy Spirit can heal our brokenness and change us from the inside out and in order to transform us from our selfish sinful human condition into the likeness of his perfect Son. (Romans 8:29-30)

The question we need to ask ourselves on a daily basis is this: Do we have a heart of flesh that God is transforming or do we have a heart of stone that resists God?

- *By Larry Omasta*



Nonagenarians in our Midst

In the course of six weeks NHCF is adding two more members to an elite group in our midst. Zephie Grimm who turned ninety on September 9th and Gerda Bludeau who turns ninety on October 15th will join Onie Adams - 97, and James Read - 93 as NHCF's group of nonagenarians. (Someone in his or her ninties, that is, between 90 and 99 years of age.)

Evangelism

Stand Up! Step Out!

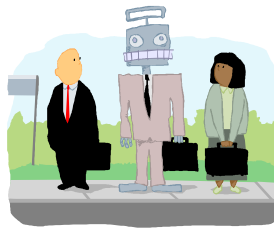
I've been sitting in church for a long, long time. In fact the only time I remember not sitting in church was the four years I was in the Air Force. I love good preaching and I love to fellowship with the brethren. Oh I was good at sitting and listening until I started learning more about Jesus and what he wanted me to do. I have learned through bible study and reclamation classes that I could tell Christ's story by my example and by sharing what he has done in my life. Sounds easy right?

Coming home from school there were two students sitting at the bus stop. They were talking when I arrived. I heard one girl say something about church so I figured that this was my cue to open my mouth and engage in a conversation about church & Jesus. While I was thinking about what I was going to say, my brain started to fizz. My antenna went up but I got nothing but static. And by the time I was ready to say something the bus pulled up. Whew! What a relief. I got on the bus thinking what a cowardly, fearful, wimp I was. Where was the stuff I learned from bible study? I beat myself up and think, "Oh my wife would have gotten an A+."

I realized standing on my own two feet is not good enough. I must be liberated from the have to's of duty, to the want to's of my heart and desire to love Christ. I'm a tool to be used for the gospel message not by my strength but in my weakness.

It was time to change buses; I stepped off the bus, walked across the street to the next bus stop. I sat beside another stranger. I began to wonder what this man would say if I asked him about Jesus. I needed courage, I cocked my head toward his left shoulder and said "Sir, have you accepted the Lord Jesus as your Lord and Savior?"

He didn't hesitate, "Oh yeah, I accepted Christ a long time ago. I'm on my way to bible study right now do you want to come?" Little did I know he pastored a church a block away from my home? He told me his mother was the pastor but she moved to Virginia to start a new church. I told him I might visit in the future. Not having anything else to say, the bus stopped right on time. We



both got off at the same stop and I said to him, "I hope I didn't bother you too much." He replied, "No! No! You did what you were supposed to do." We said our goodbyes and walked off in different directions.

I felt a little better but I wasn't equipped like I should have been. After all these years sitting and warming up church benches, I still struggle. I try to memorize Romans 10:9-10 and I continue to ask the Lord to help me yield to the Holy Spirit. Fall in love with Jesus, don't doubt or be ashamed of Him, praise and trust Him at all times.



With a little more confidence I will be bold enough to stand up and step out. - *By Willie Edwards*

Strategic Plan from Page 3

Reclamation ministry's goal is to equip our members to reach out individually to inactive members. It is tailored to the friends, family and acquaintances of NHCF members who are no longer attending church.

Earlier this year a one-day retreat was held consisting of lectures, a panel discussion and lively give and take interaction on the subject of reclamation. For more information on reclamation see John or Diane Siston.

So does your heart go out to loved ones who no longer attend church? Are you interested in being equipped to engage inactive church members? Then you might consider coming to the reclamation retreat.

Would like to seek a mentor in an area of spiritual growth or become a mentor to someone? Then it may be time for you to step out and consider mentoring. Are you feeling drawn to help new members get more involved in church so they can grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus? The assimilation ministry is beckoning you.

Finally, remember that ministries exist in a local church to help members grow & to edify the Body of Jesus Christ. That growth, so indicative of a Christian, often takes place in and through local church ministry involvement.

Is it time for you to get personally involved in a new church ministry? How you answer may change your life in the months and years ahead. - *By John Siston*