

**Notes on Gregg Harris' Presentation and Question/Answer Session
at the UCH Leaders Network Gathering**

August 14, 2008

The Doctrine of the Goodness of God

Genesis 1—"It was very good." – God created everything, "Good".

Genesis 2:18—"It is not good for man to be alone"

Everything that God does, that God is, is good and beneficial.

Romans 8:28

Fall of Man—Goodness of God collided with the Justice of God → Calvary

Deuteronomy 10:13—It is always for our good and His glory.

God does not give us any conflicting obligations. Every obligation that comes from the Lord is compatible with every other obligation.

("God doesn't give unfunded mandates.")

The problem—sometimes we add to the Lord's obligations.

Past few decades there's been the tendency to see ministry at odds with family.

The family is not an obstacle for ministry—it is a vehicle for ministry . . . but like all vehicles, it needs maintenance.

There is a "beautiful compatibility" between family and ministry.

We need to be careful to not try to be more "spiritual" than God!

Look for evidence of God's purpose and design.

If we see every commandment as a delivery system for blessing, or protection from harm, then we will see the commandments (God's Will) as a good thing.

When we are faced with temptation, we are always faced with the question, "Do you trust God?"

Every act of disobedience is a statement of distrust—every act of obedience is an expression of trust in God.

Pharisees—thought that they could put God in their "debt" by their obedience.

Reward for being wise—that you don't have to endure the consequences of foolishness.

Obedience becomes the only reasonable thing to do—if you really believe that God is only good and only wise.

Obedying Jesus Christ from the heart is entering into the Kingdom of God—part of fulfilling “Thy Kingdom come . . .”

In heaven, the will of God is not being done with murmuring and complaining!

What the Kingdom Looks Like in its Expression

1 Kings 10:4-9 –Queen of Sheba visits Solomon

The Queen saw the wisdom of God at work in the life of Solomon’s household and kingdom. The passage says that it was “breathtaking”.

We don’t just need to hear the wisdom—we need to **see** the wisdom.

Solomon’s Kingdom is a foreshadow of Christ’s Kingdom.

Matthew 6:10—A set of right relationships is breathtaking.

When the world sees this, it validates that God has sent His Son (John 17).

When we believe His gospel (enough to actually obey), we are transferred into His Kingdom.

Romans 1:5—“the obedience of faith”; obedience that springs from, is animated by, faith

1 Timothy—“appearance of godliness, but denying the power (the power is faith)”

James 2—faith by my works

Only faith can save us, but works validate/authenticate faith.

The faith that will not obey God is not a saving faith—but it’s only the faith that saves us.

Mark 1:15—“Repent and believe in the gospel.”

Matthew 7:21

Acts 28:31—“proclaiming the Kingdom of God”

Romans 14:17—it is a kingdom of righteousness

1 Corinthians 4:20—power to actually do (obedience)

1 Corinthians 6:9 “the unrighteous” will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Obedience in the Kingdom of God is not optional.

John 3:3,5

It's the Gospel of the Kingdom of God—not only being saved out of this world, but into a set of right relationships.

There is in fact a Kingdom that is now—it has come (not in its fullness), but we begin to participate in it.

The family is part of that Kingdom, the local church, and the state are all of God and part of that Kingdom.

All of this is a theological foundation for the building up of the household, as a source of Christian leadership in the local church.

Every born-again male in a local church is an “Elder in training.”

He should be walking with the wise, and becoming wise.

We very much “homeschool” our own church leaders—homeschooling applied to the local church!

Raise up deacons, then elders (not all are full teaching elders, but must be able to teach).

Every father must be the resident theologian in his own household.

A godly household, functioning as God intended, is just as breathtaking as Solomon's Kingdom was to the Queen of Sheba.

Local churches can become breathtaking—people can be brought to tears as they realize “this is how God always intended it.”

Question/Answer

How do we bring in Dads to this greater kind of vision?

Suggest having an orientation seminar for the fathers—“God has called you to become Ambassadors for Christ, and your homes are Embassies”

Gregg provides an environment for “fellow enthusiasts” who then want to learn more and grow.

We have a study group called “Leadership Institute” on Tuesday nights which teaches the men how to handle God's Word like a preacher.

We have a “stable” of 25-30 guys who are able to fill the pulpit.

The church runs on “regular”—not everyone has to be Babe Ruth, hitting home runs every time—some can just hit singles and doubles.

Keep the church elegantly simple—so that it can be organized and thrive with ordinary men.

The number one thing that an Elder does is to be an example of a believer living in the real world.

An Elder is like a Master Gardener in a Gardening Club—should give his lecture while standing in his garden (with his fruit all around him).

A church is not for academic theories, but for strategies for bringing the Kingdom of God into a more beautiful expression.

We desperately need “fellow enthusiasts” and to spend time with them.

Would you suggest getting together with 5 like-minded families in a church of 1500, or getting together with 25 like-minded families in a city and planting a church?

There are Puritans and Separatists.

Puritans try to reform an existing church, while Separatists go and start something new.

If you can make it visual to people, then it's easier for people to catch the vision.

In a church of 1500, it's wiser to have alternative tracks, rather than dismantling the entire programmatic structure.

Church planter—hoping to plant with a covenantal approach. Positives and Pitfalls with starting a church.

Strongly recommend that you have a visitor's booklet in hand the first time before the doors open. Ask visitors to read the first part of the booklet even before the service begins.

Share recent statistics about failure of children to follow Christ.

Agreement is growing that the traditional youth group is not working.

New Church Plants have a tendency to be a magnet for all kinds of malcontents!
These people must be dealt with firmly.

You have to have a clear definition of “who you are”—where they can decide whether to come back or not.

You don't want to give the impression that you are a lump of “moist clay” . . . the guests will then form you into what they just left!

We are Overseers . . . not Overdoers!!

The primary delivery system should be the Body Life of the church, not the pastoral staff.

There is a big difference between “pulling rank” in the church and leading by example.

How do you foster better church/home dynamics?

When the church tries to create safety nets for the ways that the family is “dropping the ball,” it creates the illusion that it’s “safe” to neglect your children.

Sunday Schools began as a fishing net, then were transformed into a safety net, and now has ended up as a hammock.

What you honor, you tend to increase.

Once we simplify the objective, it’s amazing how men “step up” to the task.

The Church needs to respect the household, and the household needs to respect the example and encouragement of the Elders.

Elder—“Here’s a man who is pastorally effective with his own wife and children—now go and learn from him.”

How have you encouraged families to do missions as an entity?

We have encouraged Father/Son and Mother/Daughter short-term missions . . .

For awhile, we were reconsidering short-term missions (thought it might be “Christian tourism”) . . . but have discovered that short-term missions can be useful in helping church planters.

We have adopted a culture in our church where we are constantly raising funds to send families—in a matching funds design (by families raising their funds outside the church).

Basic schedule for the church?

DVD available based on the website videos—email eric@hofcc.org (ask about video, Elders/Deacons conference, church constitution/polity)

Sundays are the primary gathering of our church

10-noon—actual service

12:30-3—shared meal/fellowship time

Leadership Institute—Tuesday nights—for men who aspire to preach and teach (must attend for one year before attempting to teach/preach)—review sermon for two Sundays later

Family Room—

Gathering of the core, committed members of the church—rotates
(Fathers/Sons13+; Mothers/Daughters13+;Couples)

Done three times within the nine months

Helps to cover topics not necessarily covered in the pulpit

Teach what would have been like a “seminar session”—followed by
interaction

Pulpit—Expository preaching

Five pulpits—all deliver the consensus outline

Oversight with freedom for beginners to “spread their wings”

Summer Family Camp

Done congregationally

Sunday Celebration—all five congregations come together (done twice a year)

(HOFCC is actually one church that meets as five separate
congregations)

Elders/Deacons Retreat every year

July—Elders Vision Retreat—what does God want us to emphasize for
the coming year?

Elders/Deacons Retreat—decisions from Elders shared with the larger
leadership team

Sunday Celebration in late fall—cast vision to the entire church for the
coming year

Calendar is intentionally light so that the families can be doers of God’s Word
and not just hearers only

What about differences in doctrinal issues?

Ask people to be in general agreement with the issues, and not to teach
doctrines contrary to the general positions of the church

Paedobaptism—we respect the head of the household’s decision, but tell them
that we are in a Reformed Baptist environment

But . . . when we add new Elders to the church, they need to be fundamentally in agreement with the doctrines of the church

When visionaries step forward with a vision that does not complement the principles that we talked about today, how do you address that?

Open to ideas that are clearly biblical . . . but not interested in merely postmodern/emerging church ideas.

Post-Modern—"I've given up my search for truth, and now I'm just looking for a good fantasy."

People are willing to suspend critical thinking in order to just try to "feel good" with each other.

They are wrestling with starting life groups . . . but trying not to assign "official friends."

Want to make sure that there is no one lacking community in the church, and yet not artificially tear up already existing community.

"Second house thinking"—we're at the second house discussion at HOFCC right now—we would have a covenant membership (where people clearly know that they are members, and that Elders will speak into their lives);

Congregation size—decision process?

Plant new congregations for two reasons—

- 1) Keep numerical growth manageable

John Rowell—over 250 people, people begin to stop trying to know one another

125-250—optimum size congregation to respond to crises within the church, yet not so many that people become anonymous

- 2) Raise up additional leaders

A lot of churches are fat, but they're not reproducing

A lot of churches would be more healthy if they are reproducing, rather than just expanding!

600 lb man—not "he's growing" but "he's fat!"

Reproductive growth model—that you have new places to lead as much as you have leaders ready to lead

House church model—needs leaders faster than leaders can be developed

One ongoing crisis in a church of 35 is “tail wagging a dog”

Crisis in a church of 150 is more manageable

Conference for Elders/Deacons?

May 2009—conference that introduces the church to others—sessions with Gregg, Eric and Steve, observe Sunday services, Elders/Deacons meeting, Institute

In order to have Elders, you must have Deacons.

“If you don’t have a secretary, you are one!”

Every one Elder needs at least two Deacons.

The last man standing in a crisis should be the Elders, teaching the Word.

Comment on “Pagan Christianity” book

I believe in the authority, clarity, and sufficiency of the Scripture.

We tend to read the Bible as merely descriptive rather than prescriptive.

Must read the observations in the light of God’s Word.

Sometimes we read the Bible as if it were a flashlight that we directly look into, rather than using it to light the path.