

Inactive Ministry -It's a Matter of Perspective

I have, in my years of ministry and in business, that we humans are often very focused on the “how” and for some reason fail to recognize the importance of the “why.” *Why* we are doing something oftentimes has as much or more impact on the thing we found are doing as the steps taken to accomplish it. In fact, without ascertaining the proper understanding of the motivation to undergo a certain project or activity, you are often setting yourself up for failure. Miles and miles of print have been produced to tell you how you ought to lose weight, be financially prudent, have better relationships and on and on and on — yet we spend little time getting to know the motivation behind these activities. We fail to determine the perspective a person has under which these actions take place.

So, instead of enumerating “how” today, we are going to talk about perspective and motivation. These two key components of ministry are often left undiscovered and, when ignored, can have detrimental effects on ministry itself. Specifically, today we are talking about *why* we should undergo a ministry specifically to inactive members of our congregations. Almost everyone agrees that we should do this and that it is a very important part of the outreach work of the local congregation. Since everyone agrees, most folks just dig in and try to figure out how to do it. However, it is of vital importance that we try to get everyone on the same page as to why we should conduct this type of ministry.

For most, if we are being honest, the motivation for a ministry to inactive members would be numbers. If we can just get them back in the pews, they will start contributing their “fair share” and we can have a balanced budget again. While we might not want to admit it, this is an unfortunately accurate assessment. It is proven out in conversations about “giving units” and line items, dead wood and finances. This should not come as much of a surprise. An unfortunate majority of our congregational conversations take place at the level of budget and finance and personal preference. (I’m not talking about all people in all places here but a significant reality that does exist). This perspective and motivation limits our ministry to the realm of conquests and sales rather than wandering and lost souls in need of the healing Gospel.

It is with this in mind that we have an opportunity to change hearts and minds, both inside and outside the church. From within, all ministry endeavors will operate more smoothly when the majority of the congregation is of one mindset. With ministry to wandering sheep, it is imperative. When we keep as our goal the sharing of Christ’s love instead of getting seats in the pews filled, things will go much more smoothly. With budget and finance fixes as our goal, we will only be disappointed and never hit the mark. Yet, regardless of outcome, when we are faithful to Christ’s mission for the Church to share His Gospel, we will always find that we are meeting our intended outcome.

Think, too, from the mind of the one to whom we minister. How valued and loved are you going to feel if you sense that you are nothing more than a conquest, a means to an end? This is often the case even with the best of motives since the Law is working hard upon the heart of the wandering. Their guilt often manifests itself in resistance and opposition. How comforting, then, would it be to understand that to the local congregation, as to Christ Himself, this person is not just a giving unit but a child of God for whom Christ died and to whom He is reaching out through His Church? What a major perspective change on both accounts.

For more information and assistance in these endeavors, please check out our website or give us at LCMS RSTM a call! May God bless you in all of your endeavors in reaching out to the lost, especially those who have wandered away from the church.

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Contributed through the LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission monthly newsletter by Todd Kollbaum, RSTM Director.

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