

5 Hopes for the Future Church

There is a rising tide that the Church has lost its edge, and for some, even lost its way. In some cases, there is truth to that. But ultimately, the general conclusion cannot be that the Church is irrelevant.

I know the “irrelevant” message can be discouraging to so many of you who serve your church in positions of leadership. This post will encourage you and provide positive direction.

The Church was never meant to remain the same; change is part of its design.

As the Church changes, largely to adapt to the shifts in culture, it's vital that we stay focused on the original purpose of the Church.

“His [God] intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Ephesians 3:10-11

This article is not written as a position of defense. It's not a “how to” article to fix all the problems. It's a clear reminder of foundational truths that help us all stay focused no matter the pressure or opposition, and practical helps to keep going.

The Church is a great force for good. The stories of salvation, baptism, and life change worldwide are too numerous to ignore.

Yes, some churches are ineffective, but the most ineffective church is more helpful than the person who does nothing.

Let's jump into the reasons the church has a promising future.

5 Reasons:

1) An attempt to dismiss the Church is like an attempt to dismiss God.

The Church isn't a building, and it's not limited to one day a week. The Church is the Bride of Christ, the people of God, destined for the hope of eternal life.

We are sent out into our communities and the world to make a difference for Christ.

Currently, most churches meet in buildings and on Sunday. That may change, but what God set in motion won't be dismissed.

In the last few years, there has been a great deal of meaningful and productive conversation about changes to the mega-church and the attractional approach to ministry.

The result has been re-focusing from a church service with an emphasis on drawing the people in to hear the message of the gospel to sending the believers out to share the gospel. *It's not an either or, but the shift is intentional and good.*

I'm listening in on what changes smaller churches are anticipating they need to make.

(Leave a comment at the end of this post if you have an insight that may help.)

Regardless of the size of the church, God's plan is still in full force.

2) The purpose of the church is not yet fulfilled.

The New Testament makes the mission of the church clear. From the well-known Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 to the passage in Ephesians 3 – I mentioned earlier, the purpose is communicating the gospel and grace of Jesus. With the clear end of making disciples of Christ.

God's heart has always been for eternal life. *"For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!"* Ezekiel 18:32

In Gwinnett County (population of just under one million people) where 12Stone's eight campuses are located, a suburb of Atlanta, hundreds of thousands don't profess to follow Christ.

What would you estimate that number or percentage to be in your city?

There is much more for us to do. Let's continue to help our churches get better so we can reach further.

3) The church is imperfect, but not ineffective.

As I talk with leaders across the country, I get to hear incredible stories of transformation and life change. It's so inspiring.

At 12Stone Church we have begun casting vision for what is next and new — what God has in store for the next couple years.

One element is the transformation of families and how we are elevating Re-Engage, an approximately twenty-week marriage small group based on the gospel.

Each time Pastor Kevin talks about Re-Engage, people can't hold back. They interrupt and tell their story of a stuck marriage, or one headed toward divorce and how it is now restored,

healthy, and growing again!

It's truly astounding. Transforming families is only one of three areas we believe God is stirring. The other two are transforming souls and transforming communities. The vision is huge and humbling at the same time.

12Stone is an imperfect church that is being used by God to change thousands of lives.

Your church is imperfect too, but no church needs to be ineffective.

Don't let the difficulties, problems, and setbacks of your church discourage you; they are part of life. The Church has always faced difficulties and solved problems.

Personally, I love solving problems when they are attached to a purpose greater than myself!

This simple plan may be helpful to you:

1. Be honest about what needs to be improved.
2. Prioritize the list.
3. Select the top three problems that must be addressed. (Set the others aside for now.)
4. Commit to solving those three problems in the next six months. (Or the appropriate time-frame.)
5. Measure your progress against pre-determined goals and celebrate what God does!

4) People still intuitively head to the church when in need of help.

I briefly mentioned a point similar to this one in a recent article offering seven reasons why I stayed in ministry for thirty-seven years. You can read it [here](#).

Marriage breakdowns, spiritually lost or confused, wanting a positive environment for kids, health concerns, lonely and hungry for meaningful relationships, these are just a few of the reasons why people still seek the church. I meet them every week.

The church, Christianity, or God himself never promises to remove trouble and difficulties from a person's life, but they do show us a better way to live our lives with resilience and purpose.

5) Personal growth and strategic innovation continue to be objectives church leaders strive for.

The church is never stronger than its leaders. First, pray for them! Ask God to grant them wisdom, favor, stamina, and clear vision.

The leaders I know are passionate about personal growth; they are truly hungry for it. They change, get better, and increase their capacity to improve the church.

Healthy and growing leaders lead healthy and growing churches.

What is your plan for personal growth?

Healthy and growing leaders are also passionate about innovation. They never settle for the status quo.

Innovation is not about change for the sake of change, and it's not merely making something different.

Positive innovation embraces practical change that makes a measurable difference directly connected to your vision.

What one or two innovative improvements are you making to your current ministries that will increase the effectiveness of your church? I pray this article encourages your love and commitment to the future of the church.

> [Read more from Dan.](#)

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