

The Sermon - In 10 Sentences Or Less

Ancient Future Church 5 - Indispensable Basics



1. "I believe in the basics...It's the little details that are vital. Little things make big things happen. They may seem trivial, perhaps even laughable to those who don't understand, but they aren't. They are fundamental to your progress...Champions are brilliant at the basics." (UCLA basketball coach John Wooden)

2. So what are the indispensable basics of the Christian life, without which you cannot go far, and upon which you can build a great deal? The Apostles' Creed gives us this list in response - the Holy Spirit and spiritual dependence, the wide and deep church community, the forgiveness of sins, and our heavenly or resurrection hope.

3. So what are the indispensable basics of church? Again, without which a church cannot go far, and upon which you can build a vibrant future?

4. That question explains the "why" behind this sermon series; we've been covering the New Testament basics of church, from witness to intentional fellowship, and from leaders who equip to laypersons who are empowered to minister.

5. The most rigorous, comprehensive study of its kind, Natural Church Development (or NCD), validates these basics: among 70k+ global churches, it discovered 8 characteristics of healthy, thriving churches; empowering leadership, gifts-based ministry, passionate spirituality, effective structures/systems, inspiring worship services, holistic small groups, needs-oriented outreach, and loving relationships and culture.

6. The first word of each characteristic is what matters most, for example all churches have leadership but is it empowering, and/or all churches have structures/systems, but are they effective?

7. One compelling discovery of NCD is called "the minimum factor" - your church can only grow or flourish to the level of the weakest of those 8 characteristics. No strength in another category can compensate for a weakness elsewhere. (Remember the barrel with eight staves here.)

8. Another almost unbelievable finding of NCD is that if a church does each of the eight traits reasonably well (think C+ or B- in terms of a letter grade), then 100% of the time that church will grow (its congregational life and experience will deepen, and it will be reaching new people).

9. NCD dispels our unfounded hopes in quick fixes or superficial solutions, and redirects us to the biblical basics that have always helped the church shine.

Quote to Remember

"We have to have the courage to train the fundamentals, the basics, at least 80% of the time...People waste too much time debating edge cases. Edge cases are the what-ifs, the could-bes, the minor details – the things that might make a 2 percent difference, but mostly distract you from the real work that would make 80 percent of the difference...When you eliminate everything that is unnecessary, you're left with just the basics and whether or not you have mastered them...Without the fundamentals, the details are useless." (James Clear, author of "Atomic Habits")

Resources to Explore

- Another sports story about the importance of basics, this one from a legendary football coach: [Vince Lombardi on the Hidden Power of Mastering the Fundamentals](#)

- Interested in learning more about Natural Church Development?:

Here's a brief video overview of NCD, and the 8 quality characteristics - [PCC Natural Church Development](#)

Here's a brief written overview of NCD and its findings, courtesy of the United Methodist Church - [ncd2pagesummary.pdf](#)

A Prayer for the Week

Let's pray this periodically throughout the week for KirkWood...

From the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) -

Gracious Father, we pray for Your holy universal church, and for our church. Fill it with all truth and peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where in anything it is amiss, reform it; where it is right, strengthen it; where it is in need, provide for it; and where it is divided, reunite it. We ask this for the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, now and forever, amen.