

Why Do We Gather?

Why do we gather each week as a church?

Your answer might be one of the biggest assumptions (and therefore, trickiest set of unspoken expectations) you have when thinking about the weekend service. It affects everything! What to sing. How loud it should be. What kind of songs to sing. Whether or not to use theater lighting. How to preach. How to “do” the offering. How long to go. Who’s allowed to lead. Who to invite. How big of a screen to use. And how many. Really...everything.

Well, let’s keep this discussion somewhat manageable. I’m reminded of some marketing copy I wrote ten years ago for one of the best coffee shops in Lancaster: “When the world is swirling around you, find the way back to a simple & livable life – back to Square One.”

To my ears and heart, this is a great place to start when we’re talking about why we gather. Even though (or maybe because) I get to experience such a wide variety of churches, I find it difficult to call all of us to a single reason (and therefore style) for our gathering. Honestly, this is my attempt to process through writing. I really want this to be a conversation starter.

As a worship leader, I believe my role is to create a space where we can meet with God. (Thanks Dan Wilt for that fantastic verbiage!) It seems to me that there’s a lot of “Re-ing” that goes on when we gather.

These are some of the things I believe we should do when we gather each week.

Re-Orient

Life is disorienting. There’s lots of things to look at, to want, to have to take care of, to understand. Gathering allows us to once again “Set our faces like a flint.” (Isaiah 50:7) We look to Him and our faces are made radiant. We say “*This* is what I believe. *This* is Who I belong to. *This* is what’s true.”

Re-Imagine

Life is disappointing. Man, it’s sick out there. Hurting, oppressive, ugly. I see the affects of sin in my life and in the world around me. There’s something transforming about meeting with the One who says “go and sin no more,” who shows up where there’s need and switches superb wine for tap water, who feeds half of LCBC with my tuna salad footlong combo meal. He just sees in other dimensions, other realities, with another imagination.

Re-Position

Life is pushy. Usually downward. I’ll never get over the reality that in one moment I was dead in my transgressions, stuck in sticky, smelly muck. And as an 11-year-old on my Noah’s ark bed, the extraordinary happened. I was re-created, a new creature, and suddenly I was home...seated in the heavenlies with Christ. #canyoubelieveit?! We celebrate this.

Re-Define

Life is ridiculous. Why would we work so hard to define who we are by what we do when He's already named us. It's like I'm Jarrett all week...except for that 60 minutes on Sunday when I remember I'm actually David. As a son, there's no earning. Intentionally listening to the Father together powerfully sets us back in the right context.

Re-Connect

Life is frenzied. We rush. Especially on the way to church! We're over-connected online, under-connected when we're breathing the same air. Beyond just a shared experience, we get the chance to respond to God and each other in the same room. Touching God-with-skin-on has a similar effect that the Ezekiel-37-dry-bones experienced.

Re-Direct

Life is idolatrous. Our charge as disciples is to bring an offering that is not for us. To acclaim, honor, magnify, worship, bless, praise, extol, love...Him. As Christ followers, we need a place to once again, as a set-apart group, express love and devotion to the Center around which our lives satellite.

Re-Believe

Life is challenging. It should be faith-draining. Or said differently, it should require faith. We need the belief-fuel of faith. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Hearing it in the company of other witnesses emboldens our faith.

Re-Enact

Life is forgetful. We get wrapped up in the latest song, outreach program, and small group system. It's cool stuff. But the Church has been doing it's offensive on the gates of hell for a very long time. Sacraments, liturgies, rituals, and ceremonies connect us to the Church throughout history. We need that context. His body broken. His blood poured out.

Re-Interpret

Life is...not always as it seems. When someone has received truth from Truth and gives it to us, our moments are interpreted. The lies that have been thriving in our heads are exposed and shrivel in the Light. It's beautiful, really. Whether in a sermon, a prophetic prayer, an encouraging word, a song lyric, the power of Truth translated in the language of love always sets us free.

Re-Glorify

Life is dusty. We, the created, stand up in our wonderful earthiness and begin to act, to do. But let's be honest. It's not that impressive. Without the glory, the breath, the life of Jesus, full of resurrection power, we're empty. Flat. A punctured bladder, vapid and limp (Psalm 37). Let me be clear: Two or more aren't gathered as the Church until we encounter the revelation of Jesus. He is central. He is everything!

I started out on this written journey, in part, to see if a more "missional" or "attractational" or "believer" or "seeker" or "traditional" or "contemporary" or "blended" or "un-church" gathering was more fitting for "Church circa 2012." At this mile marker, it seems that if we're all doing the "Re-ing" the other labels become pretty unimportant when describing why we gather weekly.

But I know there's more. I'm just one perspective. I need to hear from you. Why do we gather?

We hope you're encouraged by the Worship Fertilizer, a free resource from Ad Lib Music, *"in simple love and pure devotion to Jesus, we are eradicating isolation and burnout so that leaders bear much fruit!"*