

“Can We Find the Time??”

by Dan Adler

It seems that everyone I know, including myself, always feels there are not enough hours in the day and not enough days in the week to get done what we feel needs to be done. Things like computers, email and cell phones are supposed to help us get these things done quicker and easier, but they seem to simply allow us to cram more activity into the same amount of time (besides spending half of our time trying to keep them all working).

Then there are kids’ activities. I marvel at the role that sports have taken in so many children’s lives. From early elementary school years, boys and girls get put into sports programs that demand many nights a week and most weekends. Last weekend, Sandy and I were speaking and leading worship at a church that meets in a school in the suburbs. At first we thought this must be a popular church with all the cars and people, but then we were taken aback when we realized there were 3 different school sports games going on in that school on a Sunday morning. For those students and parents, they had made a clear decision that these sports events were more important than church attendance in their lives.

In the church it can sometimes feel the same. Every congregation I know is simply packed with activities and obligations. Many congregations have services Saturday nights, Sunday mornings, Sunday evenings, Wednesday nights and sometimes a Tuesday or Thursday night meeting as well. Often there is an assumption that the “faithful” will be in those meetings—therefore keeping the faithful of each congregation completely booked up with their local church activities, on top of school activities. And besides all this, we’re trying to fit in leisure and family time.

Into this context, here comes Heart of the City talking about calling the Church to come together once a month to worship and pray and build bridges between us. Honestly, when I look at all of that other stuff, I feel pretty hopeless about what we’re trying to accomplish. Without a change in paradigm and priorities, Heart of the City is just one more thing to do and it’s way low on the priority list.

So now and again we ask ourselves and others, ***“Is the status quo in the Church okay? Does there really need to be interaction between races and denominations and congregations, or is it just fine for everyone to stay in their own busy corner doing their own thing?”*** That’s a very honest question for us, because we could be doing many things other than this ministry. We have no desire to add more loads of obligations on already burdened people! So we ask again, ***“Is the Church fine just the way it is?”***

The truth is, ethnic/racial tensions are growing—not decreasing in cities across the country. Denominations are strongly divided over many different issues, as each is convinced that they have the one true and right perspective on the Bible. The respect and reverence our nation once held for Christianity has been largely replaced by suspicion, apathy, or even hostility. The Church must rise up to lead the way in showing the world how in Christ things can be so different! But we are not doing that! Our doctrinal divisions could be described in no other way than confusion. And God is not the author of confusion! Yet we contentedly live with things as they

are. **The status quo does nothing to cry out to God about this.** It contentedly acts as if all these divisions are just fine. The Church is strategically situated with congregations in every community of every city in the country. But we are like an Army with many independent, uncooperative platoons with no communication. We are very ineffective in fighting against a vast spiritual army because so many of us don't communicate, can't agree and don't work together and help supply each other's needs. And most alarming of all, we don't view this condition as a problem at all, and go on as if we'll win the battle alone.

So in spite of our over-busy lives, we and so many others in the city can't help but answer the question with a strong, **"NO, the status quo isn't okay! We can't possibly be walking in the will of the Lord by being racially segregated, denominationally divided, competitive congregations. We are not even close to being "One" as Jesus prayed in John 17."**

But if the status quo isn't okay, and yet there's no time, how in the world are we going to do this? That too is a question that plagues us far more often than we'd like. The only is that we have to reexamine how we use our time—both in our congregations and in our personal lives.

We have to go back to scripture. If unity in the Body of Christ is a priority, as the Bible clearly makes it, then we have to put unifying the Body of Christ on our priority list. **We do what we want to do. We program for what we care about.** We have chosen to have Heart of the City Worship Celebrations once a month because we believe that gathering outside of our congregations on a regular basis is attainable, and will actually make a difference in helping to change the Church culture and paradigm of division. But it's only possible if priorities change. Currently, unifying the Body of Christ is not on the radar for most.

If we've answered the question in the affirmative as to whether things need to change or not, then we've got to ask ourselves what less important things we can drop from our schedules in order to allow time to do something different. **For most of us, we simply can't add anything else to our schedules, but if it's a priority, we have to be willing to drop what's less important.**

Could congregations cancel an evening service once a month in order to gather with other believers? What about every other month? If they did, wouldn't their congregation grow spiritually and not suffer from it? Could Christian families clear away time from over-busy schedules to join families from other ethnic and denominational backgrounds to pray and worship together? Wouldn't the impact on their children effect race relations and congregational interaction in the future? Wouldn't it be worth the time for this generation and the next? If we could find the time to regularly get out of our separate corners and begin to join together, wouldn't the world take notice and see the Truth confirmed?! Wouldn't our efforts make a difference in the spiritual climate of our cities as we gathered to call on the Lord? ***We strongly believe that the answer to all of those***

questions is a strong “YES”. That’s why we’re here! That’s why we think it’s worth pouring our lives into.

After 911, 24,000 Christians in the Twin Cities thought nothing was more important than to gather at the Metrodome on one week’s notice with believers across the city and pray desperately for God’s hand to move in our nation. I think we could all agree that such a meeting was long overdue! The spiritual state of our nation demands our immediate and urgent intervention, even without such a crisis. **Will you ask God to help you make time in your life and in the life of your congregation? Let’s align our priorities with the heart of God, and seek to be united for the sake of His Kingdom in this world.**