

Renewing the Local Church-A Biblical Perspective

Pastor Brad Hales

bhales@thenalc.org

Renewal. It can mean to make better, change, strengthen, to prepare for a further task. As Lutherans we are a part of a "reforming" tradition, always looking for ways to share the Good News of Jesus Christ in the broken world. The local church desperately needs constant renewal, as we grow in our discipleship of the Lord Jesus and witnessing the risen Christ.

What are some possible Scriptures which speak about renewal?

Exodus 18:13-27- Moses is overwhelmed by his duties of leading God's chosen people. His father-in-law Jethro provides him with some practical advice of equipping and empowering others for the ministry.

II Kings 22:3-13, 23:1-20- In the reign of King Josiah in Jerusalem, God's temple was going through a building renovation. And during this project the Book of the Law was found behind some walls. After realizing that Judah had turned its back on the Lord, Josiah set forth to renew the religious and faith practices of the kingdom.

Nehemiah 8:1-12- Nehemiah and the priest Ezra were allowed by King Cyrus of Persia to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city from exile. One of the most important things they did was to gather the people together and read from God's Word, the Law.

Acts 15:1-30- As the question arose whether new believers in Jesus had to be circumcised, the Jerusalem Council decided that would not be the case. This early decision guided by the Holy Spirit had great impact upon the growth of the early church.

I Corinthians 3:1-11- The Corinthian Church was marred with division, sexual immorality and a fascination on following human leaders. The Apostle Paul makes it clear that the church is centered alone on the foundation of Christ.

Important Biblical Steps for Church Renewal-

1. Dealing with the Negativity:

-James 4:1-10- Source of quarreling and divisiveness. (bodily passions)

How to respond to the conflict:

-Matthew 18:15-17- Go to the person who has offended

-Galatians 6:1-5- Restore someone cost in transgression

-II Timothy 2:24-26- Lord's servant not quarrelsome

2. Discipleship Growth

Word

Deuteronomy 6:4-9- Live and teach the Word

II Timothy 3:16-17- Breathed by God, T.R.C.T.R

Prayer

Luke 11:1-13- Jesus teach prayer to his disciples

Philippians 4:6- Do not be anxious, pray

Worship

John 4:23-24- Worshiping God in spirit and truth

Hebrews 10:24-25- Do not forsake worshiping

Witness

Acts 1:8- Sharing Jesus throughout the world

I Peter 3:15- Being prepared to make a defense of our hope

Service

Matthew 25:31-46- give to the least of these

John 13:1-20, 31-35- following Jesus example of serving

3. Visitation

Pastoral and lay visitation is essential for congregational care, building relationships, sharing faith, encouragement, building trust, and casting Christ's vision for the church.

Matthew 9:35- Jesus visited the towns and villages

4. Engaging, Equipping and Empowering

In the renewal process we need to stop asking the question, "If we just had, but, "What has God blessed us with to do ministry?" Youth, aging, building, community outreach, etc. Some of the greatest assets we have in ministry are the people. It is imperative that we equip and empower the Body of Christ for the mission of the church.

Ephesians 4:12- "to equip the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ."

John 15:1-5- Bearing fruit, connected with Jesus

Hebrews 13: 20-21- Equipped to do good works for God

5. It Takes Time

Renewal takes time. It's not a quick flick of a switch. It takes hard work, perseverance, and above all, dependence upon God. It the Lord alone who can renew and revive a church.

Ezekiel 37:1-10- God, using the prophet Ezekiel, reviving the valley of the dry bones.