



Scattered

Once Upon a Time



“Christianity has lost its place at the **centre** of American life. Christians must learn how to live the gospel as a distinct people who **no longer occupy the centre of society**. We must learn to build relational bridges that win a hearing.” **Hugh Halter**

The Danger of Attractionalism, Dave DeVries

Attractionalism is the belief that creating an appealing church service and programs will attract unbelievers to come to church.

*this has been the dominant philosophy of church since the mid 80's

The Danger of Attractionalism, Dave DeVries

By anticipating that if they get their internal features right, people will flock to the services, the church betrays its belief in attractionalism. It's like the Kevin Costner character in the film *Field of Dreams* being told by a disembodied voice, "If you build it, they will come." **How much of the traditional church's energy goes into adjusting their programs and their public meetings to cater to an unseen constituency?**

The Danger of Attractionalism, Dave DeVries

The more we attracted people, the more we needed to keep doing the things that attracted them. Our energies were consumed with preparing an attractional event on Sunday, which left less time and energy to devote to disciplinemaking. Neil Cole observes, “Do we really think that our great programs will impress the non-Christians in our community to such an extent that they will say, ‘Hey, that’s a nice sign. And check out the parking lot. Wow, I want to be a Christian, too.’”

“In a culture like ours, long accustomed to splitting and dividing all things as a means of control, it is sometimes a bit of a shock to be reminded that, in operational and practical fact, **the medium is the message.**”

Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 1964

How we say something is **AS** important as what we are saying. The **methods** we use to share, live and display the Gospel to the world will modify the message **unintentionally**

Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business, Neil Postman

“...On television, **religion**, like everything else, is presented, quite simply and without apology, as an **entertainment**. Everything that makes religion an historic, profound, sacred human activity is stripped away; there is no ritual, no dogma, no tradition, no theology, and above all, **no sense of spiritual transcendence**.”

“I believe I am not mistaken in saying that Christianity is a demanding and serious religion. When it is delivered **as easy and amusing**, it is another kind of religion altogether.”

From sacred to secular: Canada set to lose 9,000 churches, warns national heritage group, Bonnie Allen, CBC, March 2019

A national charity that works to save old buildings estimates that **9,000** religious spaces in Canada will be lost in the next decade, roughly **a third** of all faith-owned buildings in the country.

From sacred to secular: Canada set to lose 9,000 churches, warns national heritage group, Bonnie Allen, CBC, March 2019

In rural areas, congregations are shrinking as members age or move away. In cities, the increasing **secularization** of society coupled with new spiritual practices has cut into traditional Christian church attendance. Even rising immigration hasn't been enough to offset the trend.

COVID accelerated

If you say you believe in the **transcendent** presence of God and the **empowerment** of the Holy Spirit and then divert funds and resources to entertaining those who show up Sunday morning (tech, decor and professional Broadway performers), **the hypocrisy of that posture is not lost on our culture**

“Christianity is now almost impossible to explain, not because the concepts aren't intelligible, **but because the living, moving, speaking examples of our faith don't line up with the message.**” **Hugh Halter**

In **Acts**, the gospel expands not through human strength, but through weakness, opposition, and persecution. Demonic forces, worldly powers and authorities, governmental opposition, language and cultural barriers, intense suffering and bloody persecution, unjust imprisonment, unbelief, internal disunity, and even shipwrecks and snakes all threaten to slow down the gospel's advance. But opposition and suffering do not thwart the spread of Jesus' grace; **rather, they only fuel it.** **Justin S. Holcomb**

The book of Acts is the first **snapshot** of how the church was meant to **function** and the principles of how its members would **behave**

The Rudder of Acts

Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, **go and make disciples** of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these **new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you**. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” **Matthew 28:18-20**

“We have to remember that the ancient faith communities that set a course to change the history of the world did so without church programs, without paid staff, without Web sites, and without brochures, blogs, or buildings. They were lean! The point of going without all the stuff is simple but profound. When you don’t have all the “stuff,” you’re left with a lot of time to spend with people.” Hugh Halter

transformation

serving

The church is the **gathering** and **scattering** of disciples committed to the **mission** of Jesus

gospel

Historically the church has over emphasized the gathered and been reluctant to embrace the **scattered**

-Sunday experience
-Pastor Centric
-Attractional
-resource heavy

non-programmed-
works oriented-
Biblically light-
non-discipleship-

Gathered



Scattered

Sunday encouragement
Teaching centric
Community Oriented
Spirit empowered
Resource light
Everyday Faith

“Church must not be the goal of the gospel anymore. Church should not be the focus of our efforts or the banner we hold up to explain what we’re about. Church should be what ends up happening as a natural response to people wanting to follow us, be with us, and be like us as we are following the way of Christ.” Hugh Halter

Truths We Learn from Acts

Only a **disciple** can disciple. We have plenty of **converts**, very few disciples

“Church is God’s people intentionally committing **to die together** so that others can find his kingdom.” **Hugh Halter**

Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be **taken** away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. **Matthew 21:43**

Truths We Learn from Acts

We are all missionaries

“Therefore, go...”

“It’s not so much that God has a mission for his church in the world, but that God has a church for his mission in the world” Christopher Wright

Truths We Learn from Acts

Right beliefs influences right behaviour

Acts is so named because it places vital importance on the behaviour of those who claim to follow Jesus. Much of the accounts will be linked to “how shall we then live”

For we live by believing 2 Corinthians 5:7a

Truths We Learn from Acts

Teaching was central to origins of the church

“The importance of preaching God’s Word is central to Acts. Acts contains numerous sermons and speeches, including eight by Peter, nine by Paul, one lengthy sermon by Stephen, and a shorter one by James. The addresses by Peter, Paul, and Stephen make up about **25 percent of the book**” John Stott, *The Message of Acts*

Truths We Learn from Acts

The Spirit is the **catalyst** and the **crucible**

“I remind you that there are churches so completely out of the hands of God that if the Holy Spirit withdrew from them, they wouldn't find it out for many months” **A. W. Tozer**

“The Holy Spirit puts the '**super**' into our 'natural.’” **Amba Keeble**

the Acts church is, does and moves

But **you** will receive power when the **Holy Spirit** comes upon you... **Acts 1:8**

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