

Northeast Park BAPTIST CHURCH

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Ministerial Musings

The command Jesus gave to the church was simple. Christ commanded his church to make disciples of all nations. So ask yourself an honest question: what are you personally doing to fulfill this charge on your life?

Jesus called the church to not only teach new believers all that he commanded, but he has called us to teach them to obey all that he has commanded. Teaching someone to obey something cannot be fully realized within the Sanctuary or Sunday School classroom. When a father teaches his child to clean his room, he does not simply tell him the process. He goes into the room with the child and shows him how to make his bed, he demonstrates how to put a toy in the toy box, and eventually how to fold his clothes. He goes into the room. He praises the effort even though the "finished room" does not resemble a perfect room.

We must disciple people exactly the same way. We must take time out of our lives and live with one another to show each other how to obey all that Christ commanded. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and scribes for teaching the law of God with their words without helping them live it out. In Matthew 23:4, Jesus says of them, "They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger." As someone who continually teaches the commands of God, these words are a stark warning. We must not teach the law of God without walking alongside one another to help each other obey.

Making disciples is a messy process. It means we will have to bear with one another's failures. It means we will see someone make the same mistake over and over again. It means blocking out time in our already busy schedules and making space for others. It means we do not simply take a meal to someone who is hungry, but we call someone to prepare the meal with us and go with us to deliver it. It means we do not simply go to the hospital, but we call up someone and take them with us. It means at some point we allow someone else to take the lead (even when we know we could do it better) and we take the back seat.

Let each of us step up and answer the call of Jesus on our lives. Let us dedicate today to making one more disciple of Jesus Christ.

God is good.
Steve

To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. Acts 10:43 ESV

The Church Is a Mess. The Church Is a Beauty.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/come-and-see-everything-wanted/>

JUNE 11, 2018 | [Dante Stewart](#)

I'll never forget walking into my coach's office after practice. I had just finished a good day on the field, and I was satisfied. With confidence I expected a session of praise.

Then he spoke. "Stew, the guys are telling me you've been slipping lately. You've been uninvolved. Why are you going through the motions?"

My heart sank. Though I didn't admit it at the time, he was right; I had become overfamiliar with my position, and I was losing the wonder of being committed to the game.

As any good coach would do, he challenged me to evaluate myself and try again. He issued an invitation to be someone different.

Compelling Invitation

As my coach challenged me years ago, so Todd Wagner challenges Christians in his new book, *[Come and See: Everything You Ever Wanted in the One Place You Would Never Look](#)*. The founding pastor of Watermark Community Church invites us out of the bonds of the familiar to remind us God is alive and well—and doing amazing things in a place we may have overlooked. Where does Wagner invite us? To church. Not to any church in particular, but the church as God intended her.

“Come and see a renewed vision of the church. Go and be a renewed community called the church.”

Wagner invites us to see that though Christians are flawed in many ways, “the church—as God intends—is actually the hope of the world” (38). The church is a beacon of hope not because of its size or amenities, but because it provides “others a picture of God’s kingdom—a glimpse of heaven on earth” (52). It’s a place that’s alive, awe-inspiring, and authentic—a “worshipful kingdom-of-God-on-earth community.”

Wagner offers two abundantly clear invitations: (1) come and see a renewed vision of the church; (2) go and be a renewed community called the church.

Come and See; Go and Be

Wagner invites us out of hyper-individualism to come and see a renewed vision of community. Far too often, American churches have been filled with people who “*attend* Sunday services without being *attentive* to the call of Christ on their lives.” He calls it “the Deal”:

Basically the Deal goes like this: members agree to validate pastors and leaders by showing up fairly regularly and agreeing to pay enough offerings to keep the weekly activity of the church operational. In return, “pastors” agree to preach civil, encouraging, self-help life messages, never asking too much of those attending. (61)

But as Wagner explains, “Change begins with moving from ‘just me and Jesus’ to ‘all of us and Jesus.’” He calls Christians to move from mere attendance to membership (connection to Christ’s body) and discipleship (connection to Christ). He invites us to see the church as part of who we are—as provision, protection, and a place where we discover and use the gifts God has given us for ministry.

It’s everything we want in the place we often overlook.

Wagner doesn’t stop there, though. He invites us to go and be the renewed community called the church. Though many excuses are made to avoid godly community, God calls churches to be involved in “the greatest work in the history of the world”: to rescue lives, defeat evil, and bring peace. Far from limiting this work to evangelism, Wagner shows that integral to discipleship is fighting for a better end by working through conflict (173), pursuing peace (208), and deep transformation (264). As we *go* and *be* in these ways, we will invite the world to *come* and *see* God’s love in this renewed community called the church.

Compelling, Yet Incomplete

Undoubtedly, this book is a needed corrective to American Christianity. Wagner does a wonderful job immersing us in Scripture as he invites us to a renewed vision. As I finished the book, I did see the church in a renewed way, but I found his conclusions incomplete and reductionistic at times. In various places he makes the “spiritual” seemingly the most important part of discipleship. To see Christian mission as limited to saving souls for heaven is to limit believers from working for justice at all levels (putting things to rights in the world), working for beauty (highlighting the glory of creation), and living out the future reign of God by partnering with him in the present.

The book also has a limited view of oneness that doesn't account for the types of diversity that should exist in churches (race, class, and gender), or the reasons churches lack such oneness. To call for "oneness" but not show what it should look on an individual, interpersonal, and institutional level can encourage churches to pursue superficial unity.

Finally, the book has an incomplete view of why people avoid community. According to Wagner, people avoid community because of something wrong within them (for example, rebellion, arrogance, laziness, and so on). That's often true, but he doesn't focus on the fact that the problem is sometimes the community itself or its leadership.

Despite these limitations, I'm glad Todd Wagner wrote this book, and I believe many will be helped by it. As I have been compelled by him, I now invite you: *come and see*.

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