

September 2009

Dear North Shore Fellowship

Recently I was with a group of pastors where one of them suggested you must become a "high expectation" church to get high expectation results, like you find in mega-churches. His assumption was that the more we expect people to do, the bigger our churches would grow. I was cringing already when he turned to me and asked, "I bet you have high expectations for your church. What do you expect from your people?"

I paused before answering. All his expectations made me tired just thinking about them! But I paused also because I was struggling to enter his frame of reference and quantify what we expect. Then it hit me – I expect more than the actions of service he had mentioned. So, I answered, *"I expect that our people enjoy Jesus more than anything else."* My questioner gave me a look that implied, "You just don't get it!"

Maybe I don't get what he was talking about, but I also don't want it. I don't want to be a church full of people hyped up and then drained by a host of church activities and programs. I long for us to be a church energized by Christ's presence among us. Do you?

**At the center of North Shore Fellowship is Jesus Christ.** No person, program, or proposition is worthy of our center. Enjoying Jesus is our primary aim. What does this mean? Webster's defines enjoy as *"to get joy or pleasure from; relish."* Jonathan Edwards referred to having "affections for Christ." Through each avenue of ministry -- whether in face-to-face relationships, our families, our fellowships, and our worship on Sundays together -- we long to enjoy Jesus. Our greatest hope for you is that you might enjoy Jesus' love, acceptance, freedom and union with you. Our goal is not to get you to jump through a bunch of hoops. Our desire is that you would enjoy Him personally, with other believers, and even with your neighbors who don't enjoy Him yet.

How does that happen? **Enjoying Jesus happens when you see that you are far worse off than you ever imagined but far more loved than you ever dared dream because of Jesus' love, acceptance, freedom, and union with you.** When you open God's word on your own, with a friend, with a group, or in worship together, your discovery of how far worse you are, but how much more loved you are, is what ignites your affections for Jesus.

Do you enjoy Jesus? Do you love Him? Do you remember that you have His full acceptance from the Father? Do you know you are free from condemnation because of Him? Do you know that He has united you to Himself?

If you are like me, when you remember these realities, you enjoy him. But more frequently we forget. So that's why we need friends, family, fellowships, and worship to help us remember and have our affections warmed towards the living Christ. If these four avenues of ministry are ends in themselves or our center, we will be drained. But if our center is enjoying Jesus these avenues serve to stir our affections for Him.

If you would like to understand this more, during the 10:00 a.m. **teaching groups** hour on Sunday, we're biblically, theologically, and practically unpacking what it means to enjoy Jesus. If you would like to experience this more, our **fellowship groups** are a great place to practice enjoying Jesus together.

Longing to enjoy Jesus with you,

Gary Purdy