

## INTRODUCTION

Perhaps at one time or another you've attended or been a part of a dead church. One way you can tell which are the dead churches, there are a lot of people that go to sleep. I heard about a pastor who got tired of one old fellow in the church going to sleep every Sunday. As soon as the pastor got up to preach, this old boy just laid his head over on the side and went sound asleep. Sometimes even snored. Well, one Sunday, the preacher decided he'd really get back at him. And he just stopped in the middle of his sermon and said quietly, "Everyone who wants to go to heaven when they die, please stand to your feet." Everybody got to their feet except that old boy just sitting back there sound asleep. Then the preacher said to be seated. And then he said, "Everybody in this room that wants to go to hell, stand up." At that moment that man woke up and jumped to his feet. Of course, he's the only one standing up and everybody's just laughing. The old boy looks around and says, "Preacher, I don't know what we're voting on, but you and me are the only ones approving it."

Let me tell you the difference between live churches and dead churches. Live churches have parking problems. Dead churches don't grow so fast. In live churches, you don't know everybody's name and you never will. In dead churches everybody has known everybody for years and wishes they didn't.. Live churches are constantly changing. Dead churches never do. Live churches have lots of noisy kids running around. Dead churches are quiet as a cemetery. Live churches' expenses always exceed their income. They're always behind. Dead churches take in more money than they'll ever dream of spending. Live churches are constantly improving for the future. Dead churches worship their past. Live churches move out in faith. Dead churches operate totally by human sight. Live churches focus on people. Dead churches focus on programs. Live churches are filled with tithers. Dead churches are filled with tippers. Live churches dream great dreams of God. Dead churches relive past nightmares. Live churches don't have "can't" in their vocabulary. Dead churches say nothing, but "we can't." Live churches evangelize. Dead churches fossilize.

I heard of a pastor who was in a church that was obviously a dead church. And on a Sunday morning, he brought in a casket to the front of that church to conduct the funeral of that church. And then he had everybody at the end of the service stand up and file by that open casket. And as they walked by, they looked in and there was a mirror because dead churches are made up of dead Christians. But live and exciting dynamic churches are made up of dynamic Christians. And here in 1

Corinthians 16, Paul gives some principles for dynamic churches. First Corinthians 16:15-24 says:

<sup>15</sup> You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the Lord's people. I urge you, brothers and sisters,<sup>16</sup> to submit to such people and to everyone who joins in the work and labors at it. <sup>17</sup> I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived, because they have supplied what was lacking from you. <sup>18</sup> For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition. <sup>19</sup> The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house. <sup>20</sup> All the brothers and sisters here send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss. <sup>21</sup> I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. <sup>22</sup> If anyone does not love the Lord, let that person be cursed! Come, Lord! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. <sup>24</sup> My love to all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen.

That phrase “devoted themselves to the service of the saints” literally means they have addicted themselves to the service of the saints. Now we're going to look at five marks of an exciting dynamic church.

## **I. HEALTHY CONGREGATIONS EXHIBIT AN ATMOSPHERE OF AFFIRMATION FOR FAITHFUL SERVICE**

In other words, in that church, there are people who are serving the Lord and they are affirmed. They are recognized. And he points out several things about these individuals that we can apply to our live today. We're not just talking about people from 2,000 years ago; I want to make the application to you.

### **1. Are you addicted to ministry?**

Is it just something that you've just got to do? I heard somebody say, “I don't want to be hooked on anything except phonics.” But I think it's good to be hooked on ministry. And that's what Paul says about these individuals. Have you ever thought about what an addiction is? And of course we usually use the word “addiction” as something very negative. People are often addicted to the wrong things. When you have an addiction, first of all, you have an intense desire. And then secondly, you have a regular habit. But there's something else about addiction that we understand, especially addiction to harmful substances, you develop a tolerance and so you have to do more than you did before. And I think you can say that about ministry.

Do you have an intense desire as a believer to serve the Lord? To minister to other people like these three individuals Paul mentions? Is your ministry a regular habit? Are you doing it all the time? Have you discovered that when you do some kind of ministry, it just makes you want to do more ministry? That's what it means to be addicted to ministry. When Paul writes about these three individuals, he says they addicted themselves. It's in what's called a “middle voice” in the Greek language. It means it's something they did to themselves. Some of you are waiting for me or

Mike or Dennis or somebody to say, “Hey, we need you to do this... We want to ask you to do this... We appoint you to do this...” You will do it if you are asked. But that’s not what these individuals did. They didn't wait until somebody asking them. It says they did it themselves. They devoted themselves to ministry. I told you before, there are some people who are saved and all they do is sit and soak and sour. That's all they do. They never serve. My friend, you are saved to serve.

Have you heard the poem about the fellow that never served? He was just waiting to go to heaven. It reads: “He wasn't much for stirring about. That wasn't his desire. While others worked to build their church, he was just sitting by the fire. Same old story day by day. He never seemed to tire. While others in the church were serving the Lord, he was just sitting by the fire. One day he died and got his due. And some say he went up higher. But if he's doing what he always did, he is still sitting by the fire.”

You are saved to serve. And I want to ask you, are you addicted to some ministry? These men were, and Paul says I want you to affirm the people in your church who are serving the Lord faithfully.

## **2. Do you refresh hurting saints?**

He says when these guys came to him, they refreshed his spirit. Have you discovered that every person has a gasoline gauge on their emotional dashboard? You've got one. And I've got one. There are some people that, when you interact with them, your gas gauge goes over to empty. But there are other people who, when you visit with them and interact with them, you know what happens to your emotional gas gauge? It fills up. Some people refresh you. And some people deplete you and drain you. We know that's true. Now I want to turn it around. Which kind of person are you? I mean, do you have the kind of attitude and personality that when you minister to somebody, you just refresh them? You're like a breath of fresh air.

Or are you the kind of person who is always talking about your own problems? And you're always draining other people?

Paul says these people refresh his spirit in verse 18. That word “refresh” is an interesting word there. That word is found in the Bible in Matthew chapter 12, where Jesus said, “Come unto me all you who are heavy laden and you’ll find rest for your soul.” It’s the same word. Some people are like a breath of fresh air, and others are like the stench of a sewage plant. Now, which one are you? Paul says when there are people in your church who are serving the Lord and ministering, affirm them. Encourage them.

## **II. DYNAMIC CHURCHES HAVE AN ATMOSPHERE OF ACCEPTANCE OF OTHER BELIEVERS**

Paul writes to the church at Corinth and he says, "All of these other churches in Asia are sending you greetings." They're acknowledging that you are believers. Did you hear about the church that put a big sign on the side of their building that said, "Jesus only"? But they didn't really mean that. They were sort of exclusive and they never really accepted people into their fellowship. So everything in that church just began deteriorating. And old vine grew up on the side of the building and it covered up the "J E S" until sign read more appropriately, "Us Only." Some churches are like that. They don't want anybody else. They think they're big enough. They say, "We don't want any new members. We don't want any new believers in this church. We just like our little fellowship, just like we got it. Us only."

The mark of healthy, exciting churches is that they're always accepting other believers. They're accepting and acknowledging that other people can love the Lord and know the Lord, even if they don't go to your church.

### **1. Do you acknowledge believers in other churches?**

In other words, do you believe that there are some Methodists who are saved, as well as some Presbyterians and some Catholics? I believe there are some Catholics that are saved. I really do. I believe that there are some Assembly of God Christians that are saved. Some Pentecostal Christians that are saved. Sometimes Baptists just think if you're not a Baptist, you're not saved.

Maybe you heard the story about the Baptist preacher at a revival. He was preaching about how good Baptists are and said, "Everybody in this room who is a Baptist and proud of it stand up and say, amen." And everybody jumped to their feet. Then he said, "Anyone who is not a Baptist, say amen," kind of daring them to do it. A little boy on the back row stood up and said, "I'm a Methodist." And the preacher thought he'd get him good. He said, "Why are you a Methodist?" The little boy said, "I'm a Methodist because my mommy and daddy are Methodists." The preacher said, "Son, if your mommy and daddy were idiots, what would you be?" He said, "I guess I'd be a Baptist."

I guarantee you I know some Baptists who think that way. They think if you're not Baptist, you're not going to heaven. Well, it seems to me that when you read the New Testament, Paul didn't say the Baptist churches in Asia send greetings. He didn't say the Methodist churches in Asia send you greetings. You know what he said? He said the churches...the believers...over there in Asia, just like they were believers in Corinth. And one of the signs of a healthy, dynamic church is that you recognize and acknowledge Christians and other churches. And I want to say it loud and I want to say it clear: Green Acres Baptist Church is not in competition with any other church.

I was visiting a family not long ago that have moved into the area. They visited our church and visited some other churches. And they decided they were going to join

another church. They acted like they was just really going to break my heart. And I said, “No, listen, we're not in competition. If you're happier in that other church, you go to that other church. The main thing is that you and your family are in church. And if you choose not to go to our church, by all means you go to another church because we're cooperating together. We're not competing against each other.” And anytime a church starts having a competitive spirit toward other churches, God will take his hand of blessing off that church. And so do you acknowledge believers and other churches?

## **2. Do you use your home for Jesus?**

Here's the second personal question that goes along with this text. Look at what the Bible says in verse 19. It says, “Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord and so does the church that meets in their house.” Did you know that for the first 300 years of Christianity, there were no church buildings? Where did they meet? They met in homes and they met outdoors. When they gathered for a large crowd, they met outdoors. On the Day of Pentecost, when 3000 were saved, they were out in the temple. The earliest congregations were in homes. And we ought to learn something about that. I'm not saying let's tear down these buildings and have churches in homes. I'm not saying that, but I'm saying that you and I can use our home for Jesus to reach people.

Have you discovered the wonderful ministry of Christian hospitality, where you open your home for Jesus? God blesses that, just like he blessed Aquila and Priscilla. Do you know where the largest local church in the world is right now? In fact, the largest local church in the history of Christianity is located Seoul, Korea. It grew from 123 believers to over 500,000. You know how it's growing? They used their homes for Jesus. They used their homes aggressively for Jesus. All throughout the week, believers in and around Seoul, Korea, open up their homes to their neighbors and to those who don't know Jesus Christ. And they invite them into their home. They feed them a meal. They talk about Jesus. They talk about what's going on in their church. And they say, “Wouldn't you like to go to church with me sometime?” I've been told that believers feel terrible if they arrive for worship and they don't have a unbeliever with them. It's unheard of. And they use their homes for that. That's the only way a church can grow to be that large. I think they have about 15 weekend worship services and a huge building. Ministry can't take place in a huge crowd like that. It takes place in the homes. Are you using your home for Jesus? When was the last time you invited your neighbors or your business associates into your home with the intent of trying to lead them to a relationship with Jesus Christ? You say, “Pastor, I don't really know how to witness. I don't know the four laws or six steps, the nine keys, or any of those things.” I'm not talking about that. I'm just talking about building bridges of relationships and then bringing them to the body of Christ. You know what the

body of Christ is? It's church. Bring them in here. This great singing and this fair preaching...who knows? God can save them out of a relationship like that.

Who gets the credit? Not the music, not the preacher, but the person that brought them to the body of Christ. Are you using your home for Jesus?

### **III. AN EXCITING CHURCH SHOWS AFFECTION TOWARD EACH OTHER**

Paul says in verse 20 to greet one another with a holy kiss. Now the emphasis is not on kissing. I remember when I was a youth minister the teenagers used to talk to me about dating. They wanted to know was it okay to kiss. They knew the things they weren't supposed to do, or at least they thought they knew. But they wanted to know if it's okay for two Christians to kiss at the end of a date. And my answer was always this, "There's a kiss. And then there's a kiss."

Well, the emphasis in this text is not on kiss. The emphasis is on "holy." It means chaste. It means pure. There's nothing romantic involved in this kiss. There's nothing sexual implied in this kiss. What it's talking about is to show affection toward other believers. And here are the two personal questions I want to ask you about affection.

#### **1. Do you greet others physically?**

I know you may greet them verbally, but I think that there is something very powerful about touch. You know, in different cultures, they still kiss as a greeting. In fact, that's why I said a holy kiss because this was sort of a Middle Eastern culture, and they still do that today. Some of you remember me reporting when we came back from the Ukraine how they try to kiss you. The men tried to kiss you. I'll never forget the first time one of those old men reached up and kissed me on the cheek. The first thing I thought was, "I hate the feel of those whiskers. My poor wife has had to feel that all these years? Yuck!" But there was one old fellow that we call the general. He was retired from the Russian army. He tried to hug and kiss you right on the mouth.

I didn't really like it too much, but that's cultural. In America, we hug or something like that to greet each other. I really think that the idea here means is that when you go to church, you ought to be touched. You ought to shake some hands. You ought to hug. You ought to be greeted physically. Do you do that? Or are you uncomfortable when we hold hands and sing. There is something in a high-tech world that demands that we be a high-touch church. That we show affection to one another. Did you know that hurting people need to be hugged? Hurting people need to sense a feeling of acceptance and affection.

I love the story that RG Lee tells about the time he was preaching in the mountains of West Virginia. And he said it was such backwoods community and he'd never seen people who live like that real hillbillies. He went into one home to have

dinner. And it was a home was so backwards that they kept a pet pig in the house! And he said he was sitting down to eat and that pig just kept rubbing against his leg and trying to climb up in his lap. And Dr. Lee kept pushing it down. And finally he said to the father, "That's sure an affectionate pig you've got there." And the father said, "Affectionate? You're eating out of his cup."

Well, I think we ought to be like that old pig. I really do. Especially when new people come into our church, they ought to feel welcomed. Over six years ago now this church was talking to us about coming to be pastor here. And Cindy and I snuck over to a service. The committee knew we were coming. We snuck over on a Sunday evening to a Sunday night worship service and we sat about halfway back. And we sat there the whole service and we don't recall one person reaching out and touching us or greeting us and saying anything to us. We just came in, stood around, and walked out. I know that doesn't happen often. It really doesn't. But it grieves me to think that anybody could ever come into a worship service here and not be personally greeted by one of our members.

You say, "That's your job, pastor. You stand at the door and shake their hand." Well, they may not come out that door. You say it's the usher's job. Or the deacons. Or the staff. No, every member ought to make yourself an ambassador for Christ to everybody that comes in here Sunday after Sunday. You ought to greet them, physically shake their hand, hug their neck, and say, "We're glad you're a part of our worship today." Are you doing that? Are you greeting people physically?

## **2. Do you write notes to each other?**

Here's the second personal question about affection. And this is very interesting because maybe you haven't thought of showing affection this way, but Paul talks about it in verse 21. Paul says he writes this greeting in his own hand. And what does that mean? It means that this entire epistle has been dictated to this point. Paul's been talking, and somebody has been writing it down. But at this point, Paul takes the quill in his hand and begins to write on the papyrus. And he says, "I am Paul and I am writing this greeting with my own hand." He says, "I'm lending authenticity to this letter. I'm verifying I'm the author." But you know what he's also saying? He's making it personal. He's personally greeting them with a handwritten note. And we believe that from that point in verse 21, the next two or three verses Paul wrote it in his own handwriting.

Did you know that you can show affection to people just by writing encouraging notes to them? You can show affection and appreciation and encouragement to other people by writing notes and sending them to people. Tell them you love them. Tell them you're praying for him. Now, when I said something about us not being greeted on that Sunday night, you may think our church is cold. It is not whatsoever. In fact, let me tell you an amazing miracle. I've been here over six

years, and I can honestly say that not a single week has gone by in the six years I've been here that I have not received at least one encouraging note from somebody in this church. And you say, is it the same person doing it every week? Oh, it's not!

I don't really know of a pastor anywhere else where somebody has written a note of encouragement to the pastor every week. These notes just say: I'm praying for you. I appreciate you. I love you. I can't tell you how much that means to me. It just blesses my heart.

It takes about 20 positive, encouraging notes to cancel out one ugly, dirty note. Did you know that the ratio is 20 to one? And there are a lot of other people who need your encouragement, who are struggling, who are having a hard time. And maybe for you, walking over and hugging somebody is just not your thing. Why don't you sit down and affirm them and show them affection by writing? Paul did that and you can do it too.

#### **IV. DYNAMIC CHURCHES ARE EXCITED ABOUT CHRIST'S RETURN**

In verse 22 Paul uses the term, "Maranatha," which means "our Lord comes." Every great church that I know of that God is blessing is one that talks a lot about the second coming of Jesus Christ. They sing songs about Jesus coming again. They hear teaching and messages about the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whereas in churches that are dead and decaying and dying, there's not much talk about the second coming of Jesus Christ. In the Early Church, when they met together and they greeted one another, they didn't say, "good morning" or "Shalom." You know what they said? They said, "Maranatha the Lord is coming!" When they dismissed and they left each other's presence they said, "Maranatha the Lord is coming!" We have extra-biblical writings that verify what happened when these Christians were being taken to the Roman prisons to be executed. They were taken into the Coliseum to be fed to the lions or thrown into Nero's prisons. The Christians would always send their love with those people who were dying and say, "Maranatha." In other words, you may be dying, but Jesus is coming back and he's going to win the victory.

##### **1. Do you love Jesus?**

Look what Paul says in verse 22. "If anyone does not love the Lord, a curse be on him." Did you know that is what the Jews tried to get Christians to do? In fact, when you read one of Paul's testimonies in Acts chapter 26, verse 11, you know what he says? He said, "I drug Christians out of their home and forced them to blaspheme." And many scholars think that the way the Jewish leaders tried to get Christians to do so was by making them say these words Paul uses: "anathema" which means accursed. They wanted them to say Jesus is cursed, but they would say Jesus is Lord! When the Romans would tie them to the stakes to be burned, they would command them to say these words. But they would say Jesus is Lord



instead! Nero would tie the Christians to the trees in his garden, cover them pitch and tar, and set fire to them to eliminate his garden. As he would ride his horses through his gardens at night. And the last words these Christians would say is Jesus is Lord. would be Sherri OSS.

I want tell you that if anybody doesn't love Jesus, they're the ones that are going to be cursed. They're the ones who are going to be punished because they just simply don't love Jesus. You know what I've discovered through the years? I've discovered that when somebody says about a believer that they really love Jesus, that's key. Some say about Christians, "You know, they go to church a lot. They sing pretty songs. They can really preach a sermon. They give a lot of money to the church. They really feed the hungry and visit the sick." But when you say someone really loves Jesus, that says it all. Has anybody ever said that about you? Paul says, if you don't love Jesus, you'll be cursed.

## **2. Do you long for Jesus to return?**

Do you long for him to come back? Can you say every morning, every noon, every evening, "Maranatha! Even so, Lord Jesus, come on back"? In 2 Timothy four verse eight are the last words of Paul. This is right after he had said, "...the time of my departure is at hand. I'm ready to be offered up." He writes about "all who have longed for his appearing." Now it's one thing for me to ask you if you love Jesus. Oh yeah. I love Jesus. But do you really want him to return? I'm not talking about in a year. I'm not talking about in 10 years. I'm not talking about it the new millennium. Do you really want Jesus to come back tonight? I mean, do you really long for him to come back tonight? Because if you don't, you need to examine your heart and see if there's something that's wrong there.

The King James version says all those who "love his appearing." Some people love Jesus, but they don't love his appearing.

When I was about six years old, only a first grader, I had a friend and we snuck over to one of our other friends in the neighborhood. And we went into his garage that was open, and nobody was at home. And we just decided he had more and better toys than we did. So we decided we'd do something about it. And so we just began to steal everything in that garage. I mean, we made six or seven trips into that garage, carting these toys and things out across two or three lots in that little subdivision to this lot with a bunch of tall grass. Well, we decided not to stop with the toys. We started hauling off everything in that garage. And on about the 10th or 11th trip, this lady and her son drives up in the driveway, honking their horn and she jumps out and grabs us. And you know what she does? She takes us home and tells our mothers what we have done!

My mother would discipline us at times. And she did a pretty good job, but it was nothing like the way my dad disciplined. And I knew it was always a bad, bad, bad time when she would call him just say for him to come home. Well, that was one

of those occasions. She was so mad at me. She put me in my room and she said, "I'm going to call your father, and he's going to come home and you're going to get it." And so she called my dad and he had to come home from work. And I want to tell you that the 10 or 15 minutes I waited for him to come home was a pretty awful time of waiting. I'll never forget when he pulled up there in his pickup truck. I can honestly tell you that I loved my dad, but I didn't love his appearing.

There may be some of you that love Jesus, but you don't love his appearing for the same reason. Maybe there's some unconfessed sin in your life and you don't want Jesus to come back tonight. There are some habits, some things in your life that you still don't have victory over. You don't want him to come back tonight. Maybe you don't want him to come back tonight because there's some unfinished business. Maybe there's somebody that you've been meaning to witness to. And you know that if Jesus comes back tonight, your window of opportunity to witness that person is going to be gone. So you say, "Lord, I'm sorry. I've been procrastinating, but I don't want you to come back tonight." There may be a multitude of reasons why you don't want him to come back. But if you can't welcome him back tonight, something's wrong. Ask, "What area of my life do I need to fix?" Do you love Jesus and long for his return?

## **V. DYNAMIC CHURCHES HAVE AN ATMOSPHERE OF GRACE**

Sometimes when we come to the end of a letter, we skip over the end. But Paul says, "...the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you." The opposite of grace is an arrogant attitude that says, "I deserve everything I've got." And we even think God is not giving us enough and life is not fair. That's the opposite of grace. You know what grace is? Grace is something that you desperately need, but you don't deserve. And in our case, as Christians, you know what it is? It's salvation. It's forgiveness. It's acceptance into the family of God because none of us deserve it. But that's what grace is.

### **1. Do you accept grace humbly?**

Do you have an attitude of humility and say, "God, I'm just so grateful for everything that you've given to me"? Are you one of those people who is always looking around and wishing it were a lot better? Do you feel God hasn't delivered on everything yet? I heard about a lady who was praying for God to do something in her life. And he just wouldn't do it. And it seemed like he was taking so long to do it. And she said, "Lord, I know you're never late, but you have missed a lot of good opportunities to be early." Do you have an attitude of complaining against God?

Or do you have a humble attitude that says, "Lord, you've just blessed me in so many ways. I can't believe it"? And when you look at people less fortunate than you do you say, "There but for the grace of God go I?" You heard about Timothy McVeigh being found guilty. What's your attitude toward him? How can he do

something like that? Is that your attitude? Or do you think if it wasn't for the grace of God, you'd do something a whole lot worse than that?

When you hear about these rapists and serial killers, do you think, "If it wasn't for God's grace and

forgiveness, that would be me"? Is that the attitude that you have about grace? Do you humbly accept God's grace?

## **2. Do you show love to others?**

Look at the way Paul finishes verse 24. If you don't know the history of this letter, you'll miss the importance of that little statement Paul makes about loving "all" the believers. Paul had tons of trouble with the church. They didn't like him. Some said we follow Apollos, not you, Paul. They accused him of not even being an apostle. Second Corinthians 10 shows their evaluation of Paul when he was in Corinth. They said he was unimpressive. His speaking amounts to nothing. He says, "I've heard what you've said about me. You don't like me. There are a lot of you that don't care for me." And he named names. He made people mad. He was blunt in pointing out sin. But then at the end of this letter in 1 Corinthians he says he loves them all.

Have you discovered how easy it is to love those people that love you? Have you discovered how easy it is to love those people that affirm you and encourage you and support you? Have you found how easy it is to love those people who put your emotional gas tank to full all the time? Sure. Folks, that's easy. But learn to love those people that drain you, who mistreat you, who malign you, and who hurt you. The one thing they need most from you is your love.

Paul said, "...my love to all of you in Christ Jesus." The key is in those last three words. You cannot love people who are unlovely unless you love them "in Christ Jesus."

## **CONCLUSION**

Look at those marks of a dynamic church. Could you say those exist in our church? That we affirm people who serve the Lord, who are addicted to ministry, that we're accepting of other believers, that we have affection toward one another, that we're anticipating the return of Jesus, that we have an awareness of grace?

I say "yes" to every one of those, praise God. But I also want to say there's a lot of room for improvement. The way our church becomes stronger and the way our church becomes more dynamic is when each one of us commits ourselves to let these character qualities be improved in our personal lives. You know, my heart's prayer and desire for this church is that when people come to our church, they'll think about Jesus.

Did you know when da Vinci was commissioned to paint The Last Supper, the Duke of Milan was the one who ordered the painting? Da Vinci painstakingly

painted all the faces of the disciples and Jesus. But then he painted a beautiful, ornate golden chalice that Jesus was passing to the other disciples. And when finally the piece of art was done, he took it to the Duke. He remarked, "Wonderful. It is beautiful. The chalice is so beautiful I can't take my eyes off it." At that, Leonardo da Vinci began to weep. And he said, "I'm not finished." And he took the painting back and painted over the beautiful golden chalice and made it a very ordinary and insignificant part of the picture. Do you know why? He didn't want anything to take away from Jesus. When people come to our church, I don't want them to see a preacher. I don't want to seem programs. I don't want them to see buildings. I don't want them to see a great choir. We want them to see Jesus. If there's anything in my life, or there's anything in your life, that's keeping others from seeing Jesus, we need to get rid of it.

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