

## **EXPLAIN SERIES: IMAGINE**

We will address four main aspects of our existence as a church in the light of the fact that this month and more specifically, we've turned TWO - TERRIFIC TWO. Isn't our God amazing?

These 4 areas are:

1. WHAT ATTRACTES PEOPLE TO CHURCH - We want to deal with first impression issues
2. WHAT KEEPS PEOPLE IN CHURCH - When the REALITY checks in, what do you do?
3. WHAT HAS KEPT US GOING - Identify the building blocks of our family of faith
4. WHERE ARE WE HEADED FROM HERE – What's our vision and commitment for the future? This will be like the STATE OF THE CHURCH OF THE CHURCH ADDRESS. We will talk about our Goals, Budget, ministry needs, challenges, and fears BUT more importantly, ask God's favor upon us as we move ahead. *Don't miss this particular sermon. Invite your friends to church. We will unveil the way forward for this congregation.*

# **I WHAT ATTRACTS PEOPLE TO CHURCH? FIRST IMPRESSIONS**

## **INTRO**

It has been said that first impressions though not necessary 100% accurate, may mean everything. In fact there is a famous quote that says "YOU DON'T GET A SECOND

CHANCE TO MAKE A FIRST IMPRESSION”. In that sense therefore, it may imply that first impression is everything.

If you want to do business with someone and you make your first appointment with them, that meeting could end up being the last depending on the impression they create.

If you are called for an interview, your first impression is very important

Those who are dating know more than I do that first date impressions are so important – it ranges from the way you introduce the main subject to the mannerisms (or lack of it) at the table!

I’m sure you’ve caught what I’m talking about.

Did you know that even here in church, first impressions are important? We may not talk about it every Sunday but you and I know that there are some things that attract and there are others that end up doing the opposite.

**Transition:** Allow me to ask you my first of many questions today:

**WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO NCWW?**

Or put differently,

**WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST IMPRESSION OF NCWW?**

Remember I’m not asking WHO but rather WHAT attracted you to this church!

Here is the point, please take a few minutes and discuss this with your neighbor and

I’m going to give a few us an opportunity to share their first impressions

**DISCUSSION: WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO NCWW? WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST IMPRESSION OF THIS CHURCH?**

**FEEDBACK:** Give a chance to a maximum of 4 people

Guided feedback in case there is slow response or too many people willing to share:

1. Someone who has attended for the last 2 years
2. Someone who has been here for one year
3. Anyone who has been here for 6 months to 1 year
4. A new comer – under 6 months - preferably 3 months or less

### **Here some of the expected answers**

1. Good Worship
2. Hospitable people
3. Powerful preaching of the word
4. My friends are here
5. The Location is great
6. The leadership is stable
7. The Name Nairobi Chapel is a recognizable name - so I just came
8. I felt it was the Lord leading me
9. My children felt so much at home
10. If you really want to know, buy me some coffee. *In other words, it is complicated.*

I'd like to suggest that we're so glad you are here even if whatever attracted you to this church did not make it to the top 10 reasons why people get to church, guess what? We are so glad that you are here.

And today, as we look at the past 24 months of our ministry here, I take this opportunity on behalf of the leadership to say

**THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR ENTRUSTING US WITH YOUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

I can confirm to you that you have joined the right family where we are committed to GROW DEEP to reach WIDE

**II TOP TEN REASONS WHY PEOPLE PICK A SPECIFIC CHURCH TO JOIN**

[Research done by Barna Research] - **Project one at a time**

1. The Theological beliefs and doctrine of the church
2. The people seem to care about each other
3. The quality of the sermons that are preached
4. How friendly people are to visitors
5. How involved the church is in helping the poor and disadvantaged people
6. The quality of the programs and classes for children
7. How much you like the pastor
8. The denomination the church is affiliated with
9. The quality of the adult discipleship programs
10. The convenience of the times of their weekend.

I want to hope that 2-3 of your reasons for being part of this growing family have been covered in this list.

You can now rest easy because you are part of a majority as far as being part of this church is concerned.

It has indeed been my pleasure to serve you alongside my colleagues in the pastoral team. The past 2 years, of you ask me, have been my best ever in ministry. I give all the glory to God for the privilege of serving him. It is an honor

### **III BIBLICAL EXAMPLE OF CHURCH ATTRACTION**

You see, some of the things we've been mentioning here today are actually in the Bible as well. That churches attract people is not a new thing.

I just want to share with you where it all began from. The 1<sup>st</sup> century church left us a legacy on some things a church can get busy doing which end up attracting the community to church.

In other words, the church in the 1<sup>st</sup> century created a very compelling **FIRST IMPRESSION** that attracted lots of people to it.

Please turn with me to **Acts 2:42-47**

*42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

Here are a couple of things that the early church did that attracted people to them: The four activities of the earliest church are introduced to us as priorities of the church. These are the four things to which these saints devoted themselves. These were not options. These were the fruit of a genuine conversion and of life in Christ.

## **I. The Apostles' Teaching**

We would suppose that “the apostles’ teaching” was the same subject matter that we find in Peter’s sermons in Acts 2 through 4. In other words, the content of the apostles’ teaching was the gospel.

I believe that at this moment Luke wants us to focus on one aspect of the apostles’ teaching: their proclamation of the gospel was recognized as authoritative, due to the authentication of God through miraculous works:

Reverential awe came over everyone, and many wonders and miraculous signs came about by the apostles (Acts 2:43).

We see evidence of this in the Gospel of Mark:

They were all amazed so that they asked each other, “*What is this? A new teaching with authority! He even commands the unclean spirits and they obey him*” (Mark 1:27).

Jesus did not merely speak as though He had authority; Jesus spoke with authority.

His words of teaching were emphatically underscored by the miraculous works God

did through Him. The same kinds of miracles were now being accomplished by the apostles (Acts 2:43), as would happen later with Paul:

These miracles, performed by the hands of the apostles, served to accredit the apostles as those who spoke for God with full authority:

Ladies and gentlemen, if our preaching from this pulpit does not reflect the power and the miraculous that the word of God should bring about, and then we need to go back to the basics!

The apostles' teaching has been preserved in the New Testament Scriptures, so that we have their instruction as well as the early church. One can hardly over-emphasize the importance of sound, biblical teaching. The Word of God is the foundation and starting point for every aspect of the Christian life. And it is for this reason that I made a plea last week for us to RETURN to the basics of reading God's word

**PRACTICAL:** We are going to read the NT in 40 days starting from the 15<sup>th</sup> of Feb to 25<sup>th</sup> of March. It is a 40 Day journey which includes both personal and group reading and studying of God's word. Please your copy of the Bible from the Info Table right after this service. *No one should be left behind! Let's go back to the Apostles' Teaching together as a community of believers.*

## 2. Fellowship

The term Luke uses for "fellowship" in our text is a much broader term than our English word. Essentially, "fellowship" means "joint participation" or "sharing something in common." It is thus a kind of partnership.

In **Philippians 2:1**, the term is used of a common sharing in the Holy Spirit.

In **Philippians 3:10** and **1 Peter 4:13**, it is used of sharing in Christ's sufferings.

In **Galatians 2:9**, it appears to be a sharing together in ministry.

The Christian should not only seek to actively partner with fellow-believers, but he should also guard against partnering with those outside the faith. Thus, the Christian should not be unequally partnered with unbelievers in Christian endeavors (2 Corinthians 6:14).

And we should not become partners with the immature and untested individuals who fall because we have prematurely laid hands on them (by appointing them to the office of deacon – 1 Timothy 5:22).

**The most common expression of “fellowship” in the New Testament is that of sharing financial resources – giving:**

Contribute to the needs of the saints, pursue hospitality (Romans 12:13, emphasis mine).

***15 Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only (Philippians 4:15).***

One can “fellowship” with fellow believers in a number of ways, including the sharing of meals and engaging in prayer.

If Acts 2:44-45 is Luke’s further description of what fellowship looked like in the newly-born church in Jerusalem, then his emphasis would fall on the fellowship of sharing one’s material goods with others.

*44 All who believed were together and held everything in common, 45 and they began selling their property and possessions and distributing the proceeds to everyone, as anyone had need (Acts 2:44-45).*

This young church in Acts attracted people to themselves and essentially to Christ by the way they partnered with in material needs – also known as FELLOWSHIP.

It seems to me from this text brothers and sisters that the call to be a true follower of Jesus is also a call to willingly share what we have with others

**Jim Elliot: He is no fool who can give what he cannot keep to gain who he cannot lose**

And Jesus said:

“Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide yourselves purses that do not wear out—a treasure in heaven that never decreases, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys” (Luke 12:33).

“In the same way therefore not one of you can be my disciple if he does not renounce all his own possessions” (Luke 14:33).

It seems like this aspect of demonstrating faith was a major avenue of attraction to the non-believers.

I pray and hope that some people have been attracted to our church in the last 24 months because of a clear demonstration of our GENEROSITY.

You see, if you are generous, it will be clear to the world that you are a disciple of Jesus.

*ILLUST: Story of a man being baptized as a sign of total surrender to Christ but just before he was immersed into the water, he put his hand in his pocket, removed the wallet and lifted it up so that it was not washed in the waters of baptism.*

## **BRIEF FINANCIAL REPORT**

In 2015, our giving marched our ministry needs! We gave a sum total of about 19M.

I said 19M. Please let us celebrate the Lord's doing. Praise be to the name of the Lord.

But also, please let us congratulate ourselves for loving the Lord with our financial resources in 2015. Again, let me take this opportunity to **THANK ALL OF YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY! THANK YOU**

### **3. The Breaking of Bread**

This expression may simply refer to the eating of a meal even though it may also have the connotation of Holy Communion.

However, the context of this text and other parts of scripture suggests it refers to sharing a meal together.

#### **Look at Acts 20:7, 11**

*7 On the first day of the week, when we met to break bread, Paul began to speak to the people, and because he intended to leave the next day, he extended his message until midnight. . . . 11 Then Paul went back upstairs, and after he had broken bread and eaten, he talked with them a long time, until dawn. Then he left (Acts 20:7, 11).*

Luke does not appear to be calling attention to the remembrance of our Lord's death, as much as to the simple sharing of a meal with fellow believers. Even if Communion was observed, this is not what Luke wanted to emphasize. We should recall that in the New Testament the Lord's Table was celebrated as part of a meal.

The sharing of a meal was perhaps the most intimate form of fellowship one could have with fellow believers.

I want to believe that some of the meals we've shared together over the last 24 months may have made it easier for some of you to settle with us because you go to know us better. Some meals may have been shared during church in the Park, Anniversary celebrations, Tea Sundays, eGroups in peoples' home, and many others. And by the way, you notice that Paul was preaching from midnight to dawn in the text we read above!

**JUST A THOUGHT:** I wonder whether we should plan to attract the youth by having evening services or night fellowships for that matter!

In fact, I've been wondering aloud whether we should not start for instance a Friday night hang out here at CHAK for the University and College age students who are in this neighborhood.

#### **4. The Prayers**

If there is one thing that the early church did total devotion and clear impact, it was prayer. They had special prayer hours that they honored. They prayed for the sick for healing. They prayed for Paul and Silas while they were in prison and there was a miraculous prison break

They totally believed in the power of prayer and there was no stopping them.

This devotion attracted many non-believers to their meetings and the result was many people got converted.

It is my sincere believe that the same should characterize our church.

I wonder how we performed in this area. I wonder!

Here is my little feedback to us: I sincerely know that this church has several committed prayer warriors who are constantly on their knees for this church. Every day, I do sense in the spirit that there are men and women who are keeping us a float in prayer.

About a year ago, I made a special plea for some FBIs (Faith Based Intercessors) and some of you signed up.

I come back to you to say THANK YOU FOR YOUR PRAYERS. May the good Lord richly reward you because your labor in Him is never in vain.

But there is also room for improvement. We need to embrace gathering together to pray every 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month.

I'm looking forward to start a prayer service in the middle of the week when we move from here. I look forward to miraculous interventions from the Lord in that prayer service.

So these 4 things ATTRACTED people to the early church.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, I'd like us to do one communal exercise. Let me ask the ushers to distribute some paper that I'd like us to use shortly..

Please give us feedback on how we've performed by writing down the following:

1. **What things must we KEEP doing?** In other words, you love them and they must not be changed. List just three
2. **List three things we must STOP doing.** In your view, they are not attracting people to our church and perhaps they are drawing some people away. List three
3. **What three things should we START doing?** In other words, these are things we are not doing, but in your view they are very important for the spiritual help of this church. Kindly list them down, at least three of them.

We will collate and synthesize these ideas and get back to you on the way forward.