



Community: Its Purpose, Its Power, and Its Promise “No One Knew!”

1 Cor. 12:27

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.
NKJV

“We are the members of the body of Jesus Christ. His Spirit lives in us. Everything He is, He is in us. We are His heart. We are His eyes. We are His ears. We are His feet. We are His hands. We are His mouth. Together we can change the world one person at a time!”

On Saturday, Feb. 13, the following headlines appeared in the Guthrie Newspaper.

Father sentenced to prison for inappropriate acts with daughters

The first person to take the stand was a daughter, who read from a multi-page prepared statement. In the statement she called her father a “monster” and how “he destroyed her” and has “forever affected my life” as she cried throughout the reading. Her voice would strengthen at times to show frustration toward her dad, who sat with his back to the stand and looking away as she spoke.

“Molesting his daughter is not what God wanted,” she cried out.

Court papers, dated from Nov. 2014, states the inappropriate acts started in an out-of-state hotel room in March 2006 and advanced a few months later when he would go into her bedroom at night and lock the door.

Her father would remind her not tell anyone about their “special relationship.”

Afterwards, the judge sentenced her father to the maximum five years on one count and the maximum 20 years on the lewd molestation count.

Both counts will run concurrently. The judge then suspended 10 years of the total sentence.

Bobby Cole was one of the most respected members of our church when he started committing these crimes against his daughter in 2006. He was very faithful in his service to our church. He was very generous. He was the kind of guy that would give you the shirt off his back. He would go out of his way to serve you. He was concerned about missions and helping the poor. He was always kind and gentle natured.

He appeared to be a faithful husband and faithful father to his children. He was a hard worker. He was very conservative when it came to entertainment and other choices for his family. He and his wife home educated their children. He wanted his wife and children to very active in service in our church.

It bothers me that this tragedy has brought shame to the name of Jesus Christ. It bothers me that his daughter will bear this scar the rest of her life if and when her wound ever heals. It bothers me that a family has been torn apart by sin and each member of the family will bear their own scars.

It bothers me that no one in our church was aware that Bobby had done this before the civil authorities were informed. It bothers me that no one in our church was aware that he was even being tempted to do this when he first started crossing the bridges in his heart that led to his final destination.

It bothers me we would experience this kind of moral tragedy in our membership. It bothers me that we would just express sorrow and excuse ourselves of any responsibility by saying “no one knew.”

Last fall a well-known doctor in a very prominent church in our city committed suicide. The church expressed sorrow and served the family. But no one in the church knew the man was contemplating suicide.

Today, as I speak, families in churches all over our nation are experiencing these kind of tragedies. They include molestation, child abuse, divorce, unwanted pregnancies, affairs, addictions, domestic violence, bankruptcy, and suicide.

The average church will express sorrow but then just excuse itself by saying “no one knew....”

Since I became a Christian I have had a personal problem with the church. My problem is the 27 books of the New Testament. When I read the New Testament I get a picture of what the church should be like. It is natural for me to compare the admonitions about the church in the New Testament with our local church. People have asked me why have you changed things in our church. The answer is simple; the New Testament. I want to see the substance in our church that Jesus and the apostles said should exist in the local church.

Jesus said we should win in Matthew 16:18.

Matt. 16:18

18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

KJV

I do not want to be a part of the average church that will excuse itself by saying no one knew. I will not be a part of an average church.

Average is also called lukewarm. It makes God ill.

Rev. 3:14-16

14 "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write,

"These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: 15 "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

NKJV

Being the average church should make us ill. Is it any wonder that the world mocks at our faith in Jesus Christ?

They do not see a close fraternity of people that shares life together in open and transparent relationships; asks one another difficult questions; encourages one another daily; supports one another through difficult times; speaks the truth to one another in love.

What has to change in our church for us to stop being average?

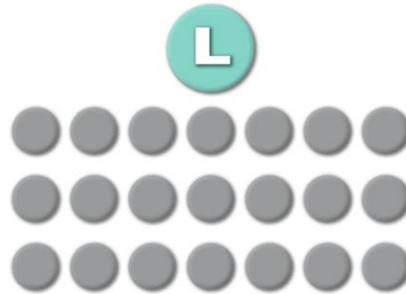
When Bobby started committing these sins in 2006, our church had a lot of serious problems and there were a lot of signs that there were serious problems.

- Our leadership team and staff did not share the same vision for the future of the church.
- Trust within our leadership team and staff was broken. Our leadership team was not transparent with one another. We did not share life together. We did not ask one another difficult questions. We did not encourage one another and support one another. We did not speak the truth to one another in love.

I was the Pastor and I was not invited to the elder's meetings in 2006. Our staff was not invited to elder's meetings in 2006.

- We were not reaching people in our community with the gospel of Jesus Christ. We baptized just 6 people in 2006. These 6 baptisms were the children of our families that attended our church. That had been the case for many years.

- We practiced row discipleship.



We called our church a safe place on our church letterhead but there was not a safe place for every member to share life with one another and confess their emotional struggles, problems, and faults with one another. There was not a safe place to ask and to be asked difficult questions. There was not a safe place for every member of the body of Christ to both receive and participate in discipleship. People were very uncomfortable discussing their emotional struggles. There was a fear of being judged. There was a fear of slander and gossip.

A few members would take their personal problems to one of our Pastors. But the church was the last place most people would go and be transparent about their personal problems. I was one of them.

I am sorry to say that we were the average church in 2006.

Currently our average attendance is 265 less than it was in 2006. But I am happy to say that we are showing signs that we are no longer the average church.

Today...

- **For the last five years, our leadership team has shared the same vision for the future of our church. (Matthew 4:19; Mathew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2)**
We are committed to go make disciples that make disciples.
- **Our leadership team has been developing trust in one another. (Hebrews 3:12-13; James 5:16)**
We all meet together on a regular basis and we strive to be transparent with one another. It has been my practice to meet with each member of our leadership team on a regular basis. I am very transparent with them about my feelings and my faults and I encourage them to be totally transparent with me. We are developing a relational atmosphere where we are not afraid to ask one another difficult questions.
- **We are working together to reach people in our community with the gospel of Jesus Christ. (Acts 1:8).**
We have baptized 258 people since January of 2010 and over the last few years the vast majority of them are people from our community.
- **We are developing team discipleship in small groups. (Hebrews 3:12-13; I Cor. 14)**



We are developing safe places for all of our members to share life together, be transparent with one another, confess their emotional struggles, problems, and faults with one another; ask each other difficult questions; encourage one another; and support one another.

We are developing safe places for every member of the body of Christ to both receive and participate in discipleship in the Word of God. We are making disciples that are making disciples.

There still may be situations in which we look like the average church when one of our members fails and we have to admit, “No one knew!” **But it will be because they chose not engage in a small group and chose not to be transparent and not because there was not a safe place for them to share.**

We have been praying very hard and working very hard to make those changes that have to be made for an average church to change into a church that can change the world one person at a time.

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Would you join us?

- Receive Jesus Christ as your personal savior and Lord
- Join team discipleship by connecting to one of our small groups
- Find your place in serving the whole church