

Pleasure, passion and purpose. Write that down at the top of your ministry application.

Pleasure, passion and purpose. Not words we usually think of for a business plan, but that's the business model of Zappos ... a wildly successful online shoe company, that has developed a company culture called success by happiness. Tony Hsieh, owner of the company, has created a culture for his employees that focuses not on productivity but on pleasure, passion and purpose. And ... just to be clear ... they are talking about pleasure in the most positive sense of the term. They have karaoke machines at the office and nap rooms (which I really think is biblical somehow) and all kinds of other things to make the place feel less like work and more like home. They encourage managers to spend ten to twenty percent of their time out of the office with their folks, developing relationships. Hsieh says it's about giving employees permission to *just be themselves*, and his theory is that when life is integrated in this way ... when what we do at work looks more like what we do at home ... well, that unleashes creativity and increases employee loyalty. And as a business plan, it's working. But Hsieh says even if they were only breaking even on the idea, it's still worth it. Because people are *happy* at their jobs. And that's worth something.

I have no idea where Tony's Hsieh's faith is, but his business plan is definitely biblical. This is how the first church designed itself. It was designed with the idea that every person would find pleasure in giving, and would give pleasure to God because they would do the things they were created to do ... things designed to bring a sense of fulfillment. Paul tells us that when life is integrated in this way, it unleashes creativity and faith.

Let's look together at one more piece of Romans, chapter 12. We've been using this passage this month to rethink church. What I'm hoping you're hearing is that church ... when it's done like the first-century followers did it ... is not so much about a building or an institution or a

denomination or even an organization. It's more like a movement. A journey ... a doorway that takes us into another kind of life. Or a verb.

So let's look together at Romans 12:3-8. (You know what I'm praying for these days? I'm praying like crazy that you will be filled with the Holy Spirit and will feel an energy ... a passion ... for Jesus you've never felt before. And I'm praying that your choices for spiritual growth will come out of that energy.) Paul says - *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.* This is Paul giving us permission to be honest with ourselves about who we are. Listen to this same passage from *The Message*: *Living then, as every one of you does, in pure grace, it's important that you not misinterpret yourselves as people who are bringing this goodness to God. No, God brings it all to you. The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him.*

In other words, understanding who we are begins with understanding who God is. You want to find yourself? Start with God. Francis Chan says its the difference between exegetical living and eisegetical living. Those are Bible study terms. **Exegesis** is one way of studying the Bible, where you start with a passage of scripture and ... using just the text and the Holy Spirit ... you figure out what it means. You don't bring your agenda to the text. You listen to the text.

Eisegesis is the opposite of that. Eisegesis is when you bring an idea to the Bible and look for verses to support your idea. And that can be dangerous, because you can end up bending words and concepts to fit what you want them to say. In other words, your personal desires can end up determining your interpretation. Does that make sense? So Chan asks, "Are you living

exegetically or eisegetically?” As you figure out who you really are, are you starting with God or are you starting with your own agenda? So the question isn’t, “Who am I?” But, “Who am I ... in Christ?”

Go back to Romans 12. Paul says (Romans 12:4-5) - *For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.* This is the next step in the journey. We start with who God is, then we look at who God uses. Paul says, think of it like a human body. The parts of the body get their meaning from the whole. For instance, a liver isn’t worth much sitting up on a table by itself. But when it is in the body ... contributing to the whole ... it is important. That’s how the Bible says we are made. To understand who we are, we begin with who God is ... and then we look for what we do best within the context of the community. Everyone has something they can do. What’s your part?

Where we get in trouble is when we get stuck on the idea that we are nouns, not verbs. From Genesis forward, we are taught that we have purpose. Paul says (Ephesians 2:10) - We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. So “church” is a verb, not a noun! And there is a huge difference between the two.

- The “church is a noun” mentality says church is a monument. The “church is a verb” mentality says church is a movement.
- The “church is a noun” mentality says I *go* to church. The “church is a verb” mentality says I *am* the church.
- The “church is a noun” mentality says someone somewhere is supposed to provide the programs and I am supposed to come to them. The “church as a verb” mentality says I am a

functioning part of a body together with a whole lot of others, and a partner in shaping my own spiritual growth.

- The “church is a noun” mentality says someone somewhere is supposed to provide me with mission opportunities. The “Church is a verb” mentality says what motivates *me* ought to *motivate* me.
- The “church is a noun” mentality says the church owes me something. The “church is a verb” mentality says if anyone owes anyone anything, I owe Jesus. Not to earn my salvation but because of what he’s done for me. I am defined by what Jesus has done for me.
- The “church is a noun” mentality stakes a claim. The “church is a verb” mentality shares the load.
- The “church is a noun” mentality is always looking for what we used to have. The “church is a verb” mentality is always looking for what’s *ahead*.
- The “church is a noun” mentality says, “Its not my job.” The “church is a verb” mentality says, “It *is* my opportunity.”
- The “church is a noun” mentality says church is bricks and mortar. The “church is a verb” mentality says church is *unbound* and *outbound*.
- The “church is a noun” mentality says you come here and we’ll show you Jesus. The “church is a verb” mentality says we’ll come to you and *be* Jesus.
- The “church is a noun” mentality says, “Let’s *go* to church.” The “church is a verb” mentality says, “Let’s ... just ... go.”
- The “church is a noun” mentality says, “Going costs too much ... can’t we just send a check?” The “church is a verb” mentality says, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

The Church as a Verb will go wherever the Spirit of God leads ... whatever the cost ... whatever the commitment ... because it is only in following the Spirit ... in moving with the Spirit ... in embracing change ... that we *find* our pleasure, passion and purpose ... and *bring* pleasure to God.

I think there are so many people sitting in churches this morning ... so focused on the “noun” of it that they are missing out on an encounter with God.

In a nutshell: Nouns sit. Verbs go. So ... are you a noun or a verb?

Before you answer that, I want to talk about a question I came across earlier this year. It was a simple question, but it is one I haven't given myself permission to ask nearly enough. The question was this: **What makes your heart sing?** This question was part of a program designed to recharge the batteries of long-term pastors. They were giving us permission to do just what Tony Hsieh does with his employees at Zappos ... to remember what brings us pleasure, passion and purpose.

And I don't know why, but for a lot of Christians, that question and those words sound illegal. Like if its fun, it must not be from Jesus. But that doesn't fit with what Jesus himself said. He said that he came that his joy might be in us, that our joy might be full. I think that means that even when something is hard ... if it's God's desire ... it ought to bring some sense of fulfillment. It ought to come from that place in us that bears the image of God. Paul encourages us to do those things that bring together the world's great need and our great joy. He says (Romans 12:6-8) - *We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; 7 if it is serving, then*

serve; if it is teaching, then teach; 8 if it is to encourage, then (you have permission to give encouragement and make that your gift) give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously (enjoy it!); if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. If it is to play basketball, play it for Jesus. If it is to change lightbulbs, do it because you love God. His point here is not to give us an exhaustive list of all the things followers of Jesus do, but to give us permission to do what makes our heart sing. In just a minute, we're going to look together at a list of serving opportunities ... some inside the church and some outside. And we made this list a long time ago, and ever since, I've been praying that when you get this list and make your choices for groups and ministries ... I've been praying that you will not sign up for anything out of a sense of "should" or "ought," but that you will do what makes your heart sing!

I have to confess ... the first few years of Mosaic's life, I was simply obsessed with developing an organization that would survive. Just keeping this alive was pretty important to me. But lately, God has been doing something new in us. I know for myself, I'm not so interested any more in whether or not Mosaic will last. I'm more interested in knowing that if Mosaic were to die tomorrow, we'd be missed. I want to reach that place where we've made enough of a difference in our community that folks would notice if we were gone. And somehow, I think we'll know we've made it when there is a lot of laughter around everything we're doing.

Because if you're not doing things for Christ that feed your pleasure, passion and purpose, I'm not convinced He's in it. It just doesn't seem like that's the way God does things. At the *least*, I know that if we're just doing church as a noun ... if we're just doing church the way we've always done it with a whole lot of obligation stirred into the mix ... one by one, our light will go out. But if you're doing things that matter to you ... that make your heart sing ... if you are

flowing in the river of God's will for your life ... then a sort of synergy is created that brings life and light to the whole house. That's what I'm after these days. Not survival, but joy.

If you will take out that ministry application, I'd like to look at it with you. You also have another copy of the small group sign-up form in your worship flier. You can turn in either or both of these today if you're ready. Before we look at the ministry application, I want to remind you that if you haven't found a small group that works for you, or if you don't see a ministry here that makes your heart sing, you are welcome to start something yourself. We'll support you in whatever way necessary ... but the deal is ... *your spiritual journey is ultimately your responsibility*. I've said this before: we can only go where God is taking us if each of us steps up and takes responsibility for our spiritual health. I can't make your journey for you. The leaders of this church can't carry it for you. It's an every-person journey. God is calling each one of us to an encounter ... to a journey ... maybe to something deeper than you've ever experienced. And we can offer the groups and the ministry opportunities but how you respond to that call is *your* responsibility.

If you need something we don't already offer, start your own. Get with one or two others and pray about how you might encounter Jesus together.