**LAW #4 - YOU MUST BECOME**

**A CENTERED SET CHURCH**

Too many churches define themselves by who is ‘in’ – those who have passed the test and are part of the group – and by who is ‘out’.

The boundary might well be something in itself that is good, such as…

* Choosing baptism
* Completing a membership class
* Signing a doctrinal agreement
* Speaking in tongues, etc

…or sometimes it is something that is unhealthy or even sinful (“Do they speak/dress/ look like us?”).

This country club mentality will quickly create Christian consumers (because membership has its privileges!), but will tend to do a poor job of forming disciple making disciples.

Such bounded set churches inevitably pour their best energy into policing their self erected boundary, rather than into equipping disciples to go as missionaries.

Whilst clearly church leadership has specific requirements and expectations that not everyone will meet (1 Timothy 3, Titus 1), it is a mistake to conflate this with our understanding of who can be drawn into the broader community of the church.

**Our witness as Christians should allow anyone to come alongside us and begin to learn from Jesus, even if in just one area of life.**

Yet this will fail if our friends are worrying that we are a bunch of judgmental bigots who are waiting for any chance to smack them down for the junk in their lives (of which they are probably all too aware).

A centered set view of church says:

* Jesus is at the center of life
* This includes my relationships/ work/ money/ parenting etc.
* Here is the source of all that is good, so let’s come to him in community for that

water of life

* Our invitation to non-Christian friends is, “Follow my example as I follow the

example of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1)

This in no way should undermine our call to holiness as followers of Jesus – part of our very attractiveness is our distinction from our culture’s mores. Yet at the same time, we stop being the ones to decide in what order God needs to remove the specks of sawdust in their eyes!

As followers of Jesus, we are not meant to be afraid of other people’s sin.

**APPLY THE LAW:**

What (unstated) boundaries do you have in your view of who can come into the church as they are today?

How can you keep growing in holiness while also growing in the warmth of your invitation to friends who live far from Jesus?