

WHY?

Why CrossPoint?

Matthew 22:34-39 & Matthew 28:16-20

May 21

There is a reason why each one of the CrossPoint Campuses exist. We believe that God has planted us where we are to accomplish two things. The first is called the Great Commandment. The second is called the Great Commission. These two directives given to us by Jesus himself drive the mission of CrossPoint Church and have for almost 100 years. How will we continue the biblical direction that has not only become our legacy but also guides our present and directs our future.

So, this is week four of a five-week series where we are answering some "Why" questions. So far, we've answered Why Jesus, Why Church, and Why do bad things happen to good people. And today we're going to talk about why we believe CrossPoint Church exists and why we believe you and your friends should be a part of CrossPoint. I love this church and I'm excited to tell you why I believe in CrossPoint Church and what we're doing here. And as the vision pastor I have to tell you that one of the questions I've always asked myself over the past 28 years in ministry is this: if I weren't the pastor would I attend this church. And my answer to that question is YES!

That being said, I want to start off with a little bit of a "state of the church" and what we're looking at as a multisite church of four campuses and 8-9 services a weekend. I'm going to use some of George Barna's statistics to talk about where the Church in America is at today. Barna is the Christian version of Gallup and is very reliable and honest and is really thorough in the research and polls that he and his organization does on a wide variety of subjects each year. His "state of the church" in 2016 shows us some pretty interesting realities that we cannot ignore. By the way, this is one of the reasons I love CrossPoint, because we don't ignore what's happening in the world around us and the facts about the culture we live in.

So, let's first look at Christianity in America. According to Barna, 73% of all Americans claim to be Christian. A full 20% have no faith at all which is up from any previous year, ever. There are 6% of Americans who align themselves with Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, or Hinduism. And only 1% say they are unsure about any form of faith. Now, what's kind of cool is that 73% of **Americans believe that religious faith is very important in their lives**. All that being said, when the numbers are crunched to give us actual church attendance each weekend the number drops to just 31%. That means that 41% of those who say they are Christians are not attending a church which means they are not receiving the vital teaching, the life-giving worship, and the family connection that God wants for them.

Most people are attending small to medium size churches of anywhere from 20 people to 500 people. If you think of it this way, the people who attend CrossPoint are a collection of people who attend a worship service that is anywhere from 35 to 160 people each weekend which fits right in with where people are in America. Only 8% of Americans attend a church of more than 1000 a weekend. That says we tend to like smaller groupings when it comes to worship services. And listen to this, when the Barna Group looked at whether people attended a worship service at a church in the last 6 months they found that 55% of Americans had attended a time of worship (excluding a wedding or funeral) meaning that America is still more churched than unchurched. And one more thing...75% of Americans pray to God which tells me that even when people don't go to church they still believe that God answers prayer...amen to that.

So, while those statistics have shown us that fewer people are identifying as Christians than did just ten years ago and that more people than ever in the history of America are saying they have no religious affiliation (20%), people still see Christianity and the Church as a part of the fabric of their lives and the lives of the communities we live in. Of course, then, the next question I want to ask then is: why don't people attend Church on a weekend and more specifically, why should people attend CrossPoint Church? What would make someone who drives by one of our campuses actually stop, find a place to park and walk in on a Sunday morning?

I have an answer to my question – I figured you thought I might have an answer, right. So, let's dive into the answer for "Why CrossPoint Church."

First, I believe **we** here at CrossPoint Church **are a God centered, God loving kind of people.**

Jesus replied, "You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind."³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. Matthew 22:37 NLT

Look again at the passage we heard earlier: Matthew 22:34-39 (put it up on the screens). This passage reminds us that we are to be people who love God more than anything else with every part of who we are. It would be so easy to be the kind of church that is all about splash and lights and music (sorry Lan) but, the truth is that if we were to lose power on a Sunday morning, we would still be a family who worships and shows our love for God. The first focus of CrossPoint Church is to *Love God*. And let me say this to you this morning, I want to apologize when I have gotten off track and veered off course from a focus on loving God more than anything and everything else that we do. Maybe you didn't even notice when it happened but, I did. There were times when I was so focused on the lights and show that I forgot that the primary reason that we are here is to show God together just how much we love Him. Amen?

Second, I believe **we are a church that loves other people as if they were our family.**

A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Matthew 22:39 NLT

We believe that people who walk into one of our campuses becomes a part of our family – not in a weird way but in a good way. For us here at CrossPoint that what we are called to do in the second part of this passage in Matthew 22 (again, put Matt. 22:34-39 up on the screens) I have been told that all our campuses are uncharacteristically friendly to guests and visitors. I had a pastor come to me after one of our services recently to talk to me. They were going around visiting other churches to see what kind of things were going on in the church world and they came here. They told me that a lot of churches think they're friendly...but, this church IS friendly. And I believe that, as a whole, we're not satisfied with how friendly we are and that most of us believe we could be even better at it. Turn to someone near you and just matter of factly say to them, "we could be even more friendly." This passage in Matthew 22 tells us we are to not just Love God but, we are to Love Others like we love ourselves. When people walk into a church they are expecting an encounter with God and if we're honest, there are sometimes when who we are and what we do gets in the way of that encounter. The more we can invite people to an honest, life altering encounter with Jesus the better our church will be and more people will want to attend.

Why CrossPoint? Because we love God and love others...not just people who are here right now but, we love people who are not yet here and we love people we will most likely never, ever meet. We love people as a part of our mission that God calls us to. Look at Matthew 28 with me...

Third, I believe that **we** are a church that **focuses on people who are far from God** and need to hear about God's love, God's plan for eternity and God's Son, Jesus Christ.

Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.²⁰ Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20

Notice Jesus does not tell his disciples to go into all the world and make church goers. The better question we should be asking instead of Why CrossPoint is why not the whole world? Here at CrossPoint we believe, like one of the founders of our denomination believed, that *the world is our parish* (John Wesley), not just the people who walk through those doors. That we are in the process of helping other people know the life changing, eternity shifting message of Jesus Christ, who left heaven and came to earth for us, who died for us, who rose again for us, and who continues to live...listen, FOR US! So, why CrossPoint? Because we believe that this place, this gathering is not enough, that there are people who need to hear more about Jesus, that there are people who would love to love Jesus but they just haven't met anyone who is willing to walk with them long enough or lovingly enough for them to see, and know, and fall in love with Jesus.

We believe that's who we are here at CrossPoint. We believe it so strongly that we open locations in communities where the message of Jesus is missing and is needed. We believe it so passionately that we invest in things that will help change lives. We get so excited about it here that we send teams of people out twice a month to our food pantry and clothing connection and twice a year to Sierra Leone West Africa. Why CrossPoint? Because we believe we're doing what Jesus calls his followers to do in Matthew 28...to go into all the world and what? "Make disciples."

Now, there are two things that I want to point out that are not found directly in these passages but, I believe are a core part of who we are at CrossPoint. The first one is our **abundant generosity**. I've been here at CrossPoint for almost 20 years now and one of the things that marks you as a church is how amazingly generous you are when you know there is a need. We've helped countless families, housed, people in need, fed and clothed people who have suffered loss, provided Christmas gifts to hundreds of children, paid rent, paid oil bills and state inspections, and the list goes on forever. I have never seen a need go unmet on our part when we were made aware of the need. That's the kind of church I want to be a part of and I think you live out abundant generosity because it's the kind of church you want to be.

Now, that leads me to tell you about something that is happening this year that I believe you need to know about. Last year we launch a 1-million-dollar capital campaign. In that campaign, we committed to do so of the things around the CrossPoint campuses that needed done for many years. We also committed to paying off the debt that we incurred when we built out the South Hanover campus. The last commitment we made was to the launch of our fourth campus in midtown. So, where are we. We'll, the ADA projects are just about complete. The elevator at the Rutherford campus is in and running. The ramp at the Colonial Park campus is in but there are still some final details that need cared for. The chair and carpeting project at the Colonial Park campus will be coming up on June 18th and we have currently paid down the \$340K debt amount down to \$190K. The final project is scheduled for 2018 and is to expand the lobby and remodel the bathrooms and kitchen near the main entrance. We are currently tracking at 102% of estimated giving for the campaign meaning that we are tracking ahead of what we expected. Whoo hoo!

When we started the campaign on Palm Sunday last year we did not expect something that happened...regular giving went a bit flat through 2016 and has continued into 2017. In 2017, the staff and church council committed to a faith budget that included a 4.4% increase in giving. This increase was not out of the normal based on the previous 6 years' track record. We went in to 2017 thinking the best about CrossPoint Church. We honestly may have underestimated the impact that on our budget when several members of our congregations moved away to new places for work or retirement. Some of these people were committed givers and we miss them physically and financially. What that means is that while the campaign is going great, we are down in weekly giving to the main work of the congregations and the communities we serve. At this point, by the end of the fourth quarter we are about \$40k below in income based on what we projected to meet budget.

If we continue to stay at that pace, without any change, we will end the year at \$120K below the need based on budget. What that means, bottom line, is that we will not be able to do all the amazing, life changing things God has laid on our hearts to accomplish. This shortfall has the potential to effect staffing, mission work, and vital ministries that touch people in ways that, of course, is priceless but, does cost something. So, I wanted to let you know that the staff and church council has looking at this and is in the process of cutting back the budget as much as possible. I'm hoping you will look at your own financial commitment to CPC and consider how you might be able to make life altering ministries and mission happen. To be honest, a \$5 or \$10 a week adjustment can make a huge difference. We are also looking at some unique ways to gain some needed funds like working with the District Superintendent on who we might be able to use some of the funds that are available from the sale of the Harris Street UMC.

That leads me to the last thing that I want to point out that makes us who we are but is not in the passages is our **denomination connection**. While I'm not sure that people care as much about denominations and labels any more when it comes to church...I appreciate our connection to one of the worlds, yes...worlds, largest denominations. The United Methodist Church is a powerful force for God in the world today with a presence on every continent, and in nations too numerous to mention. Our relief efforts and our

determination to share the Good News of Jesus are massive. I've been in places where, when they find out I'm a part of the United Methodist Church, we are usher through without question. I've gone through machine gun check points in a third world country without stopping because the vehicle said UMC on the side. I've seen our connection do great things in my lifetime and I believe we can do great things in the future.

Why CrossPoint? It was not my plan to try to convince you this morning...if I did then, amen. What I am hoping happened was that you received the information and the encouragement to go and tell your friends about your church so that they'll come and be a part of the family. Will you do that? Will you make it a point to tell others about CrossPoint? If you do, they will come to know what you know today...that Jesus loves them and there is a church that is striving to live that kind of love out in the world right now, right here! Amen?