

## Title: **A Fitting Room**

For the month of January we talked about Getting Fit in our Faith, Getting Fit for our Future...but this week I want to talk about Getting in a Fitting Room.

How many of you know what I am talking about when I say Fitting Room? I remember the fitting room in a certain store had a curtain that was about 2 feet off the floor....

I haven't been in that type of fitting room in a long time, just because it feels awkward.....While I anticipated getting something new I didn't want to be embarrassed by someone just pulling the curtain back.

But I had to go into the fitting room to change..

Just because it's new doesn't mean it is going to fit, or that you are going to like it when you change into it.

Hopefully changing into something new is enjoyable and exciting....but it can also be difficult and frustrating.

Change can be difficult whether it is changing out an old shirt for a new one.....or changing our methods of how we do church.

The fitting room is a place of change.... From old to new....from familiar to different..... From boot cut, to regular cut...to slim fit.

As we get older it seems harder and harder to make ourselves go into a fitting room and try on something new.

All of us at one time or another have probably been forced into a fitting room....

None of us wants to be forced to change....

What if we put the church in the fitting room.

From the 50's to the 1990's church was done a certain way.

Go back a generation, and the only way to hear a preacher was to attend that local church. If you had a relative in a church who told you how awesome their preacher was, you might subscribe to the cassette ministry and get tapes sent to you.

But, that was about it. You essentially listened to the preachers nearest you. Radio and television offered you a slightly wider menu, but even then, none of that was available on-demand unless you subscribed to that particular cassette ministry.

Fast forward to today, and sermons from incredible communicators are anywhere and everywhere. They're also free and available on demand. Since the 90's and the 2000's the internet has changed everything.

The Disruption of Covid in 2020 accelerated that trend even more.

Almost every church moved online, and more people than ever realize they have access to the top communicators in the world anytime, anywhere, for free.

Things have changed—in my lifetime and yours.

What moved people to hear local preachers in the past will not move them in the future. It is getting harder and harder just to get people to show up on a Sunday much less revival services.

Today people want meaning....They want someone who can help them cut through the noise and give them insight into their purpose....help them discover their gifts, & development their gifts.

What is deeply scarce right now are community and connection.

- People are more isolated than ever.
- We are seeing a crisis in mental health, rising addictions,
- The country is more politically divided now than it has been in the past twenty years.

Not only is there less collaboration and mutual understanding between Democrats and Republicans, but members of both political parties increasingly view each other in an extremely negative way.

Authentic, loving, and genuine community are more scarce than they have ever been in our lifetime.

**So the competitive advantage of the local church isn't content, it's community and connection.**

We should be running to fill that void.

To put ourselves in a fitting room as a church is uncomfortable....

Unfortunately, the way we conducted church from the 1950s to the 1990s is not the method we can continue to use effectively to reach Southwest Louisiana.

Please hear me....I do not advocate changing our message.... One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism. Repentance, Baptism, Infilling of the Holy Spirit and living a modest lifestyle. These are the foundations which should never change.

However, methods do change!

In Scripture the book of **Joshua 5:12 NLT** **"No manna appeared on the day they first ate from the crops of the land, and it was never seen again. So from that time on the Israelites ate from the crops of Canaan."**

Here is context for change..... We don't read of manna in the garden of Eden and we don't read of water flowing from a rock in Eden.

There are numerous signs of God that didn't come about until the book of Exodus.....there are also numerous signs that never happened again.

The cloud by day and pillar of fire vanished when the new generation of Israelites reached the promised land. The manna that fed them 40 years was never seen again.

The Plagues that brought Israel out of Egypt all stopped and were never seen again.

It wasn't that Israel got off track, it wasn't that Israel needed a revival, it wasn't that God was no longer with them..... **It's just the God who doesn't change His character changes His methods.**

The unfortunate thing about the church....is when we have been blessed for 40 years one way and that blessing stops. We demand that God bless us the way He used to bless us.

The question is can we let go of what is familiar.....

Are we willing to let go and learn to eat from a different tree? Are we willing to go into a fitting room and try on something different?

For example..... Jethro came to Moses and said, "**This thing that you are doing is not good. You will surely wear yourself out, both yourself and the people who are with you, for the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do this alone**" (Exodus 18:18) NIV

Moses tried to meet all the needs of the people at the beginning of their exodus. ....but later on He simply could not meet the needs of all the people.

His father-in-law Jethro said.....choose 70 well respected leaders who can help bear the load of the people.

Moses could bear the load for a while, but after a while it got too heavy for him. For this reason..... I am asking will you give your blessing to anoint some Pastoral Care Leaders..

Ryan/Jacyln Ware, Tyler/Brittany Williams, Mike/Kim Fontenot, Sis. June, Sis. Gwen....Of course, Me/Janet/ David/Michelle, Dan/Aubrey and others will be added.

These men/women can be trusted and will help share the load of praying for the sick, visiting hospitals, helping care for our church...

We are also talking to others to become sectional leaders to care for each one in their sections.... We want every person to know we love them, that we care and we will be connected in all the seasons of life.

Furthermore....We want to see our life groups increase ... we feel that whether we sit in rows or sit in circles..... Life is better together.

We have to have the grace and the humility to lean into our shortcomings and say God I can't do this. Would you help me remove it?

Learning how to do that journey..... Regardless of what age we are is something we need to strive for.

I will tell you the church has told itself and the world....you just need to try harder....

Yes we should mature and grow....but at the same time what we need is humility that says.... My personal inadequacies are something that I need to deal with daily and I have this day and I think where the world is at we need to revisit AA and Celebrate Recovery's

- 1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — (anger, pride, unhealthy sites, ego, money, S.E.X. work....that our lives had become unmanageable.**
- 2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.**
- 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.**
- 4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.**

- 5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.**
- 6. We're entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.**
- 7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.**
- 8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.**
- 9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.**
- 10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.**
- 11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.**
- 12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.**

My interest in life change and transformation and God and a deep sense of honesty and community is appealing to me.

And I have a feeling it is appealing to all of us. We just don't know how to go about getting there.

Let me wrap this up.

The fitting room is about change.

Change is difficult and uncomfortable.

The change could be going nurturing

A deep sense of honesty, connection and community.