

SERMON DISCUSSION

QUESTIONS

SEPTEMBER 26, 2021

Flesh – Interview with Hugh Halter

Pastor Connor Neigenfind

WARM-UP

1. In your Christian walk with Jesus, has God placed opportunities in your path that came as a surprise to you, seemingly not consistent with who you are, where you live, or what you do? If so, describe that (or those) situations? What was it like? How did you respond? How did you know God had a hand in it? Did this experience (or experiences) lead elsewhere in your life or lives around you? If so, in what ways?

DIGGING DEEPER

*Today, Pastor Connor concludes a four-part mini-series that has spanned the month of September. His first three sermons and teaching have prepared us for today. And today, we are privileged to have Pastor Hugh Halter, the author of the book, *Flesh*, in dialogue with Connor and us. As Connor has told us from the first week, this series is building to something that will be significant for us as a church and going somewhere that is exciting, and today's interview is the beginning of these next steps. So, with Connor and Hugh's dialogue, let's continue this journey of discovery and engagement.*

2. **What do we mean by 'incarnational' in the context of our lives and efforts as followers of Jesus?** Hugh said that 'incarnation' simply means taking on flesh as Jesus did, and being incarnational means doing it as Jesus did. It means an invitation to respond to what He did on the cross and actually live His life on earth – the mission. What does Hugh mean by this and what does this mean to you? Are you able to see this in your own life today? How about in the life of EAC?
3. **What is the mission and why does it matter?** In a simple sense, Jesus' mission is us – the church, the ekklesia, the community of followers. And we all have to be a part of God's mission. Everyone is called and therefore, everyone is sent. What does Hugh mean by this, and does this make sense to you? How so? Read John 20:19-21. What are the circumstances of this passage? And what is Jesus saying here, and who is He saying it to? So, in a nutshell, 'mission life' is for all followers of Jesus – does this ring true? How so?
4. **What is at stake if we don't engage in the mission?** Hugh said that the collective story of the church today in America is not good – declines are happening across the board, so much so that the U.S. is now seen as a mission field. What is at stake are two things – (1) the health of your own spiritual formation that leads to people becoming followers and serving Him, and (2) the legacy of future generations beyond ourselves. If we just continue to 'circle the wagons', the ultimate decline is ahead of us. God calls us to be His mission and we must move towards that in meaningful ways. It comes down to being 'church attenders' versus being 'missionaries'. How does all this strike you? Do you see it in your own life, or the lives around you? Do you see it in the wider church across America? How so?

5. **How did you (Hugh) come to embrace an incarnational approach to living on mission?** Hugh shared his personal story of where he thought he was headed as a young seminary student and plans for a 'normal' pastorate, compared to what God had in store. And clearly his story shows us that God's plans for us often come out of suffering and hardships. Have you had a similar story of God's revealing plan for your life and if so, how?
6. **So, how much Bible and theology training do I need to have to start living on mission?** If you are a follower of Jesus on a path of growing in His character and competencies, you are on your way! You have what you need, and God is ready to use you. Remember that for the first 300 years (which were actually the high growth years) of Christianity, there was no Bible, no buildings, no paid staff, and yet, it worked amazingly well – and still can today. How does this strike you? Can this first-century approach be recaptured? If so, what would that mean?
7. **What are my first steps to living a missional and incarnational life?** Be with people who need you and need God – who are those people? Remember that we follow a God who is perfectly holy and yet is a friend to sinners (who even eats with sinners!). How about we start there – breaking bread over a meal together – friends who He had would be friends we would have – this needs to be intentional as we widen our circle. What do you make of this notion?
8. **Why is a collective witness so important?** Together in community makes all the difference – Read Acts 2:42-47. What is Luke describing here? What are the key factors? Hugh also shared that around the world, almost universally, people love Jesus, whether they follow Him or not. But ask the same the same about Christians, and the response is often the exact opposite. Why is that? And what does community have to do with this huge disconnect? And can that be changed? How so?
9. **So, what is a missional community?** It often begins with family, and as ripples on the pond, expands from there. Natural rhythms emerge to be built on – sharing a meal and good times with a small group of folks, who then see a common mission to grab hold of and live life around – and needs come up that need to be met – and who become open to some time and chats with Jesus. Do you see this progression? Is this happening now in your life, or could this happen in your life? How so?
10. **What's next?** Pastor Connor said that what we have been building to with this September series and the 21-day devotional is the launching of this missional communities idea. And to invest in helping folks on the first steps of this journey. Connor framed it this way: "What would it be like if we launched small groups on mission together in our city?" And to start personally, consider these three questions – what would it look like if you lived like Jesus lived (John 8:31-32), loved like Jesus loved (John 13:34-35), and looked like Jesus looked (John 15:1,5,8)? How about we start there?

PRAYER

As you reflect on Pastor Connor and Hugh's dialogue today and begin to get a sense of being a part of a more committed missional community, prayerfully consider what God is 'calling' you to in your life, and how you can be 'sent' to fulfill His mission. Pray that He would show you ways that you can lean into His mission in a more 'incarnational' way, where you live, work and play. And seek His face in ways that will open your heart and mind to where and how He wants to use you for His Glory. As you gain understanding of His calling, pray for guidance on how to make His calling tangible in your life. And, as always, pray that the Holy Spirit would give you ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts to respond to His call to you, in order to be His hands, feet and heart in this world.

In case you missed the service, here are the EAC, Facebook, and YouTube links:

edgewateralliance.org/watch-now

facebook.com/edgewateralliance/

youtube.com/channel/UCWvQWUv1FD_qsUJUZn93kw