

# Leading Forward News

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## **“When Do You Look Outside?”**

My office is located with all interior walls. As a result, my office has no windows. For the most part that is good. I am not distracted by people walking by the building; I am not distracted by the beautiful day and tempted to go play golf; and I am not

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distracted by the build-up of traffic on the interstate and left to wonder about the time required for the drive home.

But occasionally, I must leave my office and walk to the main door and just look out the windows. Why? I lose perspective in the confines of my windowless office. The world goes by outside my office. Life happens outside my office. Differences are made outside my office. I need to look out and go out to stay in touch with the reality of what is happening and what needs to happen in my world.

Do you look outside regularly? Do you stay in touch with what is happening in your world? Are you aware of the type of

thinking, the viewpoints, the concerns, and the needs of the people that pass by your world?

What about your church? Churches have a tendency to spend much more time looking in than looking out. Our time spent looking in has two direct results. First, we notice all the disgruntled people within our church. Then we try to un-disgruntle them – make them happy. That is why we are trying to manage so many programs designed just for us and ours.

Second, when we only look in, we have a distorted view of what is really outside. We make the assumption that everyone outside is just like everyone inside. That thought then translates into “we all think alike, act alike, and believe alike.” As you would guess, we would be wrong.

We may be way past the time of needing to not just look out the window but to actually go out the door. We need to sit down with our coffee, not with our friends, but with the world. We need to visit their neighborhoods and shop in their markets. We need to attend their schools and observe their jobs. We need to hear what they have to say. We need to understand what they are thinking. We need to

discover the real needs and concerns that form the boundaries of their lives. We need to grasp what they believe and what they don't believe.

Our detective work is not to build a case for our church, and therefore us, being better than the rest of the world. Rather, we need to understand why we are so ineffective at reaching our world when we are so happy with what we are doing inside.

Just in our little world of Denton County, our world speaks over 100 different languages; struggles because of poverty and a lack education; abuses children, women, and the elderly; sees the church as irrelevant and uncaring or at least misdirected; has extreme affluence but does not recognize it nor manage it properly; and has great spiritual needs that are treated by the church with programs rather than with a relationship with God.

Maybe I just answered my own question. We don't look out because we don't like what we see. My prayer for all of the churches is that we begin to look outside, go outside, and begin to be the church outside. Our world needs us. More importantly, our world needs the God who calls us to go.