

The V.E.L.C.R.O. Approach CLOSING THE BACK DOOR

Dr, Ken Hemphill and Mike James have assembled their thoughts on how we can close the back door of our churches. They have put them down in print in their book entitled V.E.L.C.R.O. Churches. It is worth the investment for every pastor/staff person that want to be able to retain the people God sends each week to Bible Study and Worship.

Introduction

The church growth focus has been a top priority for four decades now. The main emphasis has been on attracting new people to come to our old churches.

Now it seems our key convention leaders has basically given up on the idea of getting new people to join our old churches. We have, as a convention, a strong push to forsake our existing churches and start new churches. Their motto is *New Churches Attract New People.*

It seems that our leadership want to keep the old churches around because that is where the funding is coming from to pay the bills for new church starts. It seems that is not the reason we should encourage and support our older congregations. The idea that daddy has deep pockets is the wrong approach to reaching the lost and scattered sheep.

As I write these thoughts, we now have a strong push in the “Revitalization of our declining-dying churches” Although this (I believe) is a very good strategy, there is another concern that is surfacing. How do we retain those we are reaching? Statistics reveal that almost 70 percent of those who join or attend a church will not be active after one year.

As the popular movie line, we would say, *Houston, we have a problem.* I am in full agreement that if a church is not reaching new people with the Gospel we will continue our way down this slippery slope. But we must give equal attention to keeping these folks as we do attract them. We have got to close the back door.

Dr. Ken Hemphill and Mike James is one to something great for our congregations and they have put their thoughts down on paper in their book. This is a valuable tool for every church to digest.

They give us a chapter on each letter of the acrostic V.E.L.C.R.O. along with a study on each letter. In each chapter they have included several different ideas so the groups studying can select what will work best for their church.

Here are the discussions on the acrostic **V E L C R O**

V Is the first chapter which reminds us to *Value every person as a gift from God.*

Different researchers have shown that somewhere between 79 to 86 percent of people are members of the church they now attend because they were invited/ brought by a friend or relative (p xvi)

The key word is **VALUED**

E is the second chapter which encourages us to *engage every guest with intentionality*.

This happens when your friend-our guest – first come in contact with your small group or church family and follows them until they are attached.

The key word is **INTENTIONAL**

L Is discussed in chapter three and it is about *Leading friends to faith in Christ*

Once people are valued as God's gift, and engaged intentionally within Bible Study and Worship, God has begun to open their heart to the life-changing commitment to Christ Jesus.

The key word here is **CHANGING THEIR HEART**

C Now we come to the letter "C" and is key to *Connecting New Family Members To Community*.

Our new members class is used to orientate strategy that involves every member in ministry.

This will help the "stick" so they will not be searching for the back door.

The key word is **CONNECT**

R The fifth chapter is on the letter "R" which is *Recognizing Relationships*

Studies indicate that when people become involved member ministry they remain in the community of faith.

Every born-again believer has been given at least one spiritual gift to enhance their service in God's kingdom.

When people feel valued and needed, they tend to be "stuck" tighter to our community of faith.

The key word here is **RELATIONSHIPS**

- The final letter in the acrostic represents *Organizing small group of continual care*.

This chapter will provide one with a process to ensure that family needs are being met consistently and immediately.

The key word is **ORGANIZED** to care.

The authors will introduce us to the **ISSE** formula as well.

I = Intentional

S = Sustainable

S = Simple

E = Expandable.

NOTE – If we allow God to change our hearts and guide our thinking through His Word, we will create a V.E.L.C.R.O. Congregation for our community.