

# **Churches neglecting to teach them to observe\_20705**

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## **Churches neglecting to teach them to observe**

**By Ferrell Foster**

*Texas Baptist Communications*

IRVING-The church today often is not functioning the way it did in New Testament times because too many Christians have overlooked the “teaching them to observe” phrase in Christ's Great Commission, said Pastor Jeff Harris of Grace Point Church in San Antonio.

When the church expects people to observe what God has called them out to do, then people understand who they are in Christ and their spiritual gifts are deployed in the church, Harris said at Epicenter, a conference sponsored by the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Harris called for a return to the days of a missional church.

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Jeff Harris (left), pastor of Grace Point Church in San Antonio, visits with Josh Plant (center) and Joe Bumbulis from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. (Photo by Ferrell Foster)

“Going down to the local bookstore because your church is not thriving is a cop out,” he said. The proper approach is to “get on your knees and ask God what I am to teach them to observe.”

This involves a change in what Harris called a church’s “infraculture,” which includes heightened expectations of church members.

Church members often are “biblically obese” today, with a “lot of scriptural intake but not a lot of exercise,” Harris said.

Grace Point Church stresses grace, growth, giving and going, he explained. Among other things, the church expects members to be able to communicate how God’s grace has transformed them. It also expects members to be involved in mission endeavors, both at home and internationally.

In most churches today, “the bar’s too low, and we’re too afraid to raise it because they may leave, the wealthy person may walk out,” Harris said.

“What would change right now if you knew you wouldn't get fired?”

The missional church also is countercultural, he said. “They're thermostats, and they're not thermometers.” Churches need to be setting the temperature, not reflecting it.

“We have a spiritual cancer in the body of Christ ... because our possessions possess us,” Harris said.

Finally, missional churches are cross-cultural.

“Don't run from your context. Represent your ZIP code,” he said.

“We've got to take the cultural yoke off” in regard to generational, ethnic and other issues, he insisted. “We have to have spiritual authenticity.”

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