



THE PASTOR'S VOICE

Insights from Church Leaders

The Pastor's Voice Podcast: Episode 9

Transcript: Pancakes and Church Community

Reuel Sample: You refer in the book to the living temple. What is the living temple?

Tanya Hackney: Oh, the I think the definition of the living temple is the the people who love God for in all time and all place. It's a it's a church that exists outside, you know, the physical walls of a building. Ah, it's the temple of our own hearts where we have, you know, put God on the throne and allowed his spirit to to live inside of us and to live through us and to do good through us and you know, the restraint of our own for a lack of a better word, sinfulness and selfish desires that living temple is made of of human beings and we managed to find people everywhere we went. You know, sometimes complete strangers that turned out to be, you know, part of that family and part of that living temple. And that is a powerful testimony of God's love and grace for us that you know, that his people are everywhere and look very different in all shapes and sizes and colors and languages. It's a wonderful, wonderful thing to discover, you know, after we left the four walls of a sort of organized religion. And we've kind of adopted what I would call disorganized religion. And we actually discovered something deep and true that we weren't finding inside the building.

Reuel Sample: That's an interesting I can't let that go. What were you not finding inside the building?

Tanya Hackney: I could probably talk for a long time about the dysfunctional family of God and the institution of church as as Americans have interpreted it. We have kind of

I've walked through lots of different buildings in my time. I was raised Seventh Day Adventist, and when I was in college, I rejected that, but I didn't completely throw the baby out with the bathwater. I still believe that God was there and that he loved me. I just didn't know, you know where his house was. And so I tried on a bunch of different things. I went to a Catholic Bible study trying to figure out what what Catholicism was all about going to a Unitarian Universalist church. I've been to Baptist churches and Presbyterian churches, and we used to go to a megachurch in Atlanta, and we have a philosophy in an America of the church is kind of run like a business. And because we're capitalists, there's competition for our donation dollars. And so we do the church hopping and church shopping thing that I think really hampers the work that God wants to do in the church. I think if the church is the temple is not built by human hands and it's, you know, housed in the hearts of people then looking for that home inside a building as a mistake. I think we have to look for that home in a group of people. And I think we've learned, you know what church is and what church is not. And we aren't driven necessarily to finding a church that can serve us, which is very self-centered and looking more to more to answer the question Where does God want us? Where does he want to use us? And what does he want to teach us? And that has brought us to an interesting place where somewhat uncomfortable, you know, inside a church building in our own culture, even though we were both raised reading the Bible that we've read the Bible to our children.

Tanya Hackney: Though we've been in and out of many church buildings, we're kind of uncomfortable inside a church building. We've experienced some reverse culture shock coming back to the U.S. after traveling and doing what we always called the International Church of Pancakes, which is J cooking bacon and me cooking. I would cook pancakes and Jay would cook bacon on a Sunday morning and our kids would come upstairs and we'd sit around and have breakfast, and Jay would read a chapter of the Bible, and then we would discuss it. And you know, we've made various attempts to do music together, and it's imperfect. Just like every church is imperfect, but it was very authentic. And I think sometimes in a building, I miss that authenticity. And, you know, we would meet other Christians and we would be meeting with other families. Sometimes for a while, we had another family that would do international church pancakes with us, and that was super fun. I don't think that church is something that only happens on Sunday mornings. But but even now, when I go to a church, I love the fellowship part. I love that connecting with a body of believers. But there's always a

piece of it that makes me feel uncomfortable because I don't think that we should be anonymous. I think if it's a body of believers that it was meant to be really interactive and Church in America is interactive in varying degrees, and some of it, you know, not at all.

Reuel Sample: We live in a society, especially in America, where we've digitalized numerous serialized everything. And the idea of interpersonal relations is very tough. We have a generation where they've got thousands of friends on Facebook and on gaming directories and everything else. But they they have zero soulmates, they have zero people that they are accountable to. So that's what you're talking about. Hits home is and our churches are an extension of that is that we have great churches, we have exciting worship services, we have buildings that can do just about everything, but we don't have relationship.

Tanya Hackney: Yeah. And what's that? What really satisfies people is a deep connection both to each other and to their creator. And we're kind of looking for that connection in so many different ways and we find it dissatisfying. I think it's disappointing if we're looking for that connection and church and we don't find it there, I think we then sometimes people throw the baby out with the bathwater. So if they have a bad experience in a church, they assume, Well, you know, my experience with God wasn't very positive. And so then they look elsewhere. I think that's a mistake, but an understandable mistake. And we are looking are looking for that connection.

Reuel Sample: And all your various wanderings, you have been sailing on board. Take two for how long now?

Tanya Hackney: We bought the boat in 2008. We had four children under the age of eight. We moved to. In 2009 and then in 2011, we had a fifth child and we've been traveling pretty much continuously on and off, you know, for several months a year since then.

Reuel Sample: And you've been to the Caribbean, the western Caribbean, all up and down the East Coast. How did you find community? Did you seek out, especially Christian community, that you did you seek out Christian community? Did it come to you? How did you how did you find that living temple wherever you went?

Tanya Hackney: That was very organic. I was never on social media. I'm not a very digitally connected person. I'm really a person to person. I prefer person to person connection. And so I really left that one to God. I basically said, it's up to you to bring people in and out of my life. I'll keep in touch with people that we've met. But for the actual meetings, those were all sort of divine appointments, and we have found a wonderful community and family among the sailing, just the sailing men and women and children. And we we gather in various ports and we disperse and then we meet up in another port and we often meet up with the same people over and over again. Some of those people have become like grandparents to my children. Some of them have become like brothers and sisters and cousins. It's it's a wonderful close family. We found a lot of believers out there, and I've kind of wondered why that is. And I think some of that may have to do with the way that we deal with fear that doing something like living aboard a sailboat and traveling is is kind of a scary. Unpredictable lifestyle. And it seems like people who have figured out how to deal with their fear. I are the ones that we find out there, and a lot of those people are very faithful people and they trust God to take care of them, and so they're willing to take some risks. And so it's been interesting to have met so many Christians afloat. You know, that's that's been wonderful. I love that. I love that he has people sort of sprinkled everywhere. And then on the various and sundry islands and countries we've been in, we somehow always meet up with people or connect with people, locals who are believers. And then we can kind of join them in, you know, whatever they're whatever they're doing. That's been really cool too.