

**General Topics :: my experience with local church movement so far (Philippines)**

my experience with local church movement so far (Philippines) - posted by joliboy11, on: 2017/1/8 23:55

brothers,

greetings from the Philippines!

I never thought that there is kind of this church nearby my town. Where their meetings has no "pastor" but all can share/prophesy. But I just find it weird their intonation when they pray and many "amens" now and then and spontaneous speaking, with no precider? (at least on what I attended) and some phrases uncommon to me..

My observation is they are meek and they don't dispute with other groups.

they also follow a booklet (at least on what I attended): "The Holy Word for Morning Revival" compiled by Witness Lee from different writers.

Has any of you attended the same group?

any thoughts?

you can check their teachings here:

Living stream ministry: <http://www.lsm.org/>

Re: my experience with local church movement so far - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2017/1/9 3:00

Brother,

Hank Hannegraff of Bible Answer Man who is known for diagnosis cults and spurious teachings called the local church movement a cult. But after careful study of them and reporting this they found out that they were not a cult but still evangelical. I personally find them interesting but also have alot of warnings in my spirit about certain beliefs. I would not feel comfortable at this point to add Witness Lee's teachings to this website.

I have read that they are known to take believers to court to remove slander on the internet of them so if that is true that does not speak well of them either. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Local_Church_controversies

also:

It is the conclusion of Fuller Theological Seminary that the teachings and practices of the local churches and its members represent the genuine, historical, biblical Christian faith in every essential aspect.

The Fuller panel further wrote that "the teachings of Witness Lee have been grossly misrepresented and therefore most frequently misunderstood in the general Christian community, especially among those who classify themselves as evangelicals." Christianity Today endorsed the Fuller panel's findings in an editorial in its March 2006 issue.

Whether we agree with them or not, what Witness Lee says here in the current featured word on their website is true:

"The time is short. By studying the prophecies in the Bible and checking with the world situation today, we know that the day of the Lord's coming is very near and that the last week is approaching. The crucial question today is this: Do we want to bury ourselves in the world or put ourselves in the Lord's hand? We should know that once we bury ourselves in the world and become rooted in it, it will not be easy to be uprooted. In the few remaining days, we should get ourselves ready. Let us be those who love and serve the Lord, who are revived and are overcoming every day, and who let the world go and are waiting with all our heart for the Lord's coming."

Re: my experience with local church movement so far - posted by SherlockA (), on: 2017/1/9 3:24

Have you asked other information re the absence of a pastor? On leave, schooling probably, furlough, etc? Any idea of any leaders, deacons, or elders in substitute perhaps? Not necessarily a pastor should be there for the meeting or gathering, albeit the work and ministry is still going-on and it sounds encouraging despite w/o any pastor/s.

Our local church can still carry any Bible study, prayer meetings, Sunday service even w/o our senior and delegated pastors, let's say they are invited to another church. Our fellow deacons or elders are glad to be appointed to share the Word in their behalf. And it is a good indicator of a maturing Church.

What phrases did you hear? Is it just because they pray aloud, raise their hands, raise their voices, and the likes? How about the wordings perhaps, context? Individual local churches have their own uniqueness, no two churches are the same. You cannot discount the history, experiences, and other things that went through a local church and how they have evolved in their community. Others preferred to be charismatic, lively, or traditional, etc...

I knew there are LS Churches here in Philippines, but I don't have a clear idea about their statement of faith. Nonetheless, you can ask if they also belong or affiliated to other local ministerial groups, parachurch, or other ministerial groups, who have the same faith and understanding. Ministerial groups, sometimes do their check and balance in this way as part of local unity and community, which somehow very different from western churches. I guess you are just scouting any churches nearby and quite observing? If you belong to a local church, probably you can also ask your pastor or leader and accompany you there. Let your intention be known to the church you intend to visit. So they can give you direct answers, also as a courtesy to them.

Thanks

Re: - posted by SherlockA (), on: 2017/1/9 3:31

" It is the conclusion of Fuller Theological Seminary that the teachings and practices of the local churches and its members represent the genuine, historical, biblical Christian faith in every essential aspect.

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Thanks on this information bro Greg.

Joliboy, probably you can contact the Phil Evangelical Churches, PCEC, and ask if they are part of evangelical community. A simple background investigation, will help a lot.

Thanks

Re: - posted by Sree (), on: 2017/1/9 11:19

The 2 marks of a cult are,

1. They consider themselves to be the only church.
2. They consider a book written by their leader as parallel to or even higher than Bible.

I have not personally contacted Witness Lee's group but I have heard the above 2 points are applicable to them. I have even heard that recent publications of Watchman Nee's books are altered according to Witness Lee's teachings. So all the recent editions are unreliable. If this is true then I have no doubt that they are cult.

Re: - posted by forrests (), on: 2017/1/9 15:34

I have a bit I can share on this topic but I am at work now. I will try to come back on later from home and share a bit.

Re: - posted by joliboy11, on: 2017/1/9 23:59

I also have some reservations being with them: (just on my locality) I fear that

1. most of them are not really born again
2. can they go on without Watchman Nee or Witness Lee?

I talked to one leader on the phone, when I ask about salvation this is his answer (paraphrase):
quoting 1 Thessalonians 5:23

..we have spirit, body and soul, when we believe in Jesus our spirit is saved, eternally secure. Now we our soul needed to be saved (by Christ) quoting "working out our salvation with fear and trembling". and in the future our body will be resurrected again.

I then ask about the evidence of new birth because not all are truly saved even they call Jesus, Lord. He then says, that it is not for us to judge quoting from the parable of wheat and tares. Our task is to preach the gospel and pray for them. and if you have experience you will know who the true ones are.

I also said to the brother that I found their praying (monotonous intonation) and singing weird because it is spontaneous, he then said that he also at first. And he said because they want spirit led meetings and not just formality.

As I thought of it, it could be that in not wanting "formality" we can become "formality ourselves (can you get my point?).

I heard phrases as:

"Lord we empty ourselves", "eat Jesus" I fear that they just become empty words and phrases through familiarity.. but good thing it made me reflect on myself about my prayers and speaking about God to mean what I say..

I think they have a very different approach to Christianity but they are not extremist or heretics.. maybe have a more diverse emphasis.

I am not yet sure if they have healthy fellowship with other Christians/churches different from them.

But they believe that they are not the only one saved/true church. And for them there are major and minor doctrines (of which other Christians may differ)

I only speak from my experience on my locality not on the whole group..

But anyone who knows a church in Philippines (Pampanga), I would be glad to go..

Re: - posted by StirltUp (), on: 2017/1/10 1:05

Brother, from all you said it sounds like they are desiring to follow the New Testament pattern.

One can never judge a work just by what others say. Why not attend a few of their services and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you and discern in your spirit by what spirit they minister, and of course by the scriptures as taught by Paul and the other apostles.

If they make more of an earthly leader than of Jesus Christ and His Words, of course this would be a major warning sign.

Blessings,

Re: - posted by markuskiwi, on: 2017/1/10 1:43

I attended one of those meetings in my home town.

I never went back again, most of the reasons are already mentioned in this thread.

You need discernment and you should also visit a few other congregations and pray that the HS will lead you to the one which is for you.

Re: - posted by forrests (), on: 2017/1/10 7:23

Quote:

-----by markuskiwi on 2017/1/9 22:43:37

I attended one of those meetings in my home town.

I never went back again, most of the reasons are already mentioned in this thread.

You need discernment and you should also visit a few other congregations and pray that the HS will lead you to the one which is for you.

Amen. Well put. Enough said.

Re: - posted by joliboy11, on: 2017/1/10 23:30

I'm planning to go to another meeting in other locale this sunday (the one I've talked on the phone).

have me in your prayers..

I want to check this out myself..

have any of you had first hand experiences? and what practices do you found disturbing?

Re: - posted by joliboy11, on: 2017/1/15 23:42

Just been there on sunday,

I think I have better company here,

On the prophesying service, they share on what they "enjoy" on the book they are reading, compiled by Witness Lee.. on this instance they mostly talk about the typologies, pictures of Christ and the church in the old testament, but good thing someone ask, "what then is the application of this to us?". but mostly i can't relate much though I share a little. I even found some of my church mates there before! the one I leave after I've been really born-again.

When i saw many books of witness Lee on a shelf, one brother said that they don't make much of it. I think they just have an insistent practice that they don't insist?

On their view of salvation I think they are "Calvinist" though they don't call it that way..

and they don't focus much on personal salvation / holiness they have a different emphasis, like "God dwelling His people"?

They are also pre-tribulation on Rapture.

What I enjoy is their company after the service, we ate together.. have some conversations and I ask some of their belief s.. I found that they have a very detailed interpretation of the Bible but not dogmatic about it (I hope so)..

They also practice head covering.

They also ask me to be baptize in water. Of which I like to - next sunday with my fiance..

Yes we have been "out of church" for a while until now..

Re: - posted by StirltUp (), on: 2017/1/16 1:43

Thanks for the feedback, brother.

Please keep sharing your experiences, if possible, so we can all learn from it.

Blessings,

Re: - posted by StirltUp (), on: 2017/1/16 4:35

Please also read this, a PDF document available on the Internet, written by prominent Christian apologists and leaders:
<http://www.contendingforthefaitth.com/eBooks/Hanegraaff-Passantino-Fuller.pdf>

Re: - posted by Sree (), on: 2017/1/16 12:49

The problem that I find with all those who are trying to evaluate the witness Lee's groups is they are only interested in their theology. Theology wise the Devil even has the best theology. He knows everything about salvation. He knows the Bible in and out. So it is not the theology that they hold that will identify them as Cult or not. We will easily get deceived if we check only their theology.

The use of one man's book for all their teachings instead of relying on the Holy Spirit to give them revelation from the Bible should raise a cult alert. I am not saying this makes them a Cult, because I am not sure how much they rely on Lee's book. But if it is their primary source to interpret the Bible then I have serious concerns.

In our churches, for us to Baptize someone, they should be part of the Church for some time (at least 6 months). Without knowing someone, we are not willing to Baptize anyone. This is a Biblical stand. Baptizing someone is a serious thing, one cannot Baptize everyone just because they are visiting our Church. Even Apostle Paul was very cautious on who he Baptized (1 Cor 1:14).

I am sure someone (self appointed SI Police) will attack me for saying this, quoting how in Acts they readily Baptized anyone who has believed. But in Acts time, there was a serious persecution. One can even lose their life for getting baptized in the name of Jesus. Today such environment exists in some parts of the world. In that part, if someone wants to be baptized in the name of Jesus then immediately we can. But in the west where there is no Physical persecution for faith, anyone can take a decision to get baptized without counting the Cost. Jesus himself advised his followers to Count the Cost.

So the eagerness to Baptize someone is also a cult alert.

Re: - posted by StirltUp (), on: 2017/1/16 14:22

Hi Sree,

I appreciate your concern and completely agree that it is dangerous to follow only the teaching of one man. I don't know if they do this since I have had no contact with them at all except via their website and reading some of the material.

I simply shared the link so that our brother can make his own mind up after visiting with them a few times. I also advise caution as a believer should never make hasty decisions.

Please can you tell us why you are so worried about this movement? Is it because of what you have heard, or seen for yourself?

Blessings,

General Topics :: my experience with local church movement so far (Philippines)

Re: - posted by Sree (), on: 2017/1/16 16:53

Quote:

Please can you tell us why you are so worried about this movement? Is it because of what you have heard, or seen for yourself?

Mainly because of what I have heard. I have not seen it myself. I am also interested in what the Poster experiences in these local churches. The importance this movement gives to Local Churches is very similar to what I believe. But many of their activities are not.

There was a Godly brother in our fellowships in India who joined this group. Later he took few people from our fellowship as well into this group. I have nothing against him for leaving or even taking others with him, it is all for good and cleansing of fellowship. I too heard the complaints like frequent repetition of certain terms. I cannot discuss everything that I have heard in this public forum. Some of them might be subjective observation.

If they are not cults then I will be very happy for them as they are doing a work very similar to what I believe is much needed in Christendom today.

Re: - posted by joliboy11, on: 2017/1/16 23:19

brothers if anyone has a firsthand experience, can you share them. Though I know churches vary on different localities.

Also I know that theology is not what makes a cult, a cult. Though it plays a major part specially on how they insist it.

Regarding baptism, the sister approached me that it does not mean that I should then be part of their local church. I then saw Philip baptizing an Ethiopian and just leave the scene after.

Just pray for me that I will not act just based on pressure from the group just to find acceptance.

But good thing full time workers have no monthly salary, no offering part even on the service. They practice freely giving and just depending on the Lord.

Has anyone has an idea why they pray that way?
And what is the emphasis of their Theology?

Re: - posted by roadsign (), on: 2017/1/17 11:55

Some time ago I was given Witness Lee's Bible translation - for me to evaluate. In my research I did find a number of peculiarities, translation errors, and so forth. I'm not sure I could find my review, but reviews are up there on the internet.

Based on my discoveries, if I were in your shoes I would check around some more for a church. However, you do have the Spirit who is your final authority. There may be many reasons why God would wish you to be there - perhaps to train you to think, discern, and to show merciful kindness to those who don't have it perfect.
Just use a different Bible translation!

Diane

Re: - posted by TakeUptheCross (), on: 2017/1/17 14:13

Brother,

I can share shortly my experience. I have first come to know a group of people through Bible distribution in my locality. We then had some wonderful time together and so I understood that they followed the teachings of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. At that time there was a conference to be held and so I decided to go (I must confess hastily...).

But I spent some 2 days with them and also took part in one house meeting. There are several things that I admire: they are warm and welcoming, they sing almost constantly.

But on the other hand I had really difficulties accepting some of their practices and doctrines.

1. Yes, they do believe that once you are saved, you will never be lost (or you will have eternal life - no matter what). This is frankly unbiblical and very dangerous!
2. "Calling on the name of the Lord" - I have never understood the verse (2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Peter 1:17) as literally repeating the name of the Lord constantly. I do not believe that the first believers did it either.
3. Preaching : as you mentioned earlier there were books from Witness Lee. I am not generally against Christian books. I have read some books of Watchman Nee and can only recommend them to any believer (The Normal Christian Life, "Sit, Walk, Stand", The Overcoming Life). I truly believe that Watchman Nee was a servant of the Lord. Having said that, I think we should be very careful.

I believe that it is very important that the preacher (or elder) knows himself personally the Lord! Because if he is blind - he cannot lead other blind people (what to say about the seeing) to life or to Christ even if he has all the right theology in a book. (And that applies actually to EVERY CHURCH. So using books for preaching - we should be careful there.

The other thing that disturbs me actually more is the emphasis put on the teachings by W.Lee. And so I fear the people get indoctrinated without really knowing the Lord. ..

Personally, I find it very difficult to read the writings of W. Lee. I have tried several times and I find myself just struggling with so much words.

But I will advise you to be very careful. I can understand that you really enjoy talking with other people after the service, that is generally also good and necessary. We must always beware that the church does not turn just into social gathering! Wherever you go to church, your Number ONE PRIORITY is and should be to WORSHIP GOD! And God Himself must be pleased!

Pray and pray, continue to pray! Being a part of godly church is very important!

As for me, I still keep contact with some of them, but I do not worship with them. It will be difficult for me to do so, for the reasons above mentioned.

May the Lord lead you into His gates!

Re: TakeUptheCross - posted by Sree (), on: 2017/1/18 11:16

There is lot of wisdom in what you have shared. Almost all the points you have posted are very sound and matches with what I was told as a warning sign against this group.

Re: - posted by forrests (), on: 2017/1/18 23:23

I have experienced the Milwaukee, WI "Local Church" firsthand, and while there was a great brother in it, I would not be too closely associated with them myself.

Re: - posted by joliboy11, on: 2017/1/21 0:00

thanks, brothers for your contributions..

After reading the books they have given me and hearing some firsthand testimonies on the net. I just change my mind and don't feel free to go anymore.. though I've just been there twice and by reason of my experience also.

I think they somehow contradict some of their teaching by their practice, like using a single book on all their "branches" but emphasizes being led with the Spirit and not by formality. Also on their evangelistic method as some brothers have already shared.

I don't undermine their sincerity but I just can't go with the flow..

And I think am not tenacious enough to be like Martin Luther or Art Katz to reform the group :)

General Topics :: my experience with local church movement so far (Philippines)

May I just ask your prayers that the Lord would led us to church to be with..

Re: - posted by joliboy11, on: 2017/1/21 19:20

They are following me up, how so you think should I respond?