

**General Topics :: A Release of Frustration****A Release of Frustration - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2008/11/24 8:51**

Dear brethren,

Over the years I have found that sharing some of my frustrations on this site has helped me in the past, and brought a sense of solidarity to others who may be experiencing the same.

The church my wife and I attend is a vibrant AG fellowship in Texas. We are situated in the middle of San Marcos - the home of Texas State University. There are lots of college kids. As result, the church is compelled to highly contemporize the praise and worship for our young visitors (we sometimes do "Newsboys" songs and other Christian top 40 billboard songs). The volume is loud, some of the musicians dress seemingly to make a fashion statement: grunge, tweed blazers with the shirt untucked, jeans and hair gell. A female generally leads the worship, and she is like a firecracker leaping around, speaking in tongues, shouting, preaching to the congregation in-between the songs, etc. My poor ears can't take it anymore. I have to wait outside in lobby entrance during these times, my ears hurt, my head pounds, I sense myself becoming agitated. It has been going on like this for over a year now.

If I establish eye contact with a deacon, he will ask me to help take a collection, publically read a Bible passage (which he has chosen), or just come up and pray over something at the drop of a hat. This is because I am respected as someone "spiritually mature" in the flock. Yesterday, I was asked to come forward with the "prayer team" and help pray and I kindly declined, opting instead to stay behind in my seat and pray from there. It was an awkward moment. I'm tired of being expected to perform, to endorse soul. I relinquished my credentials earlier this year because I can't take the foolery anymore. The allowance of women to do whatever they want to on the platform; the compulsory tithing under threat of a curse; the offensive rock music, and the sermons never seem to deepen - they just remain at the same level to reach and speak to those who are content to meet them eye-to-eye.

I long for the singing of some plain old Charles Wesley hymns, with just piano or accapella. I long for a meaty sermon on the New Birth or the dynamic of Sin, or the power of the blood of Christ. Something with strong meat that is able to work revelation and spiritually metabolize under the authority of the Holy Spirit.

Thanks for letting me vent! The more I study the Word, the more I sing hymns in the quiet time, the more I soak myself in scripture and read good, wholesome literature by the saints of old, the more disgruntled I get with where I fellowship. Please try to refrain from offering me the banal, "Why don't you just pray about joining another fellowship..." because that base is already covered. I am where I am for a reason; it's just that this forum is really the only place I can vent (and you know it doesn't happen often) and expect some good, constructive thought from you guys in return.

See, I feel better already :-)

Re: A Release of Frustration - posted by enid, on: 2008/11/24 9:55

I can understand your frustration. I've visited churches like that, and at one point I just walked out because what was going to take place was so predictable and sad.

Songs and singing with no depth, I dare not call it worship, for I wonder if in God's eyes it was.

Sermons which, yes, they did use scripture, but you were left wondering, is that all there is to the message. Sometimes, the singing was nearly twice as long as the sermon.

But, in Revelation 3, we find the church in Sardis, and it has different groups of people in this one church.

This church had a name that was known, but they were dead.

They needed to strengthen the things that remained.

They also needed to repent

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There were also those who had not defiled their garments and shall walk with Christ in white for they were worthy.

We should strive to be like those who walk in white, that is what God is looking for.

Take heart, God knows.

God bless.

Re: - posted by Nellie, on: 2008/11/24 10:12

Brother Paul.

Your letter reveals to me, that you are growing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You really know that all that you are witnessing in Church, is grieving your Savior, so it is grieving you, also.

Thank you for sharing this.

I have been where you are now, and God brought me out of the Church that I had belonged to for Years.

You just obey the Lord, Brother, and it won't be easy, but we all have the assurance, that" His Yoke is easy, and His Burden is Light. "

God Bless you.

Nellie

Re: A Release of Frustration - posted by davym (), on: 2008/11/24 10:38

Quote:
-----There are lots of college kids. As result, the church is compelled to highly contemporize the praise and worship for our young visitors

Why is the church 'compelled'? Is God compelling them or is the world? I'm guessing your church feels it has to offer this music to attract young people. Personally, I am reluctant to call this music 'worship'. That of course is not to say that it isn't. It just isn't for me. There is a certain amount of it in my church, but thankfully it is kept to a minimum.

From reading the Bible it is clear to me that we are not called to entertain even though this may achieve higher church numbers. To quote an old time preacher "if you get on fire for Christ, the people will come and watch you burn". A little crude I know, but the principle is clear. I believe we're on the wrong track with contemporary music. We're losing the power of the Holy Spirit.

Quote:
-----This is because I am respected as someone "spiritually mature" in the flock.

This is encouraging brother.

Quote:
-----I long for a meaty sermon on the New Birth or the dynamic of Sin, or the power of the blood of Christ. Something with strong meat that is able to work revelation and spiritually metabolize under the authority of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps you could preach in your church? I'm not sure whether God has opened this door for you yet, but you sound like a wonderful asset to your church.

The point you have raised is a common one. It's not easy to deal with because it's hard to know if the Holy Spirit is in thi

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s worship or not, but keep pressing on brother.

In Christ

David

Re: - posted by live4jc, on: 2008/11/24 13:10

Dear brother Paul,

In the short while I've been on this discussion forum, I've really come to appreciate the wisdom and Biblical grounding that is in your posts. I can relate to many of the concerns you have written about. In the past 2 years, our family has been in 2 churches that were of a Pentecostal/ Charismatic bent and now we are attending a Baptist church. For us, there came a time when we felt it was necessary to leave both of these churches, however this decision was one which came about over time, and God has unique plans and seasons for all of us.

I'll describe briefly some of the things that were going on at the original church we were at. First, there was much that was a blessing to us at this church and this was the church that my wife and I were married in. This church has a large children's program which underwent some changes over time, as new leadership assumed control of this area of the church. The focus shifted from stories and activities which were instructive, and were of a challenging nature, to entertaining the kids. The kids services featured black lights, dry ice, and syncho-pop music which kids and leaders would dance to. Some of the songs had lyrics that bothered us. For instance, in one song the kids were asked to "shake your behinds". For us, the breaking point came when a newer children's leader was performing a skit and used the term 'sexy' to describe himself. Meanwhile, the sermons we listened to in the adult service were well thought out and well prepared, but a 'marketing mentality' became the driving force of the church, as time progressed.

The next church we attended seemed very promising at the outset. Initially, we were drawn to it after listening to some of the pastor's sermons that were available for download from the church web site. He seemed like an old fashioned preacher. Moreover, when my wife asked him who his favorite authors were, he listed those like F.B. Meyer, A.W. Tozer, and Andrew Murray. However, we later found out that he was developing a new group of favorite authors, which consisted of people like Joel Osteen. We discussed our concerns about Osteen by email with him, which lead him to reply that he was 'putting him on the shelf', because of the issues that we raised. However, we remained a bit unsettled in spirit, not knowing if he had just done this to please us, or if he had truly come to see the serious errors of prosperity teaching, and other related teachings. After a year of attending, we were loathe to leave this church, especially since the people there were so friendly and loving. But as 'Kingdom Theology' became more and more of a feature of the sermons, and alternate Sunday nights were devoted to teaching "Principles of Kingdom Living", we believed it was time to move to another church.

The church we attend now, is very biblically focused. It's taken us some time to get used to having only hymns in the worship part of the service. While I don't like certain contemporary choruses, I do enjoy the fact that there is liberty and joy manifested when songs are sung that promote some of what we are urged to do in the Psalms (eg 'Shout to the Lord', 'Break forth into jubilant song' etc). I feel that some modern choruses are lacking in their spiritual meaning, while others are quite good. However, despite the fact that my wife and I would like to see more enthusiasm and joy demonstrated during worship, we have by and large been very happy with our new church. We have been challenged by the sermons. Some of them touch on vital topics such as 'church discipline' which have been pretty gone by the way side, and are no longer seen as applicable to our modern generation.

I don't know if anything I've written will be helpful, as generally your venting has just prompted me to do the same :-). I can relate though, and it is nice to be able to share these concerns with people who feel much the same way. I will pray for you for God's guidance and strength. May He bless you and cause His face to shine upon you !

Yours in Christ,
John

Re: A Release of Frustration - posted by narrowpath, on: 2008/11/24 14:17

Dear Paul,

I have been through this myself, and I believe countless others here on this forum.

After I awoke rudely from my backslidden state, I became aware of the shallowness and triviality of much of our church services. Much of this I credit to preaching here on SI! I tried to engage with others in discussions and stated my concerns with many people and the leadership. My points were not taken into consideration and so we left.

My advice is that God shows you these things for a reason beyond your own benefit. You should after much prayer speak to your leadership and the member individually, may be they see the point. Remember, the majority of your church may be in false security and may be rejected by the Lord on the last day. You have to warn them in a spirit of deep compassion. Can you imagine the gratitude of a soul rescued from such a state on the last day? I rather perplex 99 and win one rather than let them get lost.

Jude 22Be merciful to those who doubt; 23snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

Also Ezechiel 33 whole chapter.

Your are in fellowship with the prophets of old in this situation, they suffered about their people and you are not exempt.

While you remain where you are, I also advise you to seek fellowship with some likeminded believers for mutual refreshment and to maintain your spiritual sanity. This is vital for survival. It is very difficult to harbour spiritual anguish as you do for a prolonged time and not somehow become negatively affected.

I still battle depressive moods because of this situation. Now we are in a fellowship where things are better from the teaching side. Still I am looking for an authentic expression of what Jesus and Paul had in mind when they talked about the church and I told the Lord that I want to experience it once in my lifetime or else he can take me away.

Quote:

----- "Why don't you just pray about joining another fellowship

Banal, but this is what you should do after you exhausted your options.

narrowpath

Re: A Release of Frustration - posted by Lor_E (), on: 2008/11/24 14:24

My this sounds all too familiar! although there are several hundred miles apart geographically speaking, it seems to be going around, this sort of sickness. I call it a sickness because it seems to me to be opposite of wholeness, which is what the Lord gives.

We went to a church much like this for several years endeavoring to be whatever kind of a testimony we could be there. When they would ask me to sing I would quite often sing accapella, and though I might share beforehand usually it was simply reading a verse from scripture or a prayer... surprisingly there were many people who liked the quietness of singing without hulabaloo, even many young people would come to me and appreciated to words they heard.

My husband often taught an adult Sunday School class, and though he would sometimes feel that some were offended at what he spoke, many people appreciated to straight forward gospel that he spoke. Even an older preacher who came to this church from a rather larger more popular one after he retired asked my husband where he studied at and told him how much he appreciated his spirit.

There were times that he or I were asked to pray for people and so on, and we tried to be very sensitive to the Holy

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Spirit on that and pray what He would have us pray which, though sometimes, was awkward to the flesh nevertheless was what was often needed... for more than just the issue at hand, but even for the hearers.

We certainly stood out like the proverbial "sore thumb"; but, I heard from a friend of mine who ran into someone who still currently attends that church (we moved from the area about 5 years ago) that the person that she missed was myself, which quite frankly shocked me indeed!

While church "leadership" tries to bring in the numbers and dollars, there are still many people there whose hearts really want to just hear what God would say to the church. There are still people, regardless of age that still appreciate the message from hymns and the simplicity of accapella or singular instrument, if it is annointed.

As a matter of fact there are many people who are just downright starved for fellowship with the Father and the Son; who long for people to just be real that care for their souls; there are plenty of folks who, yes and amen, need to have strengthened those things that remain; even that have a hope that somewhere, someone else desires to be obedient more than they fear man, more than they want to see acceptance, more than numbers, really more than anything else.

When the time is right, as I'm sure you know, God will remove you from this congregation; I say that only because I've seen it over and over again; but until then there are other Christians that just need to see you there. They probably need to see you say, 'no, I'll just pray from here for now.'; they may see you as a hope for the true Christianity they long for much more than you may ever know.

I'm sorry to go on. It just seems to be such a struggle in this present day.

(I do not mean this verse that you by any means have fear, only as a source of encouragement.)

Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, He it is that doth go with thee; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Dt. 31:6

Lord bless you,
Lori

You are not alone with those concerns and wants - posted by White_Stone (), on: 2008/11/24 14:45

Dear Brother West,

My husband and I have given up searching for a physical church to attend. We spend time each day listening to and reading the Bible. The closer to the Lord we get the less any of the worldly trappings we are able to swallow.

Praise Jesus for His good providence to place us in a Country that has free access (for the time being, anyway) to the Bible and groups such as this. There but for the Grace of God is not a statement to be taken lightly.

I am glad you vented. Your concerns are valid. Follow your conscience.

Kind regards,
white stone

Re: - posted by MrBillPro (), on: 2008/11/24 14:46

Paul, just recently my Daughter was "kicked off" is the way I will put it the Prayer partners team at Lakewood, they have to be there one hr. early to just stand in some little covey hole location of the Church and Pray for a solid hr. Well my daughter asked the team leader instead of the one hr. Prayer time in the group, wouldn't it be better if we all walked around the Church greeting and Praying for folks that need individual prayer and the lady was so hard headed and closed minded she told my Daughter if she did not like the way things were done to move on. Now let me vent as nice as this old Tex as boy can, I wanted to slap her silly the way she put it to my daughter and I still may if I am ever having a bad day one Sunday, I will just have to ask God to forgive me. :-)

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Well my daughter keep her Prayer Partner ID tag because no one has had the backbone to ask her for it back,"yea I am upset to" so now during Prayer time, she just gets up out of her seat and goes were Gods leads her to pray for folks and it seems now the "real leaders" of the church are liking this and have approached my daughter on how to structure this and may start a different smaller team for this. The Church in my opinion needs to do some "house cleaning" to get rid of some of the folks that I feel do things as they see fit and "NOT" whats Gods leads them to do, they structure things to satisfy the majority or themselves, we want to keep the majority happy or myself, who cares what anyone else thinks is the new attitude.

Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2008/11/24 16:08

Thanks to everyone for your contributions. I guess what really motivated me to post this was the feeling I had waking up this morning. The trouble entering into quiet time, remembering what the praise and worship leader told me after the show was over yesterday. She came up to me and whispered in my ear: "You ALWAYS need to come up with the prayer team...."

This upset me. I gently told her, "Sister, I'll come up when I'm led to come up." She was taken aback and continued on her way, but it stuck with me. I told my wife about it, and she reminded me that I needed to be instant in season, out of season. This I am familiar with, but I also believe that not being led by God trumps any season you may be in at the moment.

We have home Bible studies with the deacons of my church, Matthew Henry style, and I lead the studies...and this is where God has me right now, and why I am to be at this particular church. The deacons are getting their first taste of deeper devotions, being introduced to men like Watson and Flavel and Mueller through our studies. They came to me and expressed the need for "something deeper" to supplement the Sunday morning sermons. Usually I am fine at church (meaning I can moderately tolerate the atmosphere), but yesterday it really tore into me. And then the prompting from the Chi Alpha pastor and worship leader to perform...it just perturbed me. It carried over to this morning, where I was "disquieted" by it during quiet time. My impulse was to make this thread and vent. I realize there's nothing deep and wise here - I know many of you have come to expect as much from my postings - and I apologize for that. The truth is, I get frustrated just like everyone else, and need to vent (whether in the flesh or not, I'll let you judge).

And, yes, I have prayed about different fellowships, and the answer from God is to *stay* until told otherwise. Those of you who are seated in solid fellowships where flesh and soul are discerned and avoided, you really don't know how blessed you are. How I long for purity in worship, corporate worship, and for strong, holy preaching that staggers the inner man. How I long for the simplicity of hymns without anyone's persona injected.

O brethren, let's pray for one another.

Re: A Release of Frustration - posted by Choo, on: 2008/11/24 16:38

My frustration:

Being zealous for the Lord in a church that lacks spiritual vibrancy. It is not said but felt that they think me a kind of heretic.

My frustration:

Being the odd ball for constantly suggesting the importance of seeking the Lord's face foremost about issues concerning us, our church or our nation, rather than merely talking about it or trying to seek a solution in our wisdom and strength. Being rejected time and time again about the necessity of regular corporate prayer.

My disappointment:

For some time now, the Lord has placed upon me His burden for the souls of men and a desire to do something about in my community.

He impressed upon my heart to write a personal letter explaining man's sin and redemption through Christ. It's written in a loving way, but nonetheless, where Christ and the cross is mentioned, there will be an offensive. In the letter, I listed our church's name as a reference of being a good Bible believing church where the Gospel is preached. I have gone through the phone directory and sent copies of these letters to thousands of people, at a great cost to me, but deemed it a small price to pay for the giving out of the Gospel to some who otherwise would never darken the door of a

church. At one point my pastor was pleased with me doing this, until he received a few responses from people (non-believers of course)who were offended by them. He told me that he wanted me to remove the name of our church from off t

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he letters and as much as intimated that he agrees with those that have contacted him that I should cease from sending them. This greatly disappointed me because to me the main objected of a church is to get the Gospel message out. We should be proud as a church for doing this, and not be covered by the offense of the ungodly.

I feel that again here I stand alone.

Charmaine

Re: You are not alone with those concerns and wants, on: 2008/11/24 17:04

Let's be very careful that we do not isolate from all believers tho. While the thoughts shared on this thread are very legitimate, and I have experienced this myself... scripture is clear we need brethren around us. Real brethren in real life. While this forum is great interaction, it should not replace the real life fellowship of the brethren. Can't break bread over a computer... at least not yet.

Krispy

Re: A Release of Frustration, on: 2008/11/24 17:39

Brother Paul, I concur with your original post. I here what your saying. I also Hope you can Stay with it through fasting and prayer to bring about the changes needed. God Bless you, John

Re: A Release of Frustration - posted by ccchhrrriiiss (), on: 2008/11/24 18:07

Hi Brother Paul...

I feel your pain. My parents came to the Lord at an old fashioned A/G fellowship in Tennessee. My sisters came to the Lord at a "modern" A/G fellowship in Virginia. I met the Lord one night at a summer camp in Yorktown, TX, while we were attending an Assembly of God congregation in southern Texas. I have seen this dichotomy of structure with the A/G for quite a while now. I attended congregations whose pastors seemed to have an unquenchable desire to "grow" in numbers and "vitality." Their solution? They have catered to the wants of youth.

I understand a goal of not having a "dead" church. There is nothing quite so dead as a Church meeting void of spiritual life. Yet I learned a long time ago that this has nothing to do with the music, preaching, etc... I have seen just as many (and perhaps, MORE) "dead" congregations in modern, "hip" churches as I have in the quiet, lowly ones.

Not too long ago, my wife, her sister and I attended a Christian music festival in Calistoga, CA. It was the "Rock of Ages" festival. I went mostly to hear some of the speakers (like the Creation Research people). However, I also went to see the music. I could not believe how "secular" some of it was! During the Newsboys portion of the festival at night, people were dancing with one another, "body surfing," and even moshing. Needless to say, I found it deeply disturbing. I didn't want to "judge," but I could hardly find a young person who seemed to be extraordinarily "genuine" with the sincerity of their faith at the festival!

I think that this is an epidemic at our churches. It has less to do with music and more to do with "pleasing" people...or fitting in with the conception of a pentecostal church. Pastors are simply excited when the congregation is busy with the workings of the Church. Thus, they don't worry about how "real" this faith is -- as long as people continue to attend.

My sister-in-law is 18 yrs old. Before she moved with us to attend Stanford University, she was attending a very active youth group at an independent church different than the one her parents attended in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. The youth group seemed quite busy, and most of her family was excited that she wanted to be so involved in the work of the Lord. Yet as we started to inspect the youth ministry, we uncovered a climate of disaster. The youth were simply involved because they were allowed to be involved. The 26+ yr old youth pastor was secretly trying to date my sister-in-law (while she was in high school...taking her on secret dates and even kissing her many times while they were alone). This entire youth group, in fact, was like a social dating service. Guys and girls dated one another with shocking results...even though the silly youth pastor claimed to believe and teach the principles of "biblical courting."

The youth pastor was teaching them doctrine...but the hyper-charismatic doctrine he learned at Rod Parsley's bible school. He constantly proclaimed that he "is a man of God" and "hears the voice of God." The youth group simply revolved around staying busy for the church and the youth group music bands. They would go visit churches, but we found out that they would leave early if it became "boring." There was no hunger seemingly present for the truth of

God's Word. They just seemed happy to be in a club.

We were glad to free my sister-in-law from that mess. We are trying to keep that silly youth pastor away from her (he lied to me repeatedly about their relationship...and even when confronted with what we know, he continued to lie or state his claim of being a "man of God" *rolls eyes*). Yet this sort of nightmare scenario is playing out in many churches today. This is especially true of Pentecostal churches (and even more classical pentecostal churches like the A/G). Pastors are just wanting something to happen, that they seem to settle for a "rain dance" -- like the prophets of Baal did before their altar. I even heard one pastor say that "*if God doesn't move, I move God!*" Just think of the audacity of such a statement!!! The error lies in the commonly held notion that God only moves when there is a busy congregation...or exciting music...or full pews...or youth that actually are excited to go to Church. This is not revival. Nor is God confined to such things.

I feel your pain, brother Paul. I see so many congregations that are exceedingly dead -- even though they have a reputation of being alive.

I guess I am the one ranting now. But it does feel a little better to get it off of my chest!

:-)

writers like Watson and Flavel and Matthew Henry - posted by White_Stone (), on: 2008/11/24 18:16

"getting their first taste of deeper devotions, being introduced to men like Watson and Flavel and Mueller through our studies."

Dear Brother West,

Reading Matthew Henry spoiled me for any modern writer or preacher. My first taste was Martin Luther and from there I was hooked. Martin Luther's works are available in download, Free at "The Project Gutenberg."

It was, also, then that I realized how 'dumbed down' our written language has become. How clearly these man can express their points. Matthew Henry leaves no confusion and nothing to interpretation. You know where he stands when he says something and you know where in Scripture he founded his stand.

If only there was a Church that taught from this perspective, I would make it a point to be in a pew. A Church like that would have no cheerleader leading Hymns. The members probably would not be concerned about clinging to their 'tax exempt' status, so there would be few paid positions available within it's ranks so there would probably be no Prayer Group Commando.

It requires an acquired taste for reading these books and it can spoil you for most anything else written within the last 100 years. However, it is not necessary to read them, as everything they say is in the Bible, but how clearly I can understand their point.

I can understand you not wanting to leave your church since you have this study group to look forward to and lead. I will pray the other men in your group grow in the Lord as you are.

Does you wife read these, too? It would be good if the other women at your Church were to start studying, too.

Going from what the Apostle Paul teaches is it not right for the 'praise and worship leader' to be a woman. She was out of line to tell you what to do. These are serious symptoms, I hope you are able to help them, if not, flee.

Kindest regards,
white stone

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Re: writers like Watson and Flavel and Matthew Henry - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2008/11/24 18:37

Quote:
-----Reading Matthew Henry spoiled me for any modern writer or preacher. My first taste was Martin Luther and from there I was hooked.

Reading Henry on your knees to supplement your quiet time in the scriptures will certainly spoil you. It will raise the ante very high. Henry's actual sermons are priceless too; sermons against drunkness, legality, hypocrisy. Sermons which extol all the great virtues of sobriety, humility and patience...propelled in authority by the timelessness of the Holy Spirit.

Brethren, I think that in trying to protect our churches from becoming lukewarm, we overcorrect the wheel and spin-out on the other side of the road with pumped-up ebullience and dynamic music, teaming volume and profusity with anointing.

My wife is a godly woman, but we are at different stages in the school of God. She loves the Lord with all her heart - and has the amazing faith of a babe. But she likes the contemporary music, and she can lift her hands and worship the Lord with the music. I used to be able to do the same, but I can't anymore. Something in me has shifted, and when I hear the songs I am disturbed in spirit.

I met the section presbyter yesterday, who, a long time ago interviewed me when I was getting my credentials. He knows that I have since relinquished them, and so it was a bit awkward shaking his hand yesterday, explaining I was still Christian (I could see he was concerned) and not in moral failure or anything else; I just couldn't stomach the denominationalism any longer. He put his hand on my shoulder in commiseration and told me I could call him if I ever wanted a person to talk to. I guess he thought I was lonely and confused?

:-)

P.S. My wife is expressing an interest to read Bunyon's Pilgrim's Progress for the first time. This is an amazing thing, coming from the strong Pentecostal background she was raised in. About three years ago she didn't even know what a Puritan was; John Bunyon in her mind rode a big blue ox and chopped down trees. Now she knows better...and she knows about Matthew Henry and Charles Wesley too. We're getting there slowly but surely. It takes time for God to work.

And I'm the chief example.

Re: - posted by MrBillPro (), on: 2008/11/24 19:04

Quote:

PaulWest wrote:
But she likes the contemporary music, and she can lift her hands and worship the Lord with the music. I used to be able to do the same, but I can't anymore.

Wow Paul I can relate to this, I have recently did the same. I used to be able to lift mine and holler along "I can't sing" with the best of them, now since I have quit for some reason now my wife wonders if I am getting bored with the music. Why is it that some folks in Church just can't see God may be working on us to act or be different rather than folks say are you getting bored? I just told her, I really never felt comfortable doing it and I only did it because everyone else did, she was speechless, but she still Loves me. :-)

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told me I could call him if I ever wanted. . . . - posted by White_Stone (), on: 2008/11/24 19:19

"He put his hand on my shoulder in commiseration and told me I could call him if I ever wanted a person to talk to. I guess he thought I was lonely and confused?"

Sad, he has a need to call you and he is blind to it.

It is my opinion that being 'promoted' to any position of authority or honor is personally destructive. I think the positions, if really necessary, should be on a limited basis to keep people humble. There is a famine in this Country for truly humble men and women of God. I am not speaking of false humbleness but genuine, spirit-filled humility. That is a revival that would move mountains!

Regards,
ws

Re: A Release of Frustration, on: 2008/11/24 19:51

Paul, I respect your courage and transparency to even address real heart issues that will surely offend some of your friends, and some of your ministerial colleagues. I rejoice too, for in it I hear your inner man standing for Spiritual reality... and the Gospel that accompanies that. A gospel where the least of the brethren are honored, and a simplicity of worship towards Jesus as Lord is apparent.

I believe that many, many true believers are travelling this same road of Divine discontentment. Once you have tasted of the glory of the Lord, how can a type do? You must have the real thing, and only reality will do! This is the sign of a true believer to me.

Also, Jesus said that He came not for Peace, but Division. I see pruning on many levels, both individually, and corporately. There are many who do have a form of Godliness, but have no concept of submitting to the Glory of God...and in the end, it is the only thing that will do for a son.

What you have described is typical fare for the "Emerging" church, which is a gospel that caters to me, and my senses. Is the music cool; did I enjoy? It is formed from the idea that a happy church, and a satisfied Church will grow, stay, and keep giving....as dues, in a way...for a fulfilled life...and let us not forget a christian one.

There is no holiness, for there is no cross..no self denial, but constant balancing to attain self satisfaction, all in the name of Jesus and "MY" church.

A scripture has been coming to me recently..."God seeks those who will worship Him, and worship Him In Spirit and in Truth."

Could it be Paul, that the Lord's voice is upon you, beckoning you back to devotional purity?

with respect..your friend, Brothertom

Re: A Release of Frustration - posted by joeSOC, on: 2008/11/25 1:13

I hear you brother... Its sometime very painful to go to church on a Sunday. This is why I am leaving the big bang ! Getting involved at grass roots level ... a few families and single men and women who want to pursue holiness, 1 guitar a few old hymns and bible studies... I get tremendous encouragement from Gideon who only need 300.

God help us all !

Re: - posted by Nellie, on: 2008/11/25 10:35

Brother Paul,
God led me to a small Church.
We worship God in Spirit and in Truth.
The Spirit of God is welcome, and no programs or begging for money.
Everything is in order, according to the Word of God.
I feel Blessed by God that He led me to this Church.

May you pour out what God pours into you, and I believe you will.

God Bless you.
Nellie

Re: A Release of Frustration - posted by rowdy2 (), on: 2008/11/25 11:19

Brother I too have been their and felt the frustration.

God called a woman at a well. God, called a man up a tree, God called a man on a cross, on a buggy. God feeds His sheep in the desert, on mountains, on the shores of lakes, in upper rooms and on the road to Emmaus.

We are not to uproot them because all the lost sheep will be found by The Good Shepard but we must be ready to receive and to love them.

I sing praises to God in the nursing homes twice a week with a few other members of the Body who are not connected except in Christ and we are a real blessing to people with real spiritual needs..

Eddie

Re: A Release of Frustration - posted by ginnYROSE (), on: 2008/11/25 12:35

Quote:

Dear brethren,

Over the years I have found that sharing some of my frustrations on this site has helped me in the past, and brought a sense of solidarity to others who may be experiencing the same.

The church my wife and I attend is a vibrant AG fellowship in Texas. We are situated in the middle of San Marcos - the home of Texas State University . There are lots of college kids. As result, the church is compelled to highly contemporize the praise and worship for our young visitors (we sometimes do "Newsboys" songs and other Christian top 40 billboard songs). The volume is loud, some of the musicians dress seemingly to make a fashion statement: grunge, tweed blazers with the shirt untucked, jeans and hair gel. A female generally leads the worship, and she is like a firecracker leaping around, speaking in tongues, shouting, preaching to the congregation in-between the songs, etc. My poor ears can't take it anymore. I have to wait outside in lobby entrance during these times, my ears hurt, my head pounds, I sense myself becoming agitated. It has been going on like this for over a year now.

If I establish eye contact with a deacon, he will ask me to help take a collection, publically read a Bible passage (which he has chosen), or just come up and pray over something at the drop of a hat. This is because I am respected as someone "spiritually mature" in the flock. Yesterday, I was asked to come forward with the "prayer team" and help pray and I kindly declined, opting instead to stay behind in my seat and pray from there. It was an awkward moment. I'm tired of being expected to perform, to endorse soul. I relinquished my credentials earlier this year because I can't take the foolery any

more. The allowance of women to do whatever they want to on the platform; the compulsory tithing under threat of a curse; the offensive rock music, and the sermons never seem to deepen - they just remain at the same level to reach and speak to those who are content to meet them eye-to-eye.

I long for the singing of some plain old Charles Wesley hymns, with just piano or accapella. I long for a meaty sermon on the New Birth or the dynamic of Sin, or the power of the blood of Christ. Something with strong meat that is able to work revelation and spiritually metabolize under the authority of the Holy Spirit.

Thanks for letting me vent! The more I study the Word, the more I sing hymns in the quiet time, the more I soak myself in scripture and read good, wholesome literature by the saints of old, the more disgruntled I get with where I fellowship. Please try to refrain from offering me the banal, "Why don't you just pray about joining another fellowship..." because that base is already covered. I am where I am for a reason; it's just that this forum is really the only place I can vent (and you know it doesn't happen often) and expect some good, constructive thought from you guys in return.

See, I feel better already

Lord have mercy!

Now, that you have vented your frustration, what are you hearing the Holy Spirit telling you to do?

ginnyrose

Re: - posted by fuehrerbe21 (), on: 2008/11/25 14:24

Brother Paul,

After chatting with you during the Revival Conference, I have since purchased *The Normal Christian Life* by Watchman Nee and the Lord has been working in me many of the issues Nee has raised in his works, especially sharing in Christ's death.

My wife and I left our church a week ago in an effort to be faithful to the Spirit. The church we left is the opposite of what you have described. It has great Biblical teaching and they sing the hymns of old, but it is suffering from other biblical issues such as leadership, church discipline and the family. We are currently seeking a new church and are extremely aware of the challenge we currently face.

The church we went to this last Sunday was a typical evangelical American church where the sermon is superficial the music is intended to create an emotional response. I was more focused on how the pastor sounded like Mr. Moviephone and the antics of the congregation that I didn't really worship God. The deepest the pastor went was asking the question, "Can God use evil to fulfill his purposes?" and he never even pursued a Biblical answer.

Nevertheless, Christian fellowship is essential and Biblical, therefore, we will continue to search until God tells us where he wants us.

Blessings,
Brother Ben

Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2008/11/25 20:11

Quote:
-----After chatting with you during the Revival Conference, I have since purchased *The Normal Christian Life* by Watchman Nee and the Lord has been working in me many of the issues Nee has raised in his works, especially sharing in Christ's death.

Amen, TNCL has been one of the most influential books I have ever read, and the Lord has used it mightily to impact my life. I am honored that He used me to direct your attention to it. Before my wife started having a hard time with her pregnancy, I was actually teaching TNCL for adult Sunday school in my church! It's pretty incredible how ignorant most believers are to the basic fundamentals of sin, imputed righteousness - nay the imputed *life* of Christ in our walk and the ramifications of such. Many times I would look out and see the adults staring back at me as if I were teaching the tenets of Mormonism or Armstrongism. I had to start at the very beginning with a proper understanding of the blood of Christ and the

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dynamic of Sin and death that entered into the human race through Adam's transgression. Seasoned Pentecostal saints serving the Lord longer than I've been alive really had no clue what I was talking about. To them, the power of the blood of Christ was an intangible charm that forgives sin - and something you could also plead over your children or car or bank account to ensure success.

Quote:
-----The church we left is the opposite of what you have described. It has great Biblical teaching and they sing the hymns of old, but it is suffering from other biblical issues such as leadership, church discipline and the family. We are currently seeking a new church and are extremely aware of the challenge we currently face.

The brother who pastors my church is a man of God and he teaches truth...but he is caught up in the web of utilizing contemporary means through music and programs and drama skits to bring people into the House of God. The sermons are solid and good and scriptural, but they never get any deeper than the basic guidelines of practical Christianity which one should be familiar with after a few years of walking with God. If you study the scriptures on your knees and commune with God habitually, you will quickly outgrow them and begin hungering for deeper preaching and a level of worship that the fellowship is sadly unable to provide. The old adage that the fleet can only go as fast as the slowest ship seems to apply here. I think this is a sad consequence, and I really don't know how a man can remedy it, save he just start walking into the deeper waters and pray others begin to follow him there.

I have also as of late been disenfranchised with the whole one-pastor-monarchy that I am beginning to find objectionable and unscriptural. Perhaps in some cases it is plausible; but when you have able elders and deacons and other brothers in the congregation who walk with God and are able to contribute ministerially, why not establish a system of spiritual checks and balances and allow God to bring in fresh ministry and rotate the prophesying? As it stands, everything must be filtered down through one man, and he has uncontested executive power. If you object or verbalize your feelings to others, you can be in danger of sedition, or trying to cause a schism.

Quote:
-----The church we went to this last Sunday was a typical evangelical American church where the sermon is superficial the music is intended to create an emotional response.

O brother, this is truly the bane and agony I go through each Sunday morning: the staggering inability for us to differentiate between soul and spirit, between transient happy emotions and the unassuming bedrock of joy, between the flesh of man and the fire of God. It is truly agonizing to look around at others lifting their hands in worship, smiling in bliss and rocking trance-like side-to-side...and all the while knowing it is soul power and God is not there. You can watch old Jon Bon Jovi videos from the late 1980's and see the teenage girls doing the same when the ballads are sung. With tears streaming down their faces!

Quote:
-----Nevertheless, Christian fellowship is essential and Biblical, therefore, we will continue to search until God tells us where he wants us.

Amen, brother. Corporate fellowship is vital, biblical, healthy. I believe in staying put right where I am until God moves me. The impetuous flesh wants to buck and kick and start a house church or something, but conceding to this will take me right out of the will of God and confound the deep lesson He is teaching me through this trial. I don't want to have to repeat this grade over in His school. Nothing lasts forever, and if we exercise long-suffering in Christ (no matter what the situation), the Lord will one day intervene and begin something completely new and glorious and transforming in your life. Those that jump the gun get the temporary relief they ache for, but in the long run they don't proceed into the upper echelons of His academy; they're left behind to repeat the grade, like Israel sojourning in circles for forty years in a wilderness that should have only taken a few days to transverse.

Brother Paul

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The Normal Christian Life by Watchman Nee - posted by White_Stone (), on: 2008/11/26 10:21

Is this book available on-line? Or, are there excerpts so I could sample it before buying? It sounds like a worthwhile item.

Regards, white stone

Re: - posted by fuehrerbe21 (), on: 2008/11/26 10:44

Quote:

PaulWest wrote:

I have also as of late been disenfranchized with the whole one-pastor-monarchy that I am beginning to find objectionable and unscriptural. Perhaps in some cases it is plausible; but when you have able elders and deacons and other brothers in the congregation who walk with God and are able to contribute ministerially, why not establish a system of spiritual checks and balances and allow God to bring in fresh ministry and rotate the prophesying? As it stands, everything must be filtered down through one man, and he has uncontested executive power. If you object or verbalize your feelings to others, you can be in danger of sedition, or trying to cause a schism.

You raise a good point here about church leadership. I, too, would argue that a "one-pastor-monarchy" is not Biblical. If you study Acts, you will see that the work of the apostles was spread out amongst the other elders of the Church. Paul, while a figurehead within the establishing of the church at the time, was no more important in regards to completing the tasks and purposes of the church.

Not to rock the boat too much, I would encourage you to consider how "missions" operate and how that compares to scripture. I would suggest that missions today do not operate according to the model that was established in Acts. Paul never settled in one specific location, rather he moved all over, equipping and training the elders that had been appointed. The elders were native to the area in which they lived and understood the needs of the community better than Paul could have ever known.

I don't want to take away from your initial post about your frustrations with your church, but these are big issues you raised (in my opinion) regarding church leadership.

Re: The Normal Christian Life by Watchman Nee - posted by White_Stone (), on: 2008/11/26 11:15

I answered my own question and found a downloadable PDF version. Google Search showed it.

Regards,
white stone

Re: The Normal Christian Life by Watchman Nee - posted by Tears_of_joy, on: 2008/11/26 11:30

Quote:

White_Stone wrote:

Is this book available on-line? Or, are there excerpts so I could sample it before buying? It sounds like a worthwhile item.

Regards, white stone

(<http://www.worldinvisible.com/library/nee/nchrlife/nclcont.htm>) The Normal Christian Life

If I would recommend a book, that would be this one.

Re: A Release of Frustration - posted by Koheleth, on: 2008/11/26 17:28

Hi Paul! We have been through some of the same. I guess my personal evaluation is questioning why there is so much bending to and appearing like the world. While not knowing anything about the church, you are describing a familiar and common scene, one that I have been part of several times. I know many people here have been or are wrestling with very similar situations.

I humbly would recommend that you ask yourself how much of what you experience on Sunday morning will reflect what you know to be in heaven or around the throne of God. If in your meeting there is coercion, strife, and disquieting music, then Satan is already lord there. If that is the case, I would get out. Where there is not love and mercy and peace and holiness, God is spiritually spurned. Where God is not welcome, in his fulness, in his holiness, then you don't want to be either.

her. May the Lord guide you so clearly.

By the way, not necessarily just for you Paul, but I wanted to state my agreement with Krispy's comments that you need real brothers and sisters. It is too easy to become a "lone crusader". Also, about being instant in season and out of season, that doesn't apply to going forth with the worship team when someone else is directing you to. Sorry, but don't get pressured by misapplication of Scripture. You don't "need" to do anything. However, if you can't wholeheartedly submit to the current direction of the church, you really should leave.

In the end, I need you to listen to God and not me, but this is a bit of what I have come to over the years. All the best in your search.

Re: - posted by live4jc, on: 2008/11/26 17:56

Hi Guys,

Honestly, I am not sure whether we can know definitely whether it is God's will for someone to stay in a church or to leave it. It depends on our reasons for leaving, and mainly I believe it depends on God's will for our lives, which may be different for each one of us.

In Paul's case, I believe he has very good and godly reasons for staying in his church, as he believes he is able to have an impact on the spiritual lives of the deacons in the church, through Bible studies. In my case, I believe I needed to leave a church we were in, due to the detrimental impact it was having on our kids, through the dancing and vulgarity that was a part of the kids program.

James says we ought to say, "if the Lord will." The apostle Paul wrote, "Let each be convinced in his own mind." (I know this is in regards to which day we worship on, but I think the principle can be applied to this situation as well).

In Jesus,
John

Re: - posted by Koheleth, on: 2008/11/26 18:50

Quote:
-----Honestly, I am not sure whether we can know definitely whether it is God's will for someone to stay in a church or to leave it. It depends on our reasons for leaving, and mainly I believe it depends on God's will for our lives, which may be different for each one of us.

Let's not get confused. We can know God's will so clearly in many situations. In light of what was said by live4jc, I want to add to some of my earlier comments.

If a "church" is gone to the world, it is no longer the Lord's. Now, a Christian may feel led to stay there in order to "have an impact" or "be a witness" but it is no longer a place of worship, sanctification, or fellowship. It cannot be considered a church in a believer's life.

Of course, as you say, a person may stay there, but they need to be sure it is the Lord's leading, because it would be almost entirely for the purpose of reaching out to those who need an experience of Christ, whether first-time or re-awakening. The danger in staying apart from God's explicit direction is that many peoples' walk has been lulled into lukewarmness by staying in a so-called church. Also, if there is a denominational structure, there is usually only so much that can be done.

On the other hand, sometimes Christians are too quick to bail out when there is still hope. I would never want to encourage a hit-the-road mentality in anyone. I just think we need to be honest about the situation if the Spirit is not Lord in a place that calls itself a church.

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Re: - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2008/11/26 21:47

Quote:
-----Now, a Christian may feel led to stay there in order to "have an impact" or "be a witness" but it is no longer a place of worship, sanctification, or fellowship. It cannot be considered a church in a believer's life.

How many times have you seen this actually work? Have a positive impact on the group? From what I have seen it is the 'missionary' who will eventually succumb to the prevailing apostasy.

My thoughts,

ginnyrose

Re: - posted by rbanks, on: 2008/11/26 23:11

Hi Brother Paul,

I have been blessed by your posts that I have read. I think you are very seasoned in the Lord. I also have been very blessed by the TNCL by Watchman Nee.

I believe that you said that the minister is a pretty good preacher but seems to be caught up in to using worldly methods to get people there. It seems that it has now gotten to the point to where this has become the main course. The Word is not the primary focus and the people are not growing spiritually but the church is growing numerically.

It seems like unless the Leadership can begin to refocus and turn the helm toward the Word and a deeper experience then it will eventually lose its spiritual vitality. I think meeting with the deacons for bible study is important; hopefully it will stir a spiritual hunger within them. I pray that God will give you the wisdom in how to go about everything and also words to speak at the proper time to the ready listener.

I know that you understand that everything rises or falls from the Leadership. I know that you believe in being led by the Spirit in everything you are to do without causing any discord among brethren. I sense the wisdom of God and humility in your walk with God in the way you write. I just want you to know I pray for you because we know that it will take God to bring about a spiritual awakening within the Leadership before anything significant can happen toward a truly biblical church there.

God bless you brother in what God leads you to do, because we both know that God loves those people there and truly does want them to experience the deeper spiritual life that pleases Him. He is Holy and He will have a Holy people!

Re: A Release of Frustration - posted by InTheLight (), on: 2008/11/27 15:48

I can relate to your frustration. I do thank God for places like this web site where there is such a wealth of great teaching and preaching and also many other resources for articles and books from men who knew their God. By the wonder of modern technology and God's grace, I count many men whom I've never met or who are long since departed, as spiritual fathers.

I have this longing for New Testament fellowship and teaching of God's word that plumbs the depths and divides asunder soul and spirit. I've done the church shopping thing and considered home-church but each time I know that the Spirit is leading me just to grow where he has planted me. I have prayed much over this and right now the only answer is to "wait". I can tell you that I have learned much about my own selfish pride, impatience, and unbelief through this process. It has been a time of refining. Yet still the longing remains...

In Christ,

Ron

Re: - posted by psalm1, on: 2008/11/28 0:45

They say we go too fast! This accusation comes from all directions. Our enemies do not like our speed and our friends are afraid of it. What do they mean? If they had complained that we did not go fast enough, I could understand them. If our enemies had argued that after all we say about the evils of sin, the terrors of the Judgment Day, and the damnation of hell, we do not believe in these things ourselves, I could understand that, and feel humbled under their indictment.

If our friends came together and said, "Why don't you increase the speed? Look at the dying millions at home and abroad. You have evidently got a wonderful way of reaching the masses. You have accomplished what no other organization has. You can adapt yourselves to all peoples and countries and climates. Why don't you push on faster? Why don't you train more cadets-send out more officers-hunt up more criminals, drunkards and fallen women? Go faster; get up more steam!" Now, this seems to me would be the natural way of talking for both foes and friends. But no! The cry is not "Go faster" but "You go too fast!" What do they mean?

Speed is a good thing, and, if combined with safety, the faster the better. It is reckoned good in traveling. I don't know of any train that goes fast enough for me. Time is so precious that unless it can be spent in sleeping or working, every minute of it is begrudged. My feeling whenever I am in a train is, "Now, engine driver, do your best, and fly away!"

Speed is reckoned a good thing in money-making. Who would complain if we were an Investment Company developing a profitable gold mine? The same people who complain of our speed in spreading salvation and saving men would all want to buy shares, become our partners or buy us out.

If we were a killing army, no one would complain of our going too fast on the line of victory, slaughtering Arabs, or Afghans, or Zulus, or anybody else who did not live on our side of the sea. If we killed plenty of them, burnt plenty of houses, took plenty of spoil, we should fascinate the world again as Napoleon did with the speed of his successes. Painters and poets and newspapermen would fill the whole earth with our fame.

But because God has given us a little success in saving men and women from endless damnation, and extending the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, there is a great outcry—especially from those who every morning pray "Thy Kingdom come!" - that we are going too fast; they say we are ambitious and seeking great things.

William Booth

He seemed to be a forerunner in his day!

Re: - posted by Lordoitagain (), on: 2008/11/28 2:15

Brother Paul,

I found your post quite interesting. I can empathize with much of it. I was teaching an adult Sunday School class . . . getting deeper into the Word . . . and studying deep authors. I was teaching from Watchman Nee's "The Spiritual Man". Finally the monarch of the church told me to teach "from the Gospel of Jesus Christ and not the Gospel of Watchman Nee". He was implying that my teachings were against the Gospel of Jesus Christ . . . as if I had become a heretic or something. When the Gospel disturbs the comfort zone of sleepy "soulish" Christianity . . . LOOK OUT! The messenger gets shot down.

I was very interested in this part of your post:

Quote:
-----I have also as of late been disenfranchised with the whole one-pastor-monarchy that I am beginning to find objectionable and unscriptural. Perhaps in some cases it is plausible; but when you have able elders and deacons and other brothers in the congregation who walk with God and are able to contribute ministerially, why not establish a system of spiritual checks and balances and allow God to bring in fresh ministry and rotate the prophesying? As it stands, everything must be filtered down through one man, and he has uncontested executive power. If you object or verbalize your feelings to others, you can be in danger of sedition, or trying to cause a schism.

Last December, I visited a church "festividad" in El Salvador. The church group was quite different from the traditional Evangelical church of America. I was brought up in a Church of God (Cleveland TN . . . much like AG). I was a part of an

independent holiness church for almost 7 years. Now I'm in a Spanish mission. One of the preachers in our mission was as a part of that fellowship in El Salvador for many years. I have diligently inquired of him regarding their system of operation. They don't have any ONE pastor. Psalm 23 in the Spanish Bible says "JehovÃ¡ es mi pastor" which is their typical answer when asked "Who is your pastor?". They point out the fact that Jesus didn't leave any one man in charge . . . he had 12. Another one of their "quite different" beliefs is that the preachers never "prepare" a sermon. They pray and study and MEMORIZE scripture. When they have service, one preacher reads a passage of scripture, and then 2 or 3 preachers preach on it (based on I Cor. ch. 14: 29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge).

30 If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.

31 For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.). It is always done totally impromptu under the anointing of the Holy Ghost. After the preaching, they all testify, and much of their testimony is repetition of memorized scripture. The brother that preaches in our mission knows the scripture probably better than any of the many English speaking preachers that I've heard in my life (& I've heard many). He needs no notes. It pours from his memory.

I've asked him specifically about the decision making processes of the church. It is always a "group thing". They get together and pray and seek God, and God leads them. When a church member is sick, they take turns visiting him, or they have an all-night prayer meeting and he gets healed, or they pray until God takes the sick home to heaven (whichever God chooses). In their thinking, they are sharing the pastoral burden, and it is not all on one person. Receiving a salary for ministry is taboo for them. They bring up the situation of Simon the sorcerer, and Peter's strong words to him. They also cite Paul's method of working and preaching as much more honorable.

Having seen their very successful system of operation, which is so different from the "traditional evangelical" system, I've studied the issue quite a lot. I too have "been disenfranchised with the whole one-pastor-monarchy that I am beginning to find objectionable and unscriptural". According to some studies that I have read, our current system of "one man on the top" is a trickle down from Rome. The Roman church established a priest at each place who reigned over his territory. When the protestant reformation happened, the same type of system continued . . . they just changed the name from priest to pastor. It is interesting to me that the word pastor is only used once in the New Testament in a list with other ministry gifts. I've never found where the one ministry gift "pastor" was given any more authority than any other ministry.

I was questioning my El Salvador brother about the subject of authority. I asked "what is the authority that believers and preachers are supposed to have". His answer was something like "we're supposed to have authority over sin, self, and Satan". It is a sad reality that many of the monarchs in churches have little or no authority over sin, self, and Satan in their own lives, yet they profess to hold authority over entire churches and territories.

I believe that when any man of God is proclaiming and exemplifying Christ, then his example (because Christ is being manifested through that person) becomes an authority to all who see it. That man of God doesn't have to stand over any one with a voice of commandment shouting orders. His own example is a commandment for which all who see it will be accountable on the day of judgment. "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." I Peter 5:3

Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2008/11/28 7:52

Quote:

-----I've never found where the one ministry gift "pastor" was given any more authority than any other ministry.

Yes, in scripture, the word "pastor" (to some, it's an office, to others it's a title) is grouped along with prophet and evangelist and teacher as those given by God for the perfecting of the saints in Ephesians 4; but in most western churches today, the term "pastor" has come to represent the brother who sits at the very apex of the pyramid of churchianity - in formal church buildings he is the brother who wears the hat of prophet (that is, preaching and public prayer); he is the teacher of doctrine and theology, and he is also the evangelist. He directs and presides over all the deacons and elders and micro-manages what is being taught in Sunday school and where church funds are being allocated. He can have unilateral veto power....unless, of course, he was voted in by the congregation, or someone reports him to a Presbyter (in a denominational setting). It's a fascinating study to see how this one-man-rule over a fellowship came into effect, branching out fr

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om the original "plurality of elders" system I believe the early church operated under.

Another thing I've noticed is the public collection of tithes and offerings. I think giving ought to be done in private, without a preparatory announcement, and I don't think the offering plates should be placed indiscriminately before visitors and unbelievers. Why not just put a box in the back of the hall with a scripture like 2 Cor. 9:6-8 beside it and let whosoever will be led of their own heart to give and out of the cheerfulness of their abundance.

Re: - posted by Lordoitagain (), on: 2008/11/28 11:42

SO TRUE! SO TRUE! I have had the same thoughts about the reception of offering. It's kind of difficult to "let not your left hand know what your right hand doeth" when a service is stopped for the special moment of giving. . . especially when it is done publicly with "who will give 1,000? . . . who will give \$500? . . . who will give XX?"

When unbelievers come and get the impression that our God is poverty stricken and in dire need of our finances . . . or that He is a banking institution that is sure to return your money with high interest . . . we give them the wrong concept of God, thus pushing them farther from coming to know Him.

Oh, Lord help us to return to the simplicity of the Gospel!

Lord help us to return to the simplicity of the Gospel! - posted by White_Stone (), on: 2008/11/28 12:24

It would seem that this is exactly what He is doing - right here and now.

I find this thread very interesting and edifying.

The description of the Central American worship leaves me feeling sad about what we have in comparison. Of course, we have been physically unchurched for years. This was not our choosing but due to the life we were given. If you live on the road, in a van with 4 dogs, congregations do not welcome you into their new buildings, to sit and contaminate their padded pews with second-hand stench. Of the ones we did venture into, no one ever offered us a shower or a place to wash our feet. We were treated as if our poverty was contagious. Should the Good Lord have settled us in their vicinity we would not have gone to them to worship Him.

Even among homeless there are classes. Many of them are frightening because of their lawlessness and addictions but not all are such. Also, even though someone may be homeless and not an addict or mental, it is not a given that they serve Jesus. But I have found that the more one has to depend totally upon God for their literal daily bread and shelter the closer they come to seeing Him. The majority of people in this Country have never known true hardship but I believe their lives are about to be plowed and they will be ready to receive seed and give forth the Good Fruit of true repentance. I pray they will have time, for the time is already near for the harvest.

Praying for you all,
white stone

Re: - posted by Nellie, on: 2008/11/28 12:28

As far as the majority of the Church of the Church of God denomination goes.
It is about the Pastor having control.

They have taken the control away from God the Father, Son, and Spirit, and given it to mortal man.
The Elders and Deacons are hand-picked by the Pastor, and they wouldn't dare go against him.

It may not be this way in the Church you attend, and it isn't this way in the small Church I attend now, Thank God.
No one is pressured to give.

The fleecing of the flock, and false doctrines that abound from the pulpit are rampant.

Father, help us all.

God Bless
Nellie

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2008/11/28 13:12

Quote:

-----The Elders and Deacons are hand-picked by the Pastor, and they wouldn't dare go against him.

In some churches this is the case. In many others, such as the one I attend, the board is much more in control. In this case the pastor is certainly accountable, but he also can become embattled in these environments. Having experienced both kinds of governments I can't really say which one is better or worse.

MC

Re: - posted by Lordoitagain (), on: 2008/11/29 13:12

I agree that both of those types of government can be bad, but there is yet another type of church government, as I was mentioning that I saw in El Salvador . . . an absolute plurality of leadership like Jesus left in charge when he left (11 men - not 1 man with a board of 10).

The governmental set-up that is in the majority of the churches is patterned after earthly governments which Jesus forbade

Quote:

-----Luke 22:24 ¶ And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.
25 ¶ And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.
26 ¶ But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.
27 ¶ For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.

When there is a GROUP of "pastors" "preachers" "ministers" leading a church, and all realize that they are merely servants (like a waiter at a table serving a meal-see the Greek definition there) then there is a sharing of the burden.

If each of the "board members" in the case that brother Compton referred to had to spend hours before God in prayer and hours in The Word in order to be prepared to minister, (and hopefully with results) it would change their board meetings drastically. If it was understood that they were not a "board with a pastor", but that they were all pastors sharing the burden to see God work in lives, it would be a different picture altogether.

The set-up that most evangelicals have is terribly unhealthy. Most American Christians are dependant on their pastors to do all of their deep Bible study and to determine (for them) what is good doctrine and bad doctrine. In most cases the pastors encourage them to study . . . but without ever having the challenge to study and minister before others, they never establish (for themselves) in their own hearts what they really believe.

WHAT WILL the majority of American Christians do, if we are thrown into concentration camps and have to TRULY stand alone . . . with no Bible near to even look up verses about what we believe?

Paul stated very clearly:

Quote:

-----1 Corinthians 14:31 For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.

Most Americans' faith in the fires of persecution will have to be "I know that brother so-and-so preached it like this, and I KNOW that he is a man of God" . . . Instead of having shared in ministry and studied the Word with a solid conviction of what it says.

General Topics :: A Release of Frustration

When a pastor falls in America, he takes many with him because we are SO pastor-dependent. When a pastor begins to err few in most American congregations can even detect it because in most cases . . . he is our link to God.

Will it take persecution and underground church operations to re-structure our faulty systems? In most cases it probably will . . . but the Fourth Man will be in the fire to help us through the whole process.

concentration camps - posted by White_Stone (), on: 2008/11/29 13:44

Dear Lorddoitagain,

Both of your posts have been inspiring and uplifting for me. With the pending changes coming my husband and I both foresee concentration camps as a distinct possibility. Those and a new monetary system requiring the 'Mark of the Beast.' There is no church such as you speak of around here. We read and study together and follow threads on many forums. God gifted us with the fellowship of a fine Christian Man a couple of years ago and he has done as much as he can to direct us to learn more of the Lord's will.

Memorizing scripture is a good step in the right direction.

In the Bible it speaks of singing Psalms. I have tried this but get stuck with phrasing. Will keep working on it.

Your final paragraph is worth repeating:

"Will it take persecution and underground church operations to re-structure our faulty systems? In most cases it probably will . . . but the Fourth Man will be in the fire to help us through the whole process."

Amen!

Re: concentration camps - posted by roadsign (), on: 2008/11/29 17:38

Quote:

----- I'm tired of being expected to perform, to endorse soul.

Hi, Paul, I am not hanging out here these days because of some weighty commitments. Nevertheless, the Lord just now directed me right here to your post. I hear you so intensely! You don't want to play church anymore, yet the church you have enjoyed has slipped away as a vapour into the distant past. That's how I feel too – abandoned, in a sense, though not by outward appearance.

Actually, I am taking a church history course, and am learning that most of human civilization has been no different. People have been rejecting Christ and trying to build their own Babel tower kingdoms – and hurting people in the process. We could have been living under far worse circumstances than we experience now. I find myself frequently asking, "Lord, where were you all those years? Where has the Spirit been working?" Well, he has been at work! There are quiet hints all through history. Other than that, we can likely conclude that God's best treasures never make it into the history books. We will meet them in heaven.

Meanwhile much of what we watch today under the umbrella of religion is well-defined by my OT prof: "Since the fall in Eden, humans have been trying to claw their way back to God." All the while Christ's offer of abundant life goes unheeded.

Quote:

----- I relinquished my credentials earlier this year because I can't take the foolery anymore.

The challenge is not to "throw in the towel" because we are fed up, but to relinquish anything that may stand in the way

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ay of what God may wish to do in us and through us.

Perhaps this is a season in which God is doing just that in many of us. It's unsettling.

Hang in there! And keep your eyes on the bigger picture.

Diane

Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2008/11/29 17:57

Quote:
-----The challenge is not to "throw in the towel" because we are fed up, but to relinquish anything that may stand in the way of what God may wish to do in us and through us.

Dear sister, it's truly good to see your name here. I've missed you.

You are absolutely right in what you wrote. I'm not throwing in the towel, per se, on my church family and other things pertaining to religion; it was more the denominationalism I was being required to uphold, preach (or not to preach), and concur to in writing for credential renewal. I was also tired of the relentless tithes demanded from me each month by the district Presbytery, the unnerving bookkeeping; the suspicion from time to time that the full tithe wasn't being paid if the amount fell below what the Presbytery expected from my secular income; as well as the ordination of female pastors - and the forbearance of preaching anything pertaining to election, predestination, limited atonement and original sin - which I was beginning to lean towards at that time.

I was tired of being asked by others what label I fell under in Christianity, and having to answer "AG", knowing that I no longer adhered to some of their non-negotiable tenets.

Quote:
-----Hang in there! And keep your eyes on the bigger picture.

Amen, I will. Yes, and I must constantly remind myself of the bigger picture...which is another reason I chose to credentially disassociate myself from the denomination (but not from the fellowship). I well realize the main concern the Lord has is not with my credentials or what denomination I belong to, but with *me*.

Thanks for the post!

Re: Dealing with old wineskins - posted by roadsign (), on: 2009/1/8 8:16

How's it going Paul?

Quote:
----- it was more the denominationalism I was being required to uphold,

This is a difficult spot to be in, Paul! I see that some are trying to put chains around you - to capture you and make you an enabler in its dysfunctional system. But if you comply you feed into it, and there is no love in that! If you resist, then you are perceived as the problem. Either way you suffer.

Of course, you and I, standing on the sidelines, suspect that those who are insisting on such a degree of "denominationalism" are merely putting a noose around their own neck. They are strangling themselves. But to them it is just the opposite: the survival of the "organism". The risk of the beloved wine skins tearing is just too frightening.

Jesus faced such temptations too. The religious establishment of his day was always trying to squeeze him into its mold. Thus, Jesus can identify with those temptations today, and is able to help those who must endure such temptations.

General Topics :: A Release of Frustration

Today, in our free market of religion, you and I can simply walk out the door and go to another church or simply attend no church at all. However, it is a mistake to view that as our answer in and of itself. It could be an easy cop-out. It could even pull us away from where God has actually called us - not just to serve but to forge our faith - as God's refining fire.

It's always good to remember that our modern day choices have rarely been available historically. For most of history, if you fell out of line in your local religious establishment, you could lose everything. Your choice was either to comply or accept shunning or even death.

“Render to Caesar, (or the church, or any other authority in our lives) what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.”

Our challenge is to learn what the church can rightfully require of us and what it can't - and then draw a distinct boundary line - in our conscience first and foremost. To me, this has never been an easy procedure, but has been, and still is, more like a process of continual spiritual growth. As the chains of dysfunctional loyalty breaks, my freedom to love them and serve them with the power of Christ grows. (I have a long way to go!)

Diane