

Devotional Thoughts :: SIMPLICITY OF THE CHURCH**SIMPLICITY OF THE CHURCH - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2012/9/22 10:36**

And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. Ephesians 1:22-23

Rene looked carefully both ways as he turned the corner. No one seemed to be watching. Wiping the perspiration from his forehead he glanced at his watch. He was five minutes early. He walked slowly around the block a second time to arrive at the large gate at exactly 7:14. He pressed the bell three times: short...long...short. It was the newly changed code to indicate he was a fellow-believer. The gate opened and closed quickly as Rene slipped inside. In two hours time there were several hundred believers gathered secretly in the basement for fellowship.

Rene sat quietly waiting for the others. He remembered reading in a magazine about a small group in China that gathered weekly in the back room of a small store to worship together. It was the era of the infamous Cultural Revolution. Since the believers could easily be overheard by anyone entering the store, they "sang" hymns together without words or music. Someone whispered the name of the song and they would silently move their lips and simply think of the words and music.

He chuckled out loud. The memory came of Pastor Wally saying, "We are an underground church like the believers behind the Bamboo Curtain, but the difference is that we can praise in full voice because the facilities are sound proofed. Not even our closest neighbour can hear us."

This is a description of a church group in Saudi Arabia - a country that has not had an official church in over fourteen hundred years. And yet many believers meet together secretly and at great risk all over the country.

The most common way for the church to express its faith in western societies has been through the institutional pattern. Consequently, this is the only pattern with which many Christians are familiar. But this form can be easily eliminated by a repressive government, is difficult to maintain in other hostile environments, and may not be appropriate to local cultural needs. There are other options if you and your fellow believers were under the rule of those who were trying to repress Christianity.

RESPONSE: Today I will accept that there are many forms of church to fulfill the five biblical functions of the church.

PRAYER: Pray for those around the world who must meet in secret for worship services.

Standing Strong Through The Storm (SSTS)

A daily devotional message by SSTS author Paul Estabrooks

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Re: SIMPLICITY OF THE CHURCH - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2012/9/22 10:54

The reports of God working in these dire situations are nothing short of amazing. These reports mimic the ones of the early church as recorded in Acts.

I remember hearing one of a man who was miraculously healed. He was hauled to court...Forget the outcome...

Or, how about the ones where some women were imprisoned for sharing their faith. While there they did not lose time in ministering and in the process brought others to Christ...The authorities were forced to release them...

Or, how about the home that had received a shipment of Bibles. The police came to confiscate them. They ransacked it but could not find any. All the while they were sitting in plain sight on the table in the middle of the room.

And where did I hear these stories? from one who has lived and worked in a Muslim country for many years.

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These people know God in a way that most westerners do not.