

## General Topics :: The church I yearn to belong to

**The church I yearn to belong to - posted by ThyKingCome (), on: 2014/10/10 10:51**

The church I yearn to belong to

Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord, it has been a burden on my heart to write down the desires and yearnings for what I long to see in a church fellowship, especially since my family has recently entered a period of transition. I am in no way desiring to be contentious or to start a thread which points fingers or accuses any kind of fellowship. I simply desire to share my burdens and express my heart to hopefully accomplish a few things:

-To see if other believers are in the same season and perhaps can relate to what is being said, and hopefully find encouragement to know that there are others out there in the same place.

-To possibly help sift through important and valid desires versus non-essentials in seeking a home church.

-To gain wisdom, insight and even correction from other saints who have an unbiased perspective and who can point out blind spots.

You may notice that this is not meant to be an exhaustive mission or doctrinal statement, but rather a general set of desires and convictions. I hold to fundamental, conservative evangelical Christianity.

I will post my thoughts below and then follow up with some probing questions afterwards. Please do prayerfully consider before responding and may it be in the meekness of wisdom for all to receive from.

### Gatherings

I am fully behind the need for more house churches. I have read most of the "Principles" book and greatly rejoice at the vision that is being promoted. The only thing I would like to add is that I see a need for the church "Gathered" and the church "Scattered". To me, the church Gathered is when the families of the fellowship (comprising 30 to 1000, whatever the size) gather in a public setting in order for the preaching and teaching of the Word, Prayer, Fellowship, Worship, Communion etc (Acts 2:42). This allows for visitors, outsiders and others to find the meeting place and even experience what Paul describes in 1 Corinthians that "God is truly among them". The church Scattered is when the remaining days of the week are comprised of house fellowships, prayer meetings, and specific ministry meetings for men, women, youth etc. This is the time for the church body to affect their neighborhood, community and meet in smaller intimate settings to foster discipleship and rich fellowship.

### Church Events

I am not against church events or event calendars, however I have noticed that churches seem to be more event-oriented these days and it tends to focus on a spectator mentality. I desire to see Biblical events that can edify the body, whether it's a night of worship, a marriage retreat, or a parenting conference. An example of events promoted through the church that I tend to be discouraged by are: "Classic Car Fellowships", Exercise, Kickboxing and even Cage Fighting. If saints have similar hobbies and interests that they like to express together they are free to do so, but it should not be under the banner of the church or promoted on a website or in a bulletin "I believe this tends to draw away from the purpose and focus of what the New testament Church is meant to be and portrays a mixture of Biblical purpose.

### Leadership

Leadership to me is central in what a church ought to be. I don't have a rigid view of exactly how all the details are meted out, but I don't believe a healthy leadership team consists of either of the two extremes: A Senior Pastor who is "above" his elders and is not really accountable to anyone else except for his pastor friends and mentors who can only follow the ministry from a distance or a church that is governed exclusively by a board and they have the power to hire and fire the preaching pastor (hireling) based on attendance, budget etc. Of course there must be a leader among leaders in order for there to be order biblically. I desire to see a group of humble men whose hearts the Lord has touched who are fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, who rule over their own households well and truly offer themselves to the fellowship as watchmen and overseers. The elders ought to meet frequently and have honest, raw prayer gatherings regarding all aspects of body life "giving themselves to prayer and the Word of God. They cannot be "yes" men, b

business men, politicians, self-seeking, ambitious for personal gain or promotion. There must be unity and holiness above all else.

#### Preaching and Teaching

I yearn to be a part of a church where there is Biblical, Christ-Exalting, God Fearing Preaching and Teaching. Talks and devotions have their place, but where is the Word of the Lord? Let it come now! The only way the Word is meant to be proclaimed is unsheathed â€ but sadly the scabbard lies on too many talks and sermons. I want to be convicted, rebuked, challenged, abased, confronted, lifted, encouraged, inspired, enthused, corrected and comforted by the hearing and going forth of the Word of God. There ought to be liberty to teach verse by verse through Romans, and then turn around and have a topical study on the attributes of God. Preaching and Teaching work in tandem together as seen in the Book of Acts, but many churches are one or the other. Alan Redpath said that he believed the Churchâ€™s greatest need was prophetic, evangelistic preaching. I say amen to that need!

#### Prayer

Prayer must be central and foundational. From the pulpit to the pew, prayer must be taught, modeled, and encouraged for every member. â€My House shall be called a House of Prayer, for all nationsâ€. It cannot be something we do as a church for 30 seconds before the message only, or relegate it all to a prayer team or prayer ministry â€ prayer IS the ministry of the church to the Lord! Each ministry should be born and founded, sifted and discerned through prayer AND fasting. If someone has a desire to start a ministry then it should be asked of them, â€tell me what the Lord has shown you through prayerâ€. Prayer should be incorporated into the church gathered meeting, and should be available before, after and even during service as the Lord leads. A prayer from the pulpit that is born of God can lift the hearers immediately into the throne room and cultivate the soil of hearts like nothing else can!

#### Worship (Musical)

Please, please hear my heart in this. I long to see the Redeemed singing together in glorious union to the Lamb who was slain both here now on earth and in heaven. Musical worship ought not to consume the majority of the gathered time, although sadly it does in many cases. This leaves precious little time for Prayer and the Word, which ought to remain priority, lest the fellowship be caught drifting from the fundamental components of New Testament Christianity. Believe me, I am all for musical worship â€ what a joy it is to sing together as the redeemed! Instruments, no instruments, voices, choirs, bless God it has all been used for His glory. The musical time of worship ought not to be a performance â€ â€skillfulâ€, yes, so others can follow along, but never a performance or show. Those who are leading should have a solid witness and testimony in Christ before leading, lest they cause others to stumble through a mixture of light and dark in their walk before men. It should never be a time to promote emotionalism and the songs themselves should be prayerfully considered. Is this a song the redeemed can sing TOGETHER? Is this exalting Christ? Does this tend to cause me to focus on Jesus and His glory and worthiness or does it lead me to being self-centered in my walk with Jesus? Is this time in song promoting genuine praise and ascribing worth to God?

#### Missions

I long to be a part of a church on Biblical mission. Short term mission trips can be fruitful and have their place for giving the body a brief experience in another context and to provide a resurgence of aide to another church or organization â€ however this must not be the emphasis. The Church ought to have a Biblical vision for the entire Kingdom of God and Intra-denominational ministry. Territorialism will crush the quench the moving of the Spirit. A church on biblical mission should keep the main goal in mind of making disciples locally and then sending and planting elsewhere for the work of the Kingdom to be advanced. There is no model or formula for this, however a church that has been together for 20 years and has never re-planted may be closed off to what the Lord might want to do. Money given to the church should be thrust into this endeavor. It saddens me to see churches spend 90% of their money on salaries and buildings â€ if the church caught the vision from John Wesley we would scrimp and save and be prudent and frugal so as many resources as possible could be sent out from us, rather than absorbed by us.

#### Childrenâ€™s Ministry

The burden of discipleship should never be placed on the childrenâ€™s ministry. This ministry should be a help, blessing and aide to the parent (s) whom God has entrusted with this high and holy task. Discipleship should be fostered in the home, God willing. There should be structure, much grace and also discernment amongst those serving. Children must be taught the Bible as truth, and shown the love of Jesus. Helpers who volunteer should be encouraged and appreciated but also overseen. An example of a poor decision to me is when my wife and I came away from a Friday night Bible Study to find that our boys (2 & 4) had been shown the â€Jungle Bookâ€, a movie we arenâ€™t ready to show them in our home. Oh how grace and discernment is needed with our children! We are truly grateful to have been able to have help with our children, so we were thankful and appreciative; nonetheless I believe there is a better way.

### Giving

I believe grave errors can be made regarding the money offering. One is to over-emphasize "tithing" in the teaching and give the sheep a wrong understanding of new covenant giving. We have all seen this. But I also believe it's biblical to warn from the pulpit about the corruption of greed and to give a biblical perspective on money so that the people will willingly offer to the Lord. 2 Corinthians 8-9 is a tremendous portion of scripture that can give any church a new covenant example of giving. If you are going to have money boxes on the wall, great it's discreet. If you are going to pass a plate, so be it, it makes it easier to give for the body. However, is it necessary to pass the plate twice in one service? "This offering is for our general fund" the offering at the end of the service is for our building project. I believe this can cause visitors and new believers confusion or perhaps discourage them in returning if received in the wrong way. I want to belong to a home church that I can fully get behind the practical side of giving as much as the preaching if either one is compromised then there are bound to be moral problems.

### General Housekeeping

Is sin addressed from the pulpit and in meekness of small meetings or personal confrontation, or is it overlooked. Are the shepherds shepherding, and being diligent to know the state of their flock? Or are sin issues neglected due to insecurity or fear of man? A little leaven leavens the whole lump. Any address of church discipline should begin with "you who are spiritual RESTORE such a one in gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted". Confrontation after only much prayer and personal examination. Love covers a multitude of sins!

I truly believe that Jesus' bride is universal and we are members of one another and partakers together of His flesh and blood. To me church membership is an extra measure brought in of men, but I would never contest it or make it a major issue. My only issue is with churches that take it to the extent of someone having to be "voted in" to fellowship or other unbiblical methods. I read on one church website that after being sworn in on the church constitution they would "extend the right hand of fellowship" should the right hand of fellowship be extended to all brothers and sisters because we are already in fellowship because of Jesus?

I believe that the gifts of the Spirit are just as available and embedded in the church as the book of Acts. Of course they have been abused, but they have never ceased. We have the same Spirit as Christ did "Eph. 4" there is only One Spirit who's never been retracted! Biblical leadership ought to know their own gifts and help to stir and foster these gifts in the body. All things should be done decently and in order. Words of prophecy ought not be despised, but rather tested "tongues should be kept in privacy unless an interpretation is available and have their place in a meeting where only believers are present" 1 Corinthians 12-14. Signs and wonders are NEVER to be elevated but should follow and validate authentic Christian witness as seen in Acts.

Media should be utilized in our culture, but never relied upon and abused. To each his own. Bring your Bibles to Church, Beloved! We ought to spend more time in prayer and less time watching videos, Beloved.

The church that seeks to be relevant to the world will not have the power to speak to that world. The church that seeks to be relevant to God will walk "in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit" and great grace will be upon her!

Lord, please continue to build, sustain and gather your Church together for Your great Name's sake and glory.

Amen

### Questions:

-Do these desires/convictions strike a chord with you? Do you bear witness?

-Knowing that there is no perfect church, is it too stringent to have desires like this in place, or is it better to just "take what you can get", honestly?

-If you find yourself in a place such as this, do you spend more energy praying things would change or getting behind what is currently in place? How have you responded to this tension in conviction?

Thank you for taking the time to read, Beloved. May the sweetness and love of Christ be upon our speech and may everything we say and do be done in love.

My love for you and His Church.

-Kevin

**Re: The church I yearn to belong to - posted by Sidewalk (), on: 2014/10/10 11:19**

Years ago I drew a little cartoon no one wanted to publish. It showed a desert island with the single palm tree, and two men with long beards and wearing the ragged remains of their clothes. One says angrily to the other, "OK, then I'll start my own church!"

Just as there is no perfect church out there, screening participants to prevent troublemakers from coming in, so there is no better way to let God pound character into your life than to put you into one of those less than ideal churches.

I see you are from Southern California. The challenge is intensified! He must really believe in you!

**Re: The church I yearn to belong to - posted by DEADn (), on: 2014/10/10 12:26**

The best way to alleviate this longing is to get involved in the church you attend and do something beyond sitting in the pews. Service in some way and do it with all your purpose realizing that not all people in the church feel the same way you do. If you are passionate and do that to the maximum you might catch the church on fire in a good way. Your longing may start with you.

John

**Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2014/10/10 14:16**

Brother Kevin,

What a blessing to read all you wrote. I agree with your separation of the Church "gathered" and "scattered". The Principles volume encourages those scattered sheep together in small groups for mutual encouragement. But there is a great need for "gathered" larger assemblies with more order, leadership and they can even be a help to many of the smaller "scattered" groups.

I will re-read and digest some of the excellent burdens the Lord has put in your heart. I believe this is a season of God doing a "new thing" and there will be new bodies of Christ being birthed in local areas in North America as larger denominational settings grow worse and worse.

**Re: perspective on yearning - posted by Sidewalk (), on: 2014/10/10 17:46**

I read Kevin's eloquent piece this morning, shot out a quick top of my head response, and jumped on the motorcycle to go make some deliveries. As a fellow SoCal dweller, the bike is a good way to get around quickly in the tropical temperatures.

But I pondered on the things he wrote and had another thought that works with what DEADn brought up.

The church is indeed a place for ministry, and there is almost always somewhere with a hole just your size. But the yearning goes way deeper than that, knowing that we are built on a God model, and it is no wonder we crave intimacy with others. I always liked the relationship between David and Jonathan, an incredible love bond between two men, even described as better than the love of a man for a woman! (And I don't think homosexuality played any part in this!)

For me, those church yearnings have never really worked out. But what has worked is the way God has directed me to incredible Christian friends. Not a lot, and over the years some have moved away or died- but God always seems to put me with someone who shares my passion and hungers for that special interaction. Not that we always agree of course, but the iron sharpens the iron, and joy is fulfilled.

It is good to love another guy who loves you back and lives hungry for a deeper walk with God.

A while back, I was in a large church with a men's ministry- gathering together every Tuesday night. I went for a couple years, and tested the waters with maybe 50 guys. But it was a Baptist... oops, I mean Community church, and I could not find even one willing to challenge the dominating religious system and ask the real questions seeking intimacy with Christ. It is hard to find those guys, but I do believe in asking God to bring one by!

Even on SI, you won't find many folks who want to see you in person. A pity.

**Re: The church I yearn to belong to - posted by Oracio (), on: 2014/10/10 21:15**

Very good OP with many good, valid points made. I don't believe the overall standard described in the OP is highly impossible to find in churches but to the contrary feasible to find to a large extent, even despite so much corruption being seen in so many churches these days. I say that from past experience in some good churches and from second hand testimonies of others who have attended different churches.

That said, I would caution brethren against expecting a "potential church" to excel in every single area addressed in the OP. The reality is that most churches excel in some areas and need work in others.

Again, thankfully one can still find some churches out there that could fit many if not all of those descriptions more or less, though not perfectly; churches that have not gone apostate but are still holding fast to and practicing sound doctrine.

**Re: - posted by ThyKingCome (), on: 2014/10/10 23:44**

Thank you brothers for all of your valued input and comments:

Tom, I appreciate your sense of humor and agree wholeheartedly that there has been too much of a sense of "Cavalier" church planting born out of disunity or frustration. But God even in His sovereignty has used differences to establish valuable works for His Kingdom. He is Lord.

John, Thank you also for writing, and I agree wholeheartedly - the believer who is just soaking it all in and pointing the finger without moving a finger in support is a blight on the church and not a blessing. We recently concluded a 10 year season of ministry in which my wife and I were heavily involved, including belonging to the eldership on my part. We're hungry to be invested somewhere, but it's the "somewhere" we are seeking and praying towards. In many ways looking for a new church is like courting a wife - making every prayerful step and planning for life union, while also trying to discover incompatibilities. Of course the analogy breaks down eventually, but it helps to describe the sobriety and commitment involved.

Greg, Thank you for your kind encouragement. I have been greatly blessed and stirred by Principles and also Uncompromising Faith. We sense the Lord moving in our lives in an unseen and deep way, yet we are not sure what is going to happen honestly. We're getting godly counsel, fellowshiping with believers and churches, and waiting on the Lord. We don't sense we have landed where we belong...yet. Perhaps that will change soon.

Oracio, I appreciate your thoughts and comments brother, and I do agree - it should not be vain wishing to desire the thing mentioned above, and I also agree some situations might be "half and half". I don't think it's healthy for anyone to arrive somewhere and have in mind what they want to change from the outset, so we are seeking to avoid that while still being faithful to the burdens and convictions that Lord has given us - "Guard what was committed to your trust" is a Word I believe we are to walk in here.

-Kevin

**Re: The church I yearn to belong to - posted by Sree (), on: 2014/10/11 7:34**

Brother most of them that you have posted are good. I like the fact that you have a right understanding of missions. Most churches conduct mission out of interest to collect more money than to do God's work. The mission of a church is not to stand in street and preach, unlike certain principles book states. The calling of a church is to raise up disciples with specific callings like evangelism that causes the spreading of word. The church itself is not comprising of all evangelists. This is where I disagree with these principles books. To me they are written by people who themselves never submitted to a church. Confused with personal calling and church's calling.

now i find most of the points you stated are external. my church will be 100/100 in your books. but it is not these external points that really matters. for example God gave Moses clear vision on how to build the tabernacle. He built one following the external patterns that GOD gave. But it is not the pattern that is important, the presence of GOD that matters. If the Cananites built something in same pattern, GOD'S presence wont be there, only similar structure will stand. that is why i do not agree with such need of principles book. if God himself did not list something like this in Bible, then why should we put such rule books. All that matters is are the elders of the church God fearing and humble, if they are so then God will guide the church in truth. It is his bride he knows how to preserve it. We only need leadership that is willing to listen to Jesus.

Are you part of a church. The hardest part is to be submitting to a church. Many men are loners and proudly state in forums that they have no church because none of them are passing the criterias they have. I believe that in most cases the problem is with them. They do not have a submitting spirit to sit in an imperfect Church or a humble elder. Also it is important not to sit in a church trying to correct it unless you are in a leadership.

**Re: - posted by ThyKingCome (), on: 2014/10/13 10:35**

Dear Sree,

Thank you for your response and thoughts. I shared a bit earlier that our intention is to be heavily invested into a local church and serving in the capacity that the Lord would have for us. We definitely do not want to be "on our own". To answer your question, yes, we are in fellowship currently and part of a church. We were involved with a church and in leadership for 10 years, and the church we currently are involved with we are still praying about and waiting on the Lord to see if this is His desired haven for us - right now we are parked and waiting on His leading.

I agree completely that what you said is so true - unless the glory of God is preeminent in a fellowship of believers it can just be an empty shell. Ichabod. Having a name that they are alive, but truly dead in Jesus' estimation. My intention for writing down these desires was to share the general structure and church life as one would desire to see some pillars erected on a foundation, but supremely, as you have well pointed out unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain that build it - there must be the presence of Jesus and His glory in our midst. I do believe that if certain things are rightly in place however it can lend itself to making the right platform for the glory of the Lord, i.e. Biblical Preaching, Leadership, dependency on Prayer etc.

Thank you for your wisdom and taking the time to invest.

Blessings in Jesus and One in His Spirit,

-Kevin

**Re: - posted by Sree (), on: 2014/10/14 0:59**

Quote:

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Yes I agree as well. Thank you brother for taking my post in right spirit. People who mostly have lot of expectation in Church never really live committed to one church. That is why I was interested in knowing your Church experience. Good to know that you are part of a local Church as well. May God bless you.

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Yes this is the most important thing, as long as the leadership is prayerfully waiting on the Lord to show them the direction

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**Re: - posted by Sree (), on: 2014/10/14 3:03**

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