

General Topics :: An Interview With a Modern-Day, Sunday-Morning-Church-Going Christian

An Interview With a Modern-Day, Sunday-Morning-Church-Going Christian, on: 2005/8/2 12:49

There has been a discussion on another thread where we have been talking about our "traditions" and modern practices in church today. I have often recommended the book "Pagan Christianity" by Frank Viola... which deals with the roots of many of our "traditions", which are rarely ever investigated yet considered biblical.

This is an interview that Frank Viola conducted with an average church going Christian. Please read and comment.

Krispy

In 1988, I left the organized church never to return again. Since that time, I have been gathering with Christians under the Headship of Jesus Christ.

From the day I stepped out of institutional Christianity until this day, I have been asked the following question countless times: Why do the vast majority of Christians prefer the traditional church, with all of its unbiblical practices, over churches that are patterned after the New Testament?

Just recently, I discovered an answer to that question. To my mind, the best means of passing that answer on is to share the following interview with you.

**Frank Viola
May 4, 2005**

So tell me, Anna, why do you go to church?

I go to church in order to grow spiritually.

I see. Can you describe to me what your church gatherings are like?

Sure. Our church services are essentially the same each week. First, the greeters give everyone a bulletin that gives announcements and tells about special events during the week. We then have praise and worship. I love the worship team at our church, and I enjoy the songs and the music.

Are the people in the congregation free to request songs and start songs?

Oh, no. Only the people up on the stage can do that. We just follow along. I think we have hymn books. But the words of the songs are put up on a projector screen.

What happens next?

Well, we then have announcements and the offering is taken up.

How does that happen?

Well, usually the pastor or someone from the staff will remind us about how important it is to give to God. He will sometimes read passages from Malachi on tithing and how a curse is upon those who don't tithe and a blessing is on those who do.

What is the money used for?

From my understanding, the money is used to pay the pastor and his staff. It is also used to pay for the building and for other programs the church has.

Have you ever been part of the decision-making process of how the money is to be used?

Oh, no. That's the job of the pastor and his staff. I think we have deacons who might help with this too, but I'm not sure.

Alright. Then what happens after the offering?

Well, that's when the pastor preaches his sermon.

How often does the pastor preach?

He preaches every week, unless he is out of town and a guest speaker comes in. Once in awhile he'll let the assistant pastor preach a sermon.

So basically, every week you are hearing about the Lord from the same part of the Body of Christ?

What do you mean?

Well, every Christian is a member of Christ's Body. Each member has a function, just like the physical members of your physical body. The pastor is but one member. But you are a member also. And so is every other Christian who is part of your church. So if the pastor is the only one ministering in the service, the people are only hearing from one part of the Body.

Oh, I see. I never heard it put that way before.

What if you had a question during the sermon, could you raise your hand and ask the pastor? And what if you had something you wanted to share with the congregation . . . a message, a word, a testimony, an exhortation . . . could you do that?

I don't think so. I've never seen that done before. It wouldn't be appropriate.

Okay. Let's continue. What happens after the sermon?

After the sermon, the worship team comes back on stage and plays a song or two. And sometimes the pastor will ask those who have needs to come up to be prayed for. In the last church I attended, this didn't happen. So we just went home after the sermon.

Do you know anyone at your church?

Oh yes, there are three friends of mine who go also.

How many attend your church?

I think between 80 and 100. I'm not sure of the exact number.

Other than your three friends, do you fellowship with any of the Christians at your church during the week outside of religious services?

No. In fact, I really don't know anyone else there. The pastor gives us a few minutes after the offering to greet one another. But I could never remember their names. I go to Sunday School sometimes and know some people there. They seem nice, but we don't have a relationship outside of church activities. There is also a woman's Bible study during the week. I've been a few times. The women are nice and we have discussions, but again, I really don't know them well.

Okay, you have described your church very well. Let's see. In the beginning of my interview, you said that the reason why you go to church is so that you can grow spiritually. Correct?

Yes, that is why I go.

So would it be fair to say that your church helps you to grow spiritually by listening to the pastor's sermons and by singing the songs led by the worship team?

I guess that would be accurate.

Have you ever heard how the early Christians had their church meetings in the New Testament days?

No, how did they meet?

Well, before I answer that question, let me say that there are churches today that meet just like the Christians did in the first century. So I will describe these meetings in the present tense. I belong to such a church.

Okay, sounds good.

First, everyone in the church knows one another. And quite well. We spend time together outside of religious meetings. There is a fraternity of sorts among us. We are like family in many ways.

Second, we sing. But we have no worship leader, song director, or worship team. Instead, everyone is free to lead a song or request a song. And many of the people in the church have written many of our own songs. To be honest, our singing is very powerful even though none of us are professionals.

Wow. That sounds great. I often want our church to sing a certain song at a service, but there is no way to make requests like that.

Third, when we meet, we don't have a designated person who gives a sermon each week. Instead, the ministry comes from anyone who wishes to share. So if you were to visit a meeting, you'd find many different people in the church exhorting, encouraging, testifying, and bringing a word that magnifies the Lord. So instead of hearing from one member of the Body each week (as is the case in your church), we get to hear from many members. And everyone is welcome to share.

Also, since our meetings are open, anyone can ask a question or add an insight when someone else is sharing. This happens quite frequently and it is spontaneous and very edifying.

I don't believe I have ever seen anything like this. What about the money? And what about the pastor . . . do you all have a pastor?

Just like the first-century Christians, we don't have a pastor. Instead, we realize that all of us are responsible to care for one another (we are the church). We make decisions together as a Body. We plan our meetings, our activities, and we decide how to handle our problems. We decide how to use the money we give. Tithing is not required (that was an Old Testament practice). But we do give. We give to the needs among us and to anything else the church decides to give to. We meet in homes so we don't have the obscene overhead of a church building. And we have no clergy to support. Sometimes we bless the poor and needy. Other times we help other churches like ours to get off the ground. Other times the church here will put on something special for the community. And we give to that.

So this is how the early Christians met?

Yes. In fact, this is the kind of gathering the Bible is talking about when it says, "Forsake not the gathering of yourselves together . . . but exhort one another" (Hebrews 10:25). That is what we do. We exhort one another in our meetings. Because we are constantly encouraging one another in the church meetings as well as outside the meetings, our spiritual growth is not dependent on one man (a pastor). Instead, we have the privilege of getting fed from all the members of the Body . . . for every member of the church is encouraged to share in our meetings.

I never thought of it that way, but it makes sense. It also sounds like there is a lot of freedom in this way of meeting.

Yes, there definitely is. We are free to function in our meetings as the Lord leads us. We believe that every member of the Body is gifted and has both the right and the responsibility to edify one another in the church gatherings.

How is this different from a Bible study group like the women's Bible study group that my church sponsors? And how is it really different from a Sunday School class?

It is very different. Your Bible study has a Bible study instructor or leader. And that person is under the pastor. While there may be more freedom to discuss things than a traditional church service, a Bible study is not a church meeting where every member brings something of Jesus Christ to share with every one else. In a church meeting, there is no leader except for Jesus Christ! All gather under His Headship. In a Bible study (or a weekly "cell group"), everyone does not have the freedom to make decisions on how church money will be used, how church meetings will be planned, what the church will do for the community, or for the Lord Himself. Everyone does not have the freedom and the responsibility to get the Lord's mind on the affairs of the church. It is all prescribed by human leaders.

Sunday School is similar to a Bible study. You have a leader who is in charge. And you basically go there to receive from the Sunday School instructor, not to share or to give. Nor do you get the benefit of receiving ministry from the other people in the class. Plus, Sunday School is an event that is part of the larger church. So it has time-restrictions and is ultimately under the authority of the pastor.

I understand. What do you think the main difference is between your church and mine?

There are many. But I'll just list two. Your spiritual growth is dependent on the preparation, the study, and the insights of one man . . . the pastor. (If you attend Sunday School and Bible study, then it is dependent on three people.) It would also be dependent on the amount of will power you can muster up to spend time with the Lord during the week.

My spiritual growth is dependent on an entire Body of believers who minister the Lord to me every week. I also have the privilege of spending time with these people outside of scheduled meetings. We seek the Lord together. We fellowship throughout the week, and we mutually encourage each other. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ cannot express His fullness through one or two or three people. He needs a Body to do that. And that's what I enjoy in a very real way every week. Plus, I don't have to try to muster up my will power to seek the Lord during the week. My brothers and sisters in Christ help me with that.

The other difference is that in your church, the pastor is the head of the church. He ministers to the people, and he makes the final decisions. He is in charge of the order of worship, and he has the final say on how the offering money is used. In my church experience, Jesus Christ is the Head of the church in a very real way. We let Him lead our meetings. He has the freedom to function through any one of the members of His Body that He chooses. We look to Him to make church decisions, and we, as members of His Body, are all involved and responsible for getting His mind and sharing it with one another.

These are very new thoughts to me. But it makes a lot of sense.

I'm curious. After hearing how your church experience differs from mine, do you think you would like to be part of a church like this . . . like the New Testament describes?

Well, I think the way your church does things is great. But to be honest, I don't think it's for me. I like my own church. I enjoy the pastor's sermons, and I like the fact that most of the people don't know me and I don't know them. I can come to church, enjoy the singing and sermon, and leave, not worrying about anything or anyone. Your way of meeting seems too serious and far too personal for me.

Re: An Interview With a Modern-Day, Sunday-Morning-Church-Going Christian - posted by todd, on: 2005/8/2 13:09

First of all, this isn't a real interview right? It just sounds so nice and neat and perfect. But I do think it's an effective way to communicate what he wants to get across. But really it's like a "mock interview," right?

I liked much of what he said. One thing I'm not clear on is his view about church leadership, authority, structure. It seems like his church doesn't have ANY.

Quote:
-----Just like the first-century Christians, we don't have a pastor. Instead, we realize that all of us are responsible to care for one another.

er (we are the church). We make decisions together as a Body.

Now I'm assuming he means they don't identify someone as *the* pastor. But according to Ephesians 4:11, there were pastors in the New Testament church, right?

Re: An Interview With a Modern-Day, Sunday-Morning-Church-Going Christian - posted by saved_matt (), on: 2005/8/2 13:44

excellent post Krispy especially the last comment by the woman, very revealing.

I will have to look more into what he says about tithe being an old testament practice though. I've always brought my tithe and i'm in a house church like the one described by the interviewer, definite food for thought.

thanx

Re: - posted by Eli_Barnabas (), on: 2005/8/2 13:44

Be careful about this sort of thing. It sounds right, but at the root of it there is no difference. Both the idealistic "church service" and the "home church" are human ideas.

I'm saying this only because I've known people really into this, yet it becomes terribly devisive and ironically: programmed.

Don't be tricked, the New Testament Church had leaders, teachers, apostles, prophets, etc. It was not any and everyone doing what they wanted. As a matter of fact, women did not say anything at all in the New Testament church gatherings. I'm sure that many "home church only" members ignore this.

But, let me just say I am not defending one or the other. The New Testament Church was what it was because they were in love with Jesus and were obedient to His Spirit. They did not program anything. All that you read in Acts is extremely natural. They naturally met in the homes... they naturally met in the synagogues... because they loved Jesus, they loved each other and wanted to learn, grow, fellowship and worship. There was nothing programmed.

So let's not make a program of home church. Let's stop making a program of 'church' church. Let's fall in love with Jesus and His Spirit. **Allow the Church to be NATURAL.** How do you do this? Simply love Jesus and obey the Word. And nowhere in the Word does it say: meet in the homes, or, meet in the church. We simply do it because it is naturally the best way of meeting. Does anyone understand???

Well, don't take this post wrong. This natural theory is something I've been thinking about a lot. I find people get mixed up in the do's and don't's of "how to do church" and it becomes messy.

Love Jesus, love each other, obey the Word. Nothing else to worry about.

In Christ,
-Eli

Re:, on: 2005/8/2 14:09

I wondered myself if this is a real interview... but I know as much as you do, since I posted everything he wrote concerning the interview. The author says it's real... I can't say that it isn't. I've read enough of his material that I don't think he would lie about it or make it up.

As to pastors... the word pastor in Greek is interchangeable with elder. Yes, they had pastors/elders. The leadership seems to be plural, not singular as we often see today. The pastor at the apex of the triangle, then elders, then deacons on and down the food chain... that's what we have today. That whole structure seems to have come from the reformers who kept the structure they had when they were in the Catholic Church.

Krispy

Re: - posted by saved_matt (), on: 2005/8/2 14:31

Quote:
-----The leadership seems to be plural, not singular as we often see today.

I'm currently reading watchman nee's normal christian church life and this is what he concludes is taught by scripture that there was no singular head in the churches during the first century, the reason for this would be that if the church was following one man he could veer off into error, where there is less chance of this happening if the church is led by a group of spiritual elders.

But like eli said church shouldn't be a free-for-all but shouldn't be led by any one person.

Re:, on: 2005/8/2 14:36

Eli... I'm not advocating leaderless churches. Not at all. You have not read Mr. Viola's books I am assuming. What I reject is the westernized notion of what leadership is. Churches set up like corporations. We have been programmed in America to think that is what biblical leadership looks like.

But God is not an American, and he is doing much more outside of our borders than He is doing inside our borders.

And it's happening under a much different concept of "church leadership" than we know of...

Krispy

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/8/2 15:20

I enjoyed reading the interview. It's message resonates with me. For the most part I think there is a great deal of virtue in this movement. I have several good house church friends who want me to join them...

However I remain hesitant before buying in. Maybe someone here can help me with my reservations. I see the house church movement in two different lights:

- 1) The home church movement that desires an expression of Christian bodily worship that is more than didactic instruction. This could mean that it is a healthy movement. It all depends on the heart of the people involved.
- 2) The home church movement is rooted in a critique of traditional churches, with many communities being established by refugees from bad experiences. This could mean that it is an unhealthy movement. It all depends on the heart of the people involved.

Quote:
-----Both the idealistic "church service" and the "home church" are human ideas.

I think this is correct. Here is the paragraph that reminds me that the more things change, the more they stay the same...

Quote:
-----Have you ever heard how the early Christians had their church meetings in the New Testament days?

No, how did they meet?

Well, before I answer that question, let me say that there are churches today that meet just like the Christians did in the first century. So I will describe these meetings in the present tense. I belong to such a church.

The interviewer leads the woman to ask a simple question, and then doges the answer. To be fair, the problem is he cou

Idn't answer his own question. (What is he...an archeologist or an anthropologist? ;-)) I don't think there is enough surviving records of ancient Jewish and gentile Christian communities to reconstruct the "first century church" in our times.

I admit that the house church holds an appeal of brotherhood and community that is almost non-existent in many traditional churches. The fact that the house church movement doesn't promote a single man to run the show also has a temporary appeal.

I realize the house church doesn't claim to be leaderless...just somehow more led by the Spirit than traditional churches that apparently are led by men. However, in my experience, the lack of formal authority structure doesn't mean that a single man isn't running the show anyways. Whenever there are numbers, there will be at least one silverback dominating the group. Maybe it's best that there is happy recognition of this man, or men, rather than pretending that we have achieved utopia.

As previously stated, the differences of the home church movement are very attractive to this weary church goer...if they really are differences. It all depends on the heart of the people involved.

All of these discussions about the "biblical" model for church leaves me wondering why we keep trying to answer questions of substance with mere attention to outward form. If the apostles had thought that there was only one correct church organizational structure, they would've instructed us accordingly.

MC

Re:, on: 2005/8/2 15:29

Compton... very thoughtful post. I know from experience that house churches do attract those who are angry at the traditional church. When someone comes in like that it needs to be dealt with immediately because a critical spirit is contagious. We've actually asked people not to attend after a period of time because they were not getting beyond their issues with the traditional church.

I went thru that myself, but was able to get over it. We're to the point now where on some Sundays, if for some reason our group isn't meeting, we visit a traditional church. My main reason for doing this is so we can meet other believers in our community.

Krispy

Pennies on the pile - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2005/8/2 16:13

Quote:

Compton wrote:

All of these discussions about the "biblical" model for church leaves me wondering why we keep trying to answer questions of substance with mere attention to outward form.

This site is dedicated to inward form, but a river has banks(outward form). I don't know if you are familiar with the building trade. When they want to throw cement down, to control where the cement goes they put up what is called 'shuttering'. Its wooden sides that keep the the cement in a shape that is usable and what the originally intended design of the builder was. That is all it is, what is the wineskin that needs to be put in place to hold that which comes from God. What practices, attitudes are helpful in keeping the church all that God intended it to be. Paul called himself a masterbuilder. The temple of the Jews was detailed in its design, how much more will the church be built according to his specifications. Now its just to agree on what that is. :-)

Quote:

-----If the apostles had thought that there was only one correct church organizational structure, they would've instructed us accordingly.

We are given the correct organisational structure.

Saints->deacons->elders (in the local church)

apostles, prophets, preachers, teachers, evangelists (operating translocally)

In reading the NT we are given snapshots of what they did, it is interesting to see what they did to get a picture of what a

postolic ministry would/could/should entail.

Re: Church ?, on: 2005/8/2 16:20

I think it's good this subject is brought up.

My husband was a Pastor. And even then, we didn't feel right about the typical "order of service."

We felt it should be, where each gift is used and everyone could share with each other (like those verses given earlier ... can the eyeball say to the ear, I don't need you :)

That refers to Fellowship time and our gifts.

If we check into 'how' we got to where we are, as far as "order of service and the Sunday thing", etc. I think you already know where this came from. Need I say more ?

I agree with the guy, though I've never heard of him before. Haven't read his books or know the rest of what he believes, but from what this says above ... he's right on.

BUT ~ the only thing I fear, is that we don't divide up the Body and feel, those of us who like this type of Fellowship, are better than those who don't or vice versa.

I prefer this type, that he describes, but I still visit all my brothers and sisters, in whatever Building they meet at. And whatever Born-Again 'denomination' they attend.

I have problems calling it "going to Church".

That 'saying' also, comes from the same origin that I eluded to above.

We are the Church and we go to "Fellowship" or "Assemble".

The other idea that we put reverence into a 'building', in a sense, sort of bothers me. The reverence is to The Lord, no matter where we meet ... and we shouldn't act any different at the Building, then we do everyday. Like "Church on Sunday, then ? on Monday" - in our behavior.

Also, the idea that the Pastor has as much power anymore is not scriptural. There are also "Teachers and Prophets" etc. that can keep the 'order' in the group, if things get wacky. There's a reason why these 5 gifts were listed in the order they are.

Do you know how many teachers and prophets, etc. sit in a Church pew and are never heard or used ? That's a shame ... really !

About "woman speaking in the Fellowship".

Well, I do not by any means believe a woman should teach or usurp authority over men ... but that "keep silence" verse is being taken out of context.

It was a problem in the fellowship, when Paul or whoever was speaking, these woman were asking their husbands or whoever ... "what's this guy talking about ?" or something. It was disruptive, If you read the verses that follow. "Ask your own husband at home lady" ... type thing.

I believe in all the gifts, and both male and female have them, so "where" are these gifts supposed to be used ? In Acts, they all participated together at their fellowship times.

Anyhow, my whole thought is, The Body is the Church, and the Body is One Body, and should work together as one Body and respect each other's Gifts and burdens.

By burdens, I mean, God may have given you the burden for evangelism, but this other guy may be a prophet and care more about something that goes in The Body, that you may not so we must Respect each other's "gift-burdens". Or someone with the gift of mercy, may not understand the prophet's motive and so on.

That's all :-)

There's a site I've been looking at recently, and so far, I like a lot of what I've read.

NO MAN is 100% innerent - 100% of the time, so I don't follow 'a' man or any man at all, (because I'll have to stand before God alone One Day, and give an account for what, just I believe, without saying "He or she, taught me that." But I read a lot of Authors and like an awful lot. Mostly those from the old-paths view.

Anyways, here's the site you could look at.
Like I said, I haven't read every article yet.
<http://www.watchman.net/read.html>

Love one another. Bottomline, right ?

Re:, on: 2005/8/2 16:28

Oh, and Pastor means "shepherd".

Shepherd's "lead" the sheep, they follow by his example.

Only 'goats' are 'driven'.

And woman can "shepherd" woman.

Re: Pennies on the pile, on: 2005/8/2 16:40

Quote:
-----I don't know if you are familiar with the building trade. When they want to throw cement down, to control where the cement goes they put up what is called 'shuttering'. Its wooden sides that keep the the cement in a shape that is usable and what the originally intended design of the builder was.

Zeke... how much do YOU know about the building trade?? It's called CONCRETE. Not cement. I think Mike will back me up on that one.

(I'm a structural engineer...)

Your doctrine is all messed up, my friend!! LOL :-P

Krispy

Re:, on: 2005/8/2 16:44

Quote:
-----BUT ~ the only thing I fear, is that we don't divide up the Body and feel, those of us who like this type of Fellowship, are better than those who don't or vice versa.

Annie... this is so true, and can be a real trap for many in house churches. Thats why I really love people who get saved and go straight into house churches... they dont have the biases and hurts that many Christians bring into the situation.

Krispy

Re: - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2005/8/2 16:57

Quote:

Zeke... how much do YOU know about the building trade??

Enough to get my point across! :-P :-P

Re: Pennies on the pile - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/8/2 18:37

Quote:

-----This site is dedicated to inward form, but a river has banks(outward form). I don't know if you are familiar with the building trade. When they want to throw cement down, to control where the cement goes they put up what is called 'shuttering'. Its wooden sides that keep the cement in a shape that is usable and what the originally intended design of the builder was. That is all it is, what is the wineskin that needs to be put in place to hold that which comes from God. What practises, attitudes are helpful in keeping the church all that God intended it to be. Paul called himself a master builder. The temple of the Jews was detailed in its design, how much more will the church be built according to his specifications. Now its just to agree on what that is.

Now Zeke, I am surprised at you! ;-) Although the Romans had cement/concrete the Jews did not. Their temples were built of stone which was pre-cut and fashioned in the quarry so that no sound of the hammer was heard when it was assembled. There was certainly no shuttering here.

The whole point about a new wineskin was that it had not hardened and was flexible enough to accommodate the fermenting wine within. Old wineskins would just burst and be destroyed to the loss of the contents.

Quote:

-----We are given the correct organisational structure.
Saints->deacons->elders (in the local church)
apostles, prophets, preachers, teachers, evangelists (operating translocally)

Is this an organisational structure or a relationship structure, and why did 'pastors' drop out of your list?

Oh and btw a river with concrete banks is called a canal not a river. :-D

Re: - posted by lastblast (), on: 2005/8/2 19:25

Quote:

-----Anyways, here's the site you could look at.
<http://www.watchman.net/read.html>

Great site GrannieAnnie! Here's an article there which very much relates to the present discussion titled, Churchianity today:
<http://www.watchman.net/articles/churchianity.html>

Blessings in Him, Cindy

Re: Pennies on the pile - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/8/2 21:24

Zeke0,

I agree with your points. I certainly wouldn't want to come across as a party-pooper when it comes to sharing church planning and government ideas!

I'm not sure if the list of offices you mentioned are the same as a practical organization plan for day-to-day operations though. This is my observation with scripture...and this elusive subject.

Perhaps I was sensitive to the claim that "ours" is the "Biblical model" or patterned after "The First Century Church". This is the rub...I don't think such an exclusive claim is easily demonstratable. Whether the church is episcopal, presbyterian, or congregational at it's basic starting point, everyone believes that their church is "biblical."

Let me say all of this another way...if someone can convince me that they have discovered How Jesus and the apostles would run an organized church in the year 2005 I sure would be grateful.

BTW, "Pennies on the Pile" is my favorite title for any post ever. :-D

MC

Re: - posted by Joshua99 (), on: 2005/8/2 21:48

The main focus and concern, I see in the first century church is Love for our God, resulting in deeply changed lives, so that obedience was their life. If they strayed from the Truth, it was dealt with. The Apostles spoke to the churches, by way of visits and letters to deal with error, and sin in the church. The local church leaders were raised up, under the apostles leadership, they gave clear and precise instructions(commandments)how to nurture spiritual life and how to deal with everyday issues that will arise.

There where elders and deacons, as Paul states in 2 timothy 3. I see so many christians today, who don't know their bible,they don't have any foundational truths in their hearts to give an account why they believe in the Word of God. I don't expect any word of encouragement or exhortation from this type of believer. Why? The Spirit of God is not going to speak through the natural wisdom of this day, people controlled by their flesh, worldly thoughts and ideas, the church is full of this problem. Without some standard in the Truth, all sorts of false doctrines and beliefs, will flood the local church and home churches. That is the condition for disaster if it isn't led by men and women filled with the Spirit, and established in the Truth. How many professing christians are desperate for God? Are they crying in prayer in repentance over their sin? No I don't believe so, why? It is not the conversation of most christians today. To have an "who ever wants to share" setting, with believers sharing from un-inspired books, most that are written today deny the word of God, in some form, good intentioned people who don't know the scriptures, can express ideas and topics that have nothing related to the bible and still believe Jesus taught that.

I'm very open to more than one leader of a home group or church, but not a free for all banquet.

"

Quote:

-----Let me say all of this another way...if someone can convince me that they have discovered How Jesus and the apostles would run a n organized church in the year 2005 I sure would be grateful.

Yes, get the world and the business management ideas OUT of the church and let us all fall on our knees and cry out to Jesus to visit permantly His Church and purify her and make Him..KING and LORD over all the needs and the growing o f His Church! :-) :-)

Re:, on: 2005/8/2 22:42

lastblast

In between all'a these guys talking, 'THANKS', for posting that article. I just went over and read it ... I hadn't gotten that far through his articles yet, to that one.

Waving up to you, from way down here (between these guy posts :)

Thanks again.
Love in Him.

Re: - posted by letsgetbusy (), on: 2005/8/2 23:12

I agree with what Eli said. I would add that in either case (traditional or non-traditional) it should be an evangelical (as in one-on-one witnessing) church. Spurgeon said the following:

"Formality in religion is very often a trait in the character of a man who has a divided heart."

But he also said this in the same sermon:

"Frivolity in religion is often a token of a divided heart."

So while tradition can be a snare and a trap, so can "not taking the service too serious." Romans 11:9 describes that even the Lord's table can be a snare or a trap. Like Eli said, we should just concentrate on being in love with Jesus, and not worry about the tradition or non-tradition. Let Spurgeon preach on and wrap this idea up, here he quotes the idea of a godly man:

"If I can enjoy my Master's presence it is but little matter to me where I am found. If I can but find the name of Christ extolled, and his simple gospel preached, this is all I desire.' Not so, the man whose heart is divided who has no soul in godliness. He is bigoted to the extreme, and well—I repeat it—he may be, poor man; all he has is the empty shell. What wonder therefore that he should be ready to fight for it?"

All quotes from sermon: "A Divided Heart."

Re: An Interview With a Modern-Day, Sunday-Morning-Church-Going Christian - posted by ChrisL, on: 2005/8/3 1:22

As something similar was posted in this thread earlier, there are unfortunately many good-meaning pastors and leaders of churches that really don't have the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, Who testifies to Jesus. They are bogged down by the cares and values of this world, and too fearful to break out of the worldly organizations, structures and traditions that they've helped to create around themselves. At this point preaching of the Word is very weak and man-originated (having a form of godliness but denying its power), and those in the body who truly have the passion of the Holy Spirit to preach the whole Word of God are suppressed out of fear, that weakness in the leadership might be exposed. Walls of pious activity and busy projects are built up enough to fool the comfortable among us. I hope and pray that those in the body of Christ who are burning with the Spirit of Truth and Love for Christ will step out in faith, not as angry rebels, but as humble, faithful stewards of a great Treasure to be shared.

Mat 13:10 And coming near, the disciples said to Him, Why do You speak to them in parables?

Mat 13:11 And answering, He said to them, Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, but it has not been given to those.

Mat 13:12 For whoever has, to him will be given, and he will have overabundance. But whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.

Mat 13:13 Because of this, I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

Mat 13:14 And the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled on them, which says, "In hearing you will hear and in no way understand, and seeing you will see yet in no way perceive.

Mat 13:15 For the heart of this people has grown fat, and they heard heavily with the ears, and they have closed their eyes, that they not see with the eyes, or hear with the ears, and understand with the heart, and be converted, and I heal them." Isa. 6:9, 10

Jos 8:34 And afterward he(Joshua) read all the Words of the Law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that was written in the book of the Law.

Jos 8:35 There was not a word of all that Moses commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the aliens that walked among them.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/8/3 3:00

MC

Quote:
-----Let me say all of this another way...if someone can convince me that they have discovered How Jesus and the apostles would run a n organized church in the year 2005 I sure would be grateful.

If it were discoverable, we are just crazy enough to try to implement it!

Zeke

I woke this morning with the thought 'what a perfect illustration your concrete shuttering provides!' The whole difference is in what has the formative influence. In a free flowing river, it is the river which actually shapes the banks. In a concrete shuttered canal it is the concrete banks which shape the river.

That is my whole anxiety about methodologies and strategies, in a nutshell. I see in the New Testament organisation developing to meet rising needs; it is not a Starbucks franchise system.

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/8/3 4:25

Quote:
-----If it were discoverable, we are just crazy enough to try to implement it!

:-P

Quote:
-----...in a nutshell. I see in the New Testament organisation developing to meet rising needs.

Hmmm...this reminds me of something I heard before in another thread. "A thing must be before it can do...." ;-)

MC

Re: An Interview With a Modern-Day, Sunday-Morning-Church-Going Christian - posted by free, on: 2005/8/3 8:51

Quote:
-----when we meet, we don't have a designated person who gives a sermon each week. Instead, the ministry comes from anyone who wishes to share. So if you were to visit a meeting, you'd find many different people in the church exhorting, encouraging, testifying, and bringing a word that magnifies the Lord. So instead of hearing from one member of the Body each week (as is the case in your church), we get to hear from many members. And everyone is welcome to share.

This sounds like the ideal scenario for a small group meeting. It would be chaotic in a group larger than 40 people.

I feel that there should be some order of service if only to do just that - bring order. Some people can call that tradition but you know what I mean. Jesus always did things orderly. See how he fed the 5000.

A great church is like one I attended in New York city where there is a question and answer session right after the service and people are asked to pose questions of the pastor on the sermon that morning.

The idea of everybody knowing everybody else in the entire church is not very practical. At best it is superficial, at worst, it will chase off certain shy people. The best way to really know people (and not just cocktail style) is in small groups. That's where all sharing can be done and also accountability to each other. Then they can meet at each other's homes like they did in the New Testament days.

Re: - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2005/8/3 11:18

Quote:

philologos wrote:

I woke this morning with the thought...

I count it quite an honour that you would be giving this topic at hand so much time in mind.

Re: - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2005/8/3 11:24

I think words are meaning different things to different people.

In the church context, when I hear organisation I immediately think of saints, deacons, elders. The furthest thing from my mind is business hierarchy model of governance, I think that for me, the only exposure I have had of church leadership is where elders are in front (not below, nor behind, nor above the rest) of the congregation. The deacon team and the Saints slip in behind them as a body going forward. That is organisational church structure. To others organisational means only one thing: control of people, which is sad.

Not to speak presumptuously, but I believe what the Father is after is fruitfulness, the personal application of John 14 has been expounded clearly, but what of the principles being applied to the bigger body. The Father is the husbandman of the vineyard of our lives and the church's life. The imagery created by that piece of scripture is of a carefully manured garden, which has the perfect conditions to bear fruit. The life flows through the vine into the branches. It is interesting to note that the gentiles were considered a wild vine.

This is what I would like to try and help you see. The banks are the word of God which guide the river in the right direction. What you say about the banks of a river just being the natural outcome of where the water flows, does not necessarily mean that where it goes is the right way. If you are familiar with the Okavango river in Botswana, you will know what I mean. It is a big river whose banks guide it straight into the desert, to disappear in the sand. The river just flowed where the banks were and it achieved nothing, the church is glory to glory, not dying in the desert as this particular river.. In saying that anyone who has seen the Delta would attest that it is a magnificent place.

If I could be so bold as to suggest that one of the reasons that Toronto got out of hand was the lack of focus as to why God poured out his Spirit in the first place. It's about going, disciplining nations, planting churches, preparing a bride for the Lord Jesus. That is the fruit of life that I believe the Father is looking for in every person and in every church.

Coming back to rivers, banks and vineyards, A garden with lots of water that is unattended becomes a jungle which doesn't produce much. Even though life abounds everywhere is it life that is useful to many people. Leaders and authority structures have been put in place by a loving Father to guide the growth as best as the Fathers within the Church can discern. To presume that placing any boundaries is bad, let a child grow up unattended, what kind of growth do you get?

As to regarding shuttering, canals and CONCRETE(punk). If the shuttering is placed there by revelation and obedience to the word of God are we inhibiting God's work or are we working with the Father? The shuttering are values which come from the word of God which govern our behaviour and relationships within the church. They are not rules, but values that guide us in our hearts.

From reading the N.T. From Acts onwards we can notice how Paul along with his team worked with the Holy Spirit to create an environment that was perfect for growth of the church at a personal, local and translocal level.

I find it strange that as far as personal application of the word goes there has been much teaching, that is generally accepted, but as far as getting a working model from the scriptures the great teachers are silent. If we have a guide for our finances and a guide on how to raise our kids, how much more is there a guide to building the church which is the most important thing to Jesus.

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2005/8/3 11:52

Quote:

This sounds like the ideal scenario for a small group meeting. It would be chaotic in a group larger than 40 people.

When I see comments like this, I wonder if anybody actually has any experience in such services? I've been in services with about 70 people in it, with open testifying, exhortation, tongues & interpretation, prophecy, etc. with no chaos. I know of one brother who is at a very very large Church which easily packs in THOUSANDS, and they've had such open-services without chaos breaking out. I've read another book "The Open Church" which speaks of an Assemblies of God Church in Arizona that normally runs about 1,000 people, and the only format they meet in is an open one.. yet, no chaos (though that is not to say they've been absent from carnal people acting out).

It's been my experience that a lot of people are extremely uneasy with public speaking in general, let alone in a Church. Thus, most people if they are going to stand up in a Church service to speak up are generally going to be afraid to do so unless they have the motivation of the Spirit in order to do so. Yes, there will also be carnal folks in the congregation, who will get up and say some pretty stupid stuff... but these to me in my experience tend to be a lot smaller of a problem than many might imagine.

Quote:

The idea of everybody knowing everybody else in the entire church is not very practical

Indeed, it is impossible. I never saw this idea in the Scriptures where it was taught that all believers knew each other. It's impossible to form deep and meaningful relationships with everybody, time simply will not permit you to.

Re:, on: 2005/8/3 13:07

one man's chaos is another man's order...

Krispy

Re: An Interview With a Modern-Day, Sunday-Morning-Church-Going Christian - posted by Manfred, on: 2005/8/3 13:24

Hello,

I have been meeting in homes since 1987, and there's nothing like it. We came to this as we thought that that is how it was during the primitive church. Eighteen years later we still think the same.

But, I must add that I live in continental Europe and the Christian scene here cannot be compared with what goes on in the States where I lived for a while. Over here, everything is rather small, and often very small; not to be compared with the bigness of things in the US.

Manfred

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2005/8/3 13:38

I wonder how many house churches that feel they are following the model of the Early Church are experiencing the fruit and results of the Early Church.

I think the house church movement is cool, I just haven't heard much about the kind of fruit coming out of it. Maybe some are experiencing it.

I'm talking about Acts kind of fruit- demonstrations of the Spirit and power. Does anyone know of any house churches that are experiencing anything along these lines?

Re: An Interview With a Modern-Day, Sunday-Morning-Church-Going Christian - posted by Manfred, on: 2005/8/3 13:58

Quote:
-----I wonder how many house churches that feel they are following the model of the Early Church are experiencing the fruit and results of the Early Church.

I think the house church movement is cool, I just haven't heard much about the kind of fruit coming out of it. Maybe some are experiencing it.

I'm talking about Acts kind of fruit- demonstrations of the Spirit and power. Does anyone know of any house churches that are experiencing anything along these lines?

Hi Todd,

I can only speak for myself here, and what applies to our assembly, might not necessarily apply to others.

The fruit I see in the New Testament, and not only in Acts, is spiritual growth. All of the the NT epistles centre on this, and therefore that is what we are seeking here; certainly not "signs and wonders" - but spiritual maturity in the Lord.

Manfred

Re: An Interview With a Modern-Day, Sunday-Morning-Church-Going Christian - posted by dougkristen (), on: 2005/8/3

Very interesting topic which I have had to wrestle with myself many times... I have been in both home churches and a variety of 'traditional' churches. As has been spoken on this thread, it comes down to fruit in our lives and how God is working in us, whether we are in either church setting. There can be both good and bad fruit in both church environments. I currently attend a 200 member church and we have weekly home meetings where the life of the church and intimacy occurs. It's like having both.

I have been in a strictly home church that ended up being very controlling and cult like and hurt my family greatly. It was the leader of the home church. It was really a traditional church government meeting in homes...

Again, are we doing the Will of the father? I have had to allow God to use me where I am planted and right now I am where I am because of relationships I have with some of the people in the church I attend.

Doug

Its all a matter of perspective - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2005/8/3 14:27

Quote:

KrispyKrittr wrote:
one man's chaos is another man's order...

Howz this one "One mans terrorist is another mans freedom fighter!" ;-)

Re:, on: 2005/8/3 16:40

Quote:
-----demonstrations of the Spirit and power

What do you mean by this? Charismatic type experiential type things?

Todd, you dont hear much about house churches and their fruit because it operates outside the bounderies. We've seen a number of people saved, we're involved in prison ministries, ministry to retirement homes, etc etc... if that what you mean by fruit... it's happening.

If you're talking about barking and slain in the spirit Toronto type stuff... I'm sure that happens in some... but not in ours since we reject that type of thing for doctrinal reasons. (Please dont everyone get side tracked on that!)

Krispy

Re:, on: 2005/8/3 16:43

Quote:
-----I have been in a strictly home church that ended up being very controlling and cult like and hurt my family greatly. It was the leader of the home church. It was really a traditional church government meeting in homes...

Yep, that can be a problem too. But it occurs in any church... traditional or home church.

Krispy

Re: Its all a matter of perspective, on: 2005/8/3 16:46

Quote:
-----Howz this one "One mans terrorist is another mans freedom fighter!"

To be honest w/you Zeke... as an American, I dont care for that one. Freedom fighters would be people like George Washington, or Dwight Eisenhower, or Winston Churchill. They didnt murder innocent civilians like little children. Thats what defines a terrorist, not true "freedom fighters".

Sorry... I found that distasteful, my brother.

Krispy

Re: Hiroshima, on: 2005/8/3 16:58

**Edit:Picture removed.*

Distracting and irrelevant to this thread, even if in reference to a comment. MB (Moderator)

Re: Dresden, on: 2005/8/3 17:00

*Edit:Picture removed.

Distracting and irrelevant to this thread, even if in reference to a comment. MB (Moderator)

Re: Baghdad 2003, on: 2005/8/3 17:04

War is sinful.

*Edit:Picture removed.

Distracting and irrelevant to this thread, even if in reference to a comment. MB (Moderator)

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2005/8/3 17:50

Quote:
-----The fruit I see in the New Testament, and not only in Acts, is spiritual growth. All of the the NT epistles centre on this, and therefore that is what we are seeking here; certainly not "signs and wonders" - but spiritual maturity in the Lord.

Yes, certainly that is fruit, and that's truly great. So is seeing people saved, acts of kindness to the poor, etc. But clearly that's only part of the kind of results they were getting in the New Testament Church. From what I can tell, they also had the constant witness of the power of God that was with them as well.

Quote:
-----What do you mean by this? Charismatic type experiential type things?

Todd, you don't hear much about house churches and their fruit because it operates outside the boundaries. We've seen a number of people saved, we're involved in prison ministries, ministry to retirement homes, etc etc... if that's what you mean by fruit... it's happening.

If you're talking about barking and slain in the spirit Toronto type stuff... I'm sure that happens in some... but not in ours since we reject that type of thing for doctrinal reasons. (Please don't let everyone get side tracked on that!)

Salvations are fruit, yes. Prison and retirement home ministry is great, but what kind of fruit are you seeing there? Demonstrations of the Spirit and power? Are people getting touched by God? Getting healed, delivered? Because all kinds of religions do good deeds, so that in and of itself I don't believe is demonstrating the Spirit or power, necessarily.

Barking I don't know about (in fact, I don't think anybody is too excited about that), but getting overwhelmed by God's presence (what some might refer to as "slain in the Spirit")- yes, I would consider that situation to possibly be a demonstration of the Spirit, though not necessarily of power. I think power would be more like miracles, healings, deliverance, etc. (which, of course, might happen if someone gets powerfully touched by God).

1 Corinthians 2:4

"And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power"

But really I am also talking about the results outside of the assembly, so to speak. I'm talking about seeing New Testament results and having a New Testament kind of witness. A New Testament kind of power and fruit.

Romans 15:18-19

"For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, **in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.**"

I'm talking about that.

Of course personal and corporate spiritual growth is great and legitimate fruit. But doesn't this growth include growing in power? Where's the demonstrations?

I'm sure that any religion can claim spiritual growth. What do we really mean by that? The fruits of the Spirit? Yes, that's wonderful. But what about the demonstrations of power?

1 Corinthians 4:20

"For the Kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power."

Don't get me wrong, I think house churches are cool and I'm leaning more and more towards that direction, but let's not get arrogant in thinking we're more spiritual because we've chosen this model for "doing church."

I think I'd pick a traditional church that is seeing demonstrations of the Spirit and power over a house church that's not a anytime. I'm more interested in the power (fruit/results) than the form. Aren't you? I'm just looking at the New Testament ideal here, as I see it.

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/8/3 21:51

Quote:

-----I have been in a strictly home church that ended up being very controlling and cult like and hurt my family greatly. It was the leader of the home church. It was really a traditional church government meeting in homes...

Yep, that can be a problem too. But it occurs in any church... traditional or home church.

Yep.

Wherever sheep graze, wolves are sure to be near. What church model can be completely wolf repellent? My opinion is that these churches that are run by one top man, with the automatic support of weak "elders" is an unstable situation to be in.

Even if elders must answer to the pastor, they should be capable of spiritual exchangeability with the pastor.

At least that's my feeling on the matter.

MC

Re: - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2005/8/4 1:28

Quote:

That's what defines a terrorist, not true "freedom fighters".

Again, it depends where you get your definitions from.

Quote:

Sorry... I found that distasteful, my brother.

Sorry Steve, it was a little jab, I see that it is a touchy subject, so I apologize. So in keeping with the teachings we have received here, I am asking for forgiveness?

Re: - posted by free, on: 2005/8/4 4:30

What happens when a home church gets so big (there is a limit to the size of every home) that it cannot accomodate the people who are coming? Doesnt it turn into another regular church?

In a free-for-all setting, what usually happens is the vocal ones will do all the talking. Im not sure these are all spirit-filled (we can only hope). So we spend our time listening to them listening to their own voices. Where is the spiritual food coming from?

When Jesus fed the 5000 he did it by dividing them into groups and they were ministered by his disciples. Now, at that time, unbeknown to us yet, there was one among the twelve who was a "Judas". 11 out of 12 is all this fallen world allow us. So it is with churches these days.

I can only talk of my own experience with churches. In the last 10 years Ive lived in 5 different cities all over the world, Asia, America and Europe. In each city, before I chose my church I visit 5 or even more. So, you can see how many churches Ive visited. Some are like rock concerts. Some are like funeral services. No church is perfect, is right. If we are unhappy with a church, we have the freedom to move to another till we find one which fits our temperament. We must always factor that in, our temperament. God made us all different and it is maybe not such a bad thing that churches differ.

I dont think it is necessary to copy the early churches. Times have changed. In those days, they were not allowed to meet as freely as we are (or at least in most countries).

Re:, on: 2005/8/4 8:26

Zeke... forgiveness given, of course.

*** edited *** I responded to something that the admins removed... so I have removed my response.

Krispy

Re: Bagdhad 2003, on: 2005/8/4 8:26

Quote:

Neilgin1 wrote:
War is sinful.

**Edit:Picture removed.*

*Nilgin wrote: War is sinful
xxxxxxxxxxxxxx*

Stever's reply:

We live in a fallen world, thanks to Adam & Eve. Jesus Christ came to this earth two thousand years ago to handle the sin problem. "Behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world".

With all of that being said, what did Jesus Christ have to say about anyone living on this earth until He comes again?

Matthew 24:4-14

"4. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

5. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

6. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

7. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

8. All these are the beginning of sorrows.
9. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.
10. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.
11. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.
12. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.
13. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.
14. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.Â”

What does Romans tell us about Governments and their right to wage war? Christ has already told us that war will be with us until He creates the New Heaven and the New Earth:

Romans 13

1. Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: THE POWERS THAT BE ARE ORDAINED OF GOD.
 2. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.
 3. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:
 4. FOR HE (RULERS OF GOVERNMENT) IS THE MINISTER OF GOD TO THEE FOR GOOD. BUT IF THOU DO THAT WHICH IS EVIL, BE AFRAID; FOR HE BEARETH NOT THE SWORD IN VAIN: FOR HE IS THE MINISTER OF GOD, A REVENGER TO EXECUTE WRATH UPON HIM THAT DOETH EVIL.
 5. WHEREFORE YE MUST NEEDS BE SUBJECT, NOT ONLY FOR WRATH, BUT ALSO FOR CONSCIENCE SAKE.
 6. FOR FOR THIS CAUSE PAY YE TRIBUTE ALSO: FOR THEY ARE GOD'S MINISTERS, ATTENDING CONTINUALLY UPON THIS VERY THING.
 7. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.
- xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Just as God used Nebuchadnezzar to punish Israel, he uses one nation to go against another. There will never be peace on this earth, other than in the millenium, when Christ rules with a rod of iron. Other than that it will not happen until He creates a New Heaven and a New Earth after the Millenium, after the Great White Throne Judgment

God bless,

Stever

Re:, on: 2005/8/4 8:32

Quote:
-----What happens when a home church gets so big (there is a limit to the size of every home) that it cannot accomodate the people who are coming? Doesnt it turn into another regular church?

You split off into a new group. Many "traditional" churches do this as well with their small/cell groups. We've done this, and now we have a network of home churches which are under the oversight of a group of elders. A house church really shouldnt be much bigger than 20 - 25 adults. If there are a lot of children, then I would recommend 15 - 20 adults. It depends on the size of the house your meeting in... if your in double wide, obviously the group might need to be smaller.

Krispy

Re:, on: 2005/8/4 8:36

*** edited *** I responded to something that the admins removed... so I have removed my response.

Thanx...
Krispy

Re:, on: 2005/8/4 8:39

Quote:
-----I dont think it is necessary to copy the early churches. Times have changed. In those days, they were not allowed to meet as freely as we are (or at least in most countries).

This is only partly true... in Acts it tells us that the church had favor with ALL the people. In that instance they were not being persecuted, yet they met in homes... everyday. As well as the temple.

I dont think we can just dismiss the way they met. I'm not anti-traditional church. I just know from experience that the intimacy is lost now in most traditional churches. We meet for 90 minutes, look at the back of someone's head... chat for 5 minutes as we exit to the parking lot... and we call it fellowship. It's not.

Krispy

Re:, on: 2005/8/4 9:04

Krispy said:

I dont think we can just dismiss the way they met. I'm not anti-traditional church. I just know from experience that the intimacy is lost now in most traditional churches. We meet for 90 minutes, look at the back of someone's head... chat for 5 minutes as we exit to the parking lot... and we call it fellowship. It's not.

Stever's response:

I agree. Also, how did Christ preach the Gospel and heal the sick? Did he go door to door? Did he build a multimillion dollar building and invite everyone in? No, He went about preaching wherever He went to whoever the Holy Spirit placed in His path. Did he heal everyone? No! Only those that He was led to by the Holy Spirit.

The early Church in Acts should indeed be our model. We do not need Pastors that have been trained in our Godless seminaries of today to lead us. We need Spirit Filled believers that are sold out to God that want to open their homes for this glorious purpose.

1 John 2 tells us that the Holy Spirit reveals all truth to the believer:

20. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things..... 27. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

1 Timothy 3 gives us a model of the type of men that can take on this task:

1. This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a pastor, he desireth a good work.
2. A pastor then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;
3. Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;
4. One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;
5. (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)
6. Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.
7. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.
8. Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;

9. Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.
10. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.
11. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.
12. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.
13. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

God bless,

Stever

Re: - posted by free, on: 2005/8/4 10:13

I don't think we can just dismiss the way they met. I'm not anti-traditional church. I just know from experience that the intimacy is lost now in most traditional churches. We meet for 90 minutes, look at the back of someone's head... chat for 5 minutes as we exit to the parking lot... and we call it fellowship. It's not.

You are right. This is indeed not fellowship. But all churches should have small groups which meet either after the service (traditionally called Sunday school) or cell groups meeting at mid-week for those either in the same neighbourhood or of the similar age or both. If we are not in small groups, the church does not know our existence. Especially a bigish church.

Between a church with no small group and a house church, I would choose the latter. Spiritually we grow much faster in small groups.

BTW what will happen to tithing in house churches?

Re:, on: 2005/8/4 10:18

free... you're right on the money! I agree.

Krispy

Re: - posted by andres (), on: 2005/8/4 11:31

free is right, small groups really can ground men and women in the word and in prayer something you can't get in a Sunday service. I was listening to a sermon by Paris Reidhead called "if you agree" and he says that "small groups are going to save the church."

Re:, on: 2005/8/4 11:41

Believe it or not, I have encountered some churches (usually very conservative) that resist the idea of small groups. Mainly their reasoning is that if non-clergy folks (laity) had ran the small groups they could get off into error. They reason that only the pastor, or someone who went to seminary, should lead the groups.

I suppose I reject that notion only about 90%. I think in a church the small groups should have some oversight by the eldership. But I reject the idea that only those who went to seminary should lead. I don't think that's scriptural... we are all commanded to teach and preach the gospel. That's like people I know who want to lead a friend to the Lord, they want that friend to talk to the pastor. NO! You talk to them! You lead them to the Lord! Study your Bible on your own... don't depend on ANY man to teach you all you know. That's what the Holy Spirit is for!

We're too dependent on man to teach us... I'm not against teachers. We need them. But we should never be completely dependent on them.

Krispy

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2005/8/4 11:46

Quote:

In a free-for-all setting, what usually happens is the vocal ones will do all the talking. I'm not sure these are all spirit-filled (we can only hope). So we spend our time listening to them listening to their own voices. Where is the spiritual food coming from?

Indeed, there will probably be a few people who are apt to express themselves. Paul told Timothy that elder candidates must be "apt to teach" so, there will probably be some people that frequently are used in certain gifts on a regular basis, as such is their ministry. Of course, it is possible that not everybody that stands up to say something will be of God in what they say.

But, was this not the case even with the Lord when he taught? When people were assembled to hear the word of the Lord from Him, were there not demonic manifestations that He had to deal with? Where there not people who would stand up and contradict what He said? Even Christ saw some pretty rowdy services. Yet He never seems to have suggested "nobody is every allowed to talk but me" when He met with people.

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2005/8/4 11:49

Quote:

I don't think it is necessary to copy the early churches.

I'm not so sure we should attempt to copy the early church, rather we should seek to obey the Scriptures and hold fast to the things taught by the apostles:

2 Thes 2:15 So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2005/8/4 11:54

Quote:
-----Between a church with no small group and a house church, I would chose the later. Spiritually we grow much faster in small groups.

What about between a church with small groups and a house church? Which would you pick then?

Ever since reading *Myths of the Modern Mega-Church* which was brought up recently on another thread here at SI, I've been more fascinated with this topic. Rick Warren's church has about 30,000 members I think. But I understand they have thousands of small groups as well.

So I think the Sunday service is just kind of a huge get-together for everyone to come get the corporate vision and stay connected and worship God together. But the small groups are probably where most of the growth takes place. That sounds pretty cool to me. I think you refer to this kind of model as a cell church.

I think one big benefit to this model is that you're a part of something bigger that's established than you're little group. I would expect that this would help people from getting cultish.

I wonder if this is how the Corinthian church and bigger New Testament churches might have organized meetings. Though I don't think it's provable by Scripture, but I do think it's possible that it was something more like this, especially where Christians weren't being persecuted.

I think the Corinthian church had thousands of members, right? Maybe they had house churches that was their regular fellowship but then maybe leaders all met together somewhere once every couple weeks or once a month of something like that. Or maybe they all met together every once in awhile. But I think this is mostly speculation. But it does seem reasonable and to me it seems more likely that it was something like this.

Like I think someone brought up before, how are you going to get thousands of people in a house? So then what do we do? Do we have to split, or can we branch? And yet maintain a common vision and fellowship within the larger context, locally?

Re:, on: 2005/8/4 11:59

Quote:
-----So I think the Sunday service is just kind of a huge get-together for everyone to come get the corporate vision and stay connected and worship God together. But the small groups are probably where most of the growth takes place. That sounds pretty cool to me. I think you refer to this kind of model as a cell church.

When we lived in Tennessee we attended a great church that had a "traditional" service (but not too traditional) on Sundays, but the main focus was small groups. (This was a couple years before Warren's thing got popular) The pastor referred to the small groups as campfires... and on Sunday we bring our campfires and have a bonfire.

I really liked that, and if there was a church here in NC like that... we would be there. Haven't found it.

Krispy

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2005/8/4 12:07

Small groups are not the answer to the lack of intimacy in a big church. Just as the saints naturally gather into corporate gatherings, they should naturally form into smaller groups as well. This should happen because the love of Christ compels them to get involved in the lives of other saints. It should be natural that the saints are flowing in their ministry gifts outside of the official Sunday school classes. I know some pastors are scared to death of cell groups forming splits and introducing heresy and such... and they attempt to tightly regulate them e.g Having cell leaders limit their group to talking about the pastors sermon.

It is interesting though, that they don't get upset if a small group of people happen to go out to lunch after service and talk about the Bible or other theological matters. It's something in such settings we don't worry about "free for all's" and the like. I can't remember the last time pastors said, "ok saints, no more going out to lunch with eachother after service, such is simply too risky." If they told us that, we'd all probably look at them like they were crazy and we would tell them to drop dead. Yet, when it comes to "cell groups" and the like, because there is some semblance of organization and formality, many get very worried, and a lot of attempt to control is asserted.

I think there is a big difference between shepherding and attempting to control. In reality, the notion that a pastor or group of pastors has control over the service is an entire illusion, yet one that seems readily accepted. If a bunch of people stood up at your next service and speaking, or started doing "unauthorized" cell group meetings, and the pastor told them to stop... and they didn't... how's he going to control them? Perhaps if he calls fire down from heaven or has the ground open up under them, then I might believe there is some notion behind the pastor having control over the service and church. But, I've yet to see such ever happen. A shepherd though, simply seeks to guide the church through whatever activity it is doing, and providing oversight and insight, but never has control over the matter.

Re: - posted by free, on: 2005/8/4 12:07

Quote:
-----I think one big benefit to this model is that you're a part of something bigger that's established than you're little group. I would expect that this would help people from getting cultish.

Exactly. About it being part of something bigger so that you can work together on some big projects when the occasion calls for one.

I dont know if going to a church where there are 30,000 people worshipping at the same time is right for me. But Ive no objection as long as there are intimate cell groups. If there is a church with cell groups, Ill chose that over a house church.

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2005/8/4 12:15

Quote:

I wonder if this is how the Corinthian church and bigger New Testament churches might have organized meetings. Though I don't think it's provable by Scripture, but I do think it's possible that it was something more like this, especially where Christians weren't being persecuted.

The Church in Jerusalem gathered at the portico of Solomon in the Temple area (daily at that), but they also gathered together daily from house to house, breaking bread. This doesn't seem to have been something the apostles started, save perhaps the corporate gathering, but something that just happened.

(Just a note: I'm posting more on this thought with something I wrote in a new thread called "True Fellowship" - https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id=6651&forum=35)

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2005/8/4 12:21

Quote:

The pastor referred to the small groups as campfires... and on Sunday we bring our campfires and have a bonfire.

I like that.

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2005/8/4 12:40

Quote:

Small groups are not the answer to the lack of intimacy in a big church. Just as the saints naturally gather into corporate gatherings, they should naturally form into smaller groups as well. This should happen because the love of Christ compells them to get involved in the lives of other saints. It should be natural that the saints are flowing in their ministry gifts outside of the official Sunday school classes. I know some pastors are scared to death of cell groups forming splits and introducing heresy and such... and they attempt to tightly regulate them e.g Having cell leaders limit their group to talking about the pastors sermon.

Good point. Although I think it's important to realize that we might be talking about an ideal here. What if small groups don't just form naturally like they ideally would? I mean, I don't think it's necessarily wrong to simply provide a format for people to get involved in a small group as they choose. Especially if the church is huge like Saddleback. I don't know exactly how it works there, but I suspect they simply have some kind of format to facilitate small groups. You probably get a list of people or groups close to where you live and then you can decide if you want to try or join that group. That seems ok to me. What do you think?

As far as Shepherding vs. Control, I think, again, you make some good points. I think most churches out there right now, especially in the West, don't really have foundations.

Ephesians 2:20

"having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone."

I suppose most have the corner stone, but then no foundations on it. So things tend to be weak and shaky and easily fall apart. I have been through, and know many others have, a church falling apart because the head pastor had an affair. I don't know what's more tragic, that the pastor had an affair or that the church still hasn't recovered going on ten years later.

I believe that true apostles and prophets are going to rise up and be established in the Church once again before this age is passed. We need these foundations. I believe that apostolic authority is God's way of working out that Shepherding vs. Control issue. It seems that Apostles have utmost authority (which might seem like control) under God. But if they are true apostles, it's legitimate.

1 Corinthians 12:28

"And God has appointed in the church, *first apostles*, second prophets, third teachers..."

I believe that when the apostles and prophets are established in the Church once again, as in the beginning, most of these authority kinds of problems will be eliminated.

I don't think there are a whole lot of true apostles established right now. I know of a few who I might consider an apostle. But, thank God for 2 Corinthians 12:12 (by the way, isn't it interesting that the number 12 speaks of authority biblically?)...

"The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles."

So if someone is claiming to be an apostle, it seems that it would be fairly easy to test the legitimacy of their claim. It seems that there are clear and consistent signs indicating a true apostle.

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2005/8/4 12:42

Quote:

-----The pastor referred to the small groups as campfires... and on Sunday we bring our campfires and have a bonfire

Yeah, that's good.

Re:, on: 2005/8/4 13:15

Quote:

-----Small groups are not the answer to the lack of intimacy in a big church. Just as the saints naturally gather into corporate gatherings, they should naturally form into smaller groups as well. This should happen because the love of Christ compells them to get involved in the lives of other saints.

Small groups may or may not be the answer... but the way most churches structure their services does in fact work *against* intimacy and getting to know people.

A couple years ago I contacted a church that we were interested in attending occasionally. The pastor and I discussed my feelings about small groups, and he asked me not to attend his church because he was afraid I would come in and turn his people on the idea. I had no intention doing that... we just wanted a place to attend for the teaching. But why be afraid of people who actually want to be involved in the lives of other believers?

Krispy

Re:, on: 2005/8/4 13:18

Quote:

-----Exactly. About it being part of something bigger so that you can work together on some big projects when the occasion calls for one.

That's why when one of our groups gets too big, they split off into 2 groups, yet all are under the same shepherding elder ship. We are connected, all the groups gather for a big get together once every 2 months, and we also share in ministries such as our prison ministry. We're basically talking about the same thing.

Krispy

Re:, on: 2005/8/4 13:23

I was talking to a pastor here locally a few weeks ago (we were both involved in a community function together), and I was telling him about a great Bible study we have at the gym I work out at. I also mentioned that perhaps I would visit this pastor's church sometime. He told me that if we ever decided to attend his church on a regular basis, I would need to bring that Bible study under his authority, and he would appoint one of his underlings to run it.

I said... "expect almost everyone to quit coming then."

Why can't some people just let the Holy Spirit do His own thing, man? He doesn't need us to help Him out. We have had 5 or 6 people accept the Lord in that Bible study in the last 6 months. (I wanted to ask how many people have gotten saved in his church in the last 6 months, but I recognized that was my flesh begging to ask that question... so I didn't.)

Krispy

Re: - posted by Nellie, on: 2005/8/4 13:52

I know how you feel. Krispy.

Our Pastor where I go to Church, has to control everything.

I feel like I would enjoy getting together with other believers, and sharing the Word of God.

God gives us different gifts, so as long as it is Biblical I don't see anything wrong with small gathering in Homes.

In His Service

Nellie :-)

Re:, on: 2005/8/4 14:05

Nellie, Pastors are sometimes tempted to assume more control than scripture gives them. I think thats true for anyone in a position of leadership. However, the difference between biblical leadership and what the world calls leadership is in the arena of service. True biblical leaders will be servants to those they are leading. Like Jesus washing the feet of the disciples.

Krispy

Re:Amber Light - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/8/4 14:10

Todd,

You have raised a couple of interesting points as far as I'm concerned. I'm not picking on you :-P , it's just that your comments stirred up some experiences that I have had that I feel are common enough to others to warrant a footnote in this thread.

Quote:

-----I believe that true apostles and prophets are going to rise up and be established in the Church once again before this age is passed . We need these foundations. I believe that apostolic authority is God's way of working out that Shepherding vs. Control issue. It seems that Apostles have utmost authority (which might seem like control) under God. But if they are true apostles, it's legitimate.

This comment shows a great deal of hope. That's a great thing. However, let me raise an amber light here...there is a growing number of "prophets" and "apostles" who believe Paul's words "the household of God is to be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets..." is speaking about modern men like themselves. I can tell you first hand that this belief invariably leads to abuse. Even if it takes 5-10 years, any man today who thinks he is a foundation for the church will abuse her sorely.

From their fruit alone, it is easy to conclude these men are not prophets like Prophets and apostles like Apostles. So if they want to claim these titles...let it be for the business cards they swap with each other at their conferences.

Quote:

-----Ever since reading Myths of the Modern Mega-Church, which was brought up recently on another thread here at SI, I've been more fascinated with this topic. Rick Warren's church has about 30,000 members I think. But I understand they have thousands of small groups as well.

As a companion to Warren's book about the myths of Mega-churches, may I recommend the book "Churchquake" by C. Peter Wagner? Churchquake is accepted by many self-styled apostles as the manifesto for their "Apostolic Reformation." I don't doubt Warren is exceptional, but after reading Wagner's book I'm not sure all Mega-church pastors want all the myths to be myths. Any of us who believes mega-churches aren't, at least in one sense, religious corporations should read Churchquake...not because the book is negative on the fact but because it celebrates the fact.

This is not to say that the Mega-church is all false or useless...only that large-scale economics, and institutional bondage, have entered into the spiritual life of these leaders.

The thesis for Churchquake is straightforward: Only a super-wealthy church nimbly led by a single visionary leader with unilateral control of the budget can effectively advance the Kingdom into the global 21st century. These are schizophrenic times! Even as we talk about the emergence of small house churches we also have to wrestle with the Mega-church tr

end.

Here is an Amazon review I posted in February this year for Churchquake. My thoughts may seem scathing...until you read the book.

"Amway Apostles

After reading this book I learned how similar the first century church was to our 21st century MLM corporations. It really is uncanny. In light of this discovery, perhaps pastors should study real business gurus such as Peter F. Drucker or Geoffrey A. Moore.

The sum of "Churchquake" can be found towards the end of the last chapter on raising money. After demonstrating that larger donors should get preferential attention from the pastor, Peter Wagner asks aloud; how does the pastor know the income level of the church members? The answer is simple. "A good pastor knows his sheep!" (pg.261) Apparently Wagner's research of church history uncovered the fact that early church elders received printouts every Monday listing the top donors in order to reward them with a week at a luxury resort on the Mediterranean.

This is the heart of these new "Apostles". No longer are they spiritual leaders with a mission to feed the sheep---they have become organizational leaders with a machine that fleeces sheep. (John 21; 15-16). The crucial question is...do they realize it?"

MC

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2005/8/4 14:32

Modern day false apostles like C. Peter Wagner are essentially trying to be nothing other than your typical hierarchical denominational bishop, but the title of bishop isn't good enough, they go for the mack-daddy title of them all, apostle. I read a lot of his junk of modern day apostles... scary stuff. The fact that they suggest you cater to your wealthier donors shows they've never read James where he scorns those who are wealthy better places to sit in the congregation.

And I say this as one who fully believes in modern day apostles. It's interesting to note how Paul considered one of his marks of apostleship the fact that he was naked, hungry, and poorly clothed.

A true apostle is interesting in doing nothing else but establishing Christ. They want nothing to do with establishing themselves and their ministries. They are only interested in establishing Christ's ministry. Their ministry is only established when they see Christ established. Modern day apostles and prophets ought not to be at all interested in how they are accepted. They should only be concerned with if Christ is accepted. Many in the apostolic and prophetic movement know nothing of this doctrine.

Re:, on: 2005/8/4 15:37

KJ... From one NC'er to another... I loved that last post. That was awesome, and you hit the target.

Krispy

Re: An Interview With a Modern-Day, Sunday-Morning-Church-Going Christian - posted by dann (), on: 2005/8/4 16:01

I thought it would be fun and instructional to answer Mr. Viola interview as though he had interviewed me:

So tell me, , why do you go to church?

Go to church? If by that you mean 'Why do I meet with other Christians regularly?' - I do so because in the tenth chapter of the book of Hebrews the faithful are instructed to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. We assemble together in order that we might exhort one another to love and good works, just as the scriptures say. This form of assembly is not to be confused with the Sunday morning gathering of the flock (we gather on the Lord's Day for to worship corporately and also to hear a word from those whom God has gifted with speaking gifts.) The assembling together how

ever takes place in smaller groups- this happens naturally and as such, there is no program to it.

I am concerned of course that you refer to the church in your question as though it were a location and not a congregation. It betrays either a poor understanding of what church is, or a presumption that I do not understand what a church is – either way sir, you are to be blamed.

I see. Can you describe to me what your church gatherings are like?

I should like to make myself understood just in case you are still uncertain. I believe (as does everyone in my congregation) that any time two or more believers meet in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that the church has ‘gathered.’ Understanding that The church ‘gathers’ informally many times during the week, I presume then that you are referring to the Sunday morning gathering of the church (as opposed to ‘in’ the building corporately owned by the church) ?

Typically, on Sunday morning, we meet as an entire congregation. We meet in a building that was purchased by the church for the purpose of corporate gatherings. We also meet for corporate prayer time on other nights, but again, I will restrict my answer to the Sunday gathering as you seem fixated with it.

At an appointed time each Lord’s day, we gather at the building our church owns. As we enter the building we are either greeted by those within, or if we are the first to enter, we wait for others to come and greet them. We have decided corporately that we should elect from amongst our congregation, a couple of people every week to ‘officially’ greet people as they enter – so as to be sure that should any new person enter into the midst of our congregation, they will have been soundly and genuinely welcomed. Prayer requests, needs, and information pertinent to the various active ministries are gathered throughout the week, and presented to members as they come into the building. We call this our church ‘bulletin’ – however, it is as I have said, simply a thoughtful, convenient way to keep everyone informed of what is going on in the various ministries, etc.

As the appointed time arrives, members move into the inner hall, where there are pews set up to sit in, and they find a place to sit. Someone from the congregation will open our time together in prayer, and volunteers will accompany the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. I would pause here to distinguish between performance and accompaniment. If our congregation is listening to a group of musicians perform – they are not singing to one another, or to God – and this is understandably discouraged and guarded against. The musicians are there as an accompaniment – the music stand must never replace the pulpit.

When I say ‘pulpit’ I refer to that podium behind which the speaker will address the congregation. In the same way that the pews are functional – that is, they provide a place for people to sit – so also the ‘pulpit’ is a functional tool in that it provides a place for the speaker to place his bible and notes, and at the same time be seen and heard by the entire congregation. There is nothing especially biblical about the pulpit – it simply facilitates (in the most practical way we can imagine) someone to address a large body of people simultaneously.

We don’t always sing of course – sometimes we share testimonies, or if the Lord has done something in our lives or we are aware of the Lord working somewhere and want to bring the Lord glory – we may use that time to share. But typically we sing when we meet together – as we have met, at least partially, for this very purpose.

Are the people in the congregation free to request songs and start songs?

Absolutely. Most of us are content to sing songs suggested by the volunteers, but there is no rule or anything like that. If we wanted to sing a song, we would just say so, and unless a good reason could be found not to sing it – we would sing it.

What happens next?

If anyone is inclined to give an offering to the ministry of the church we collect that offering. On the first Sunday of the month we also take a benevolent offering – this offering is not intended to provide for the church and its ministries, but rather for the meeting of various needs in the local community.

How does that happen?

Whoever is in front of the congregation will announce that it is time to take up any offerings. A prayer is said – to ask t

he Lord to bless the offering so that it is used for His glory and not for our own devices. Then certain men from the congregation collect the offering. Often to the accompaniment of a hymn or psalm.

What is the money used for?

The money is used to support the ministries that the church is involved in. The main ministry being the edification of the local body of Christ. Full time Christian workers who are employed by our congregation are paid out of this offering, like wise we set aside money every week for seven missions that our church supports (Union Gospel Mission, Gospel for Asia, Operation Mobilization, Rio Grande Bible Institute, Wycliff Bible translators, Trans world Radio, and Emanuel International), as well as augmenting the needs of any missionaries sent out from our own congregation.

Have you ever been part of the decision-making process of how the money is to be used?

Yes, everyone in the congregation is a part of that decision making. We don't nickel and dime the congregation however – it is understood that certain recurring expenses will continue to be required (building maintenance, salaries, etc.) and while the whole congregation is involved in setting boundaries for the way the money is used, we don't phone each member to determine what color toilet paper to buy.

Alright. Then what happens after the offering?

During the week, someone will have been seeking the Lord for a "message" from the Lord. I don't mean some "th us says the Lord" sort of "new revelation" or anything like that – just a word of edification or encouragement taken from the bible and expounded to the congregation. The congregation listens to the "sermon" at the end of which we may or may not sing another song. It is typically (but not always) an elder (pastor) who brings this corporate word of encouragement (not to be confused with the smaller, informal gatherings where we all might share what the Lord is doing, or share a word of encouragement).

How often does the pastor preach?

Typically, the pastor preaches every week. That is not to say that if someone from the congregation believed that God had given them a message that should be heard by the whole congregation that they would be denied – rather, it is the responsibility of the (under) shepherd to lead Christ's flock to the green pastures, and to the still waters. In James 3:1 we read, "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment." Like wise in Hebrews 13:17 we see that those who shepherd us must give an account to God for our souls – since it is they who are charged to watch over us. Given that this is so, we don't put any Tom, Dick, or Harry in the pulpit – for their sake as well as for the sake of the one in the congregation whose charge it is to oversee the congregation.

So basically, every week you are hearing about the Lord from the same part of the Body of Christ?

You mean the tongue? That is correct, each body has a tongue, and it is the tongue that gives voice to the body. We typically do not let the foot and ear come up and speak, if that is what you mean...

Well, every Christian is a member of Christ's Body. Each member has a function, just like the physical members of your physical body. The pastor is but one member. But you are a member also. And so is every other Christian who is part of your church. So if the pastor is the only one ministering in the service, the people are only hearing from one part of the Body.

That is a gross and perhaps intentional oversimplification of course. Every member of the body is free to minister according to those gifts that the Holy Spirit has given them. In Romans Paul says that we are many members in one body who have gifts that differ according to the grace that has been given to us – and that we should minister according to those gifts. The way you have presented your reasoning suggests that you believe that everyone should do everything whether they are gifted by God to do it or not. That doesn't strike me as a reasonable or biblical.

What if you had a question during the sermon, could you raise your hand and ask the pastor? And what if you had something you wanted to share with the congregation . . . a message, a word, a testimony, an exhortation . . . could you do that?

Yes, the pews are not a prison. Most people wouldn't want to trip the momentum of the pastor, and would ask him about

ut it after the service Â– but if you stood up and asked the question, you would certainly receive an answer. Likewise, if you had a testimony or an exhortation, you could give it Â– but typically one doesn't interrupt someone else who is speaking Â– just as a matter of courtesy, to the speaker, and to those who are listening to him. We must not forget that scripture instructs us to, in honor, give preference to one another (Romans 12:10) Â– that means that most of us wouldn't interrupt a sermon to share a message, word, testimony or exhortation. There is a time and place for that, and it isn't during the sermon. After the sermon the pastor might ask for (or a person could at that time) such things Â– but interrupting someone while they are speaking is hardly putting them before yourself.

Okay. Let's continue. What happens after the sermon?

The speaker typically closes our corporate time together in prayer, sometimes we may sing a song, and hear a word of encouragement or affirmation regarding the message

Do you know anyone at your church?

We know everyone at our church. I mess up some of the kids names once in a while, but we make a point of knowing everyone in the church Â– How would we be able to pray for them if we didn't know them? We (as well as many others in our congregation) make a point of inviting others for fellowship and a meal together at least once a week. During this informal time we talk about the Lord, discuss what we are reading from scripture, perhaps sing a song or two, share some food Â– etc.

How many attend your church?

We have 40 active members, and perhaps between twenty and thirty others who show up weekly Â– not counting their children. With kids we have over a hundred.

Other than your regular friends, do you fellowship with any of the Christians at your church during the week outside of religious services?

Yes. Relationships take time to build of course, and one has to be committed to doing it also. The larger a congregation is, the less likely you will be able to have deep connections with everyone in your congregation Â– and I don't think that is the biblical model either. After Peter's sermon on the roof top there were over 3000 people in that one congregation. Should we insist that everyone in that newly formed congregation suddenly had intimate relationships with every other member? The thought is as ridiculous as imagining that they all met in someone's living room!!

Seriously though. Our congregation is still small enough that I can have a close relationship with many in the congregation. People come and go, and my ministry to them changes accordingly, the group I minister today will not be the group I minister to in ten years, nor will I be ministered to by the same people. We know this from our own experience, from reason itself, and we see the same thing played out in scripture (Paul founds a congregation of believers; Timothy eventually inherits that congregation, then appoints an elder to oversee it etc. I not only expect, but even anticipate that the same will be true of every ministry in the church Â– it is a fluid thing. Relationship should be as strong as they can be, but to expect that John, James, and Peter knew everyone in the Jerusalem congregation personally is putting a yoke on them that might tickle our own fad-ish fancies, but is nevertheless unrealistic.

Okay, you have described your church very well. Let's see. In the beginning of my interview, you said that the reason why you go to church is so that you can grow spiritually. Correct?

Not so. The reason I gave was because scripture instructs me to do so, and as I desire to be obedient to my God and King, so I desire to assemble together with other believers Â– not just for my own spiritual growth, but for the growth of others Â– God has gifted me and them both, I grow by their fellowship with me, and they grow by my fellowship with them. Both the sower and the reaper benefit..

So would it be fair to say that your church helps you to grow spiritually by listening to the pastor's sermons and by singing the songs led by the worship team?

Fair? Only if by fair you mean such an oversimplification as to utterly obfuscate what is really going on. No, I would describe your characterization as lacking Â– and offer that this generalization is being presented either because you are profoundly nearsightedness, or as I believe because you wish to promote an agenda or model that is contrary to the one I a

m currently adhering to. As I stated earlier, we meet both formally and informally. The formal meetings do not define the congregation— unless you are in a dead church. If Sunday morning was the only time I assembled with other believers I would have only myself to blame.

Have you ever heard how the early Christians had their church meetings in the New Testament days?

Of course I have, I mean the bible gives a pretty good description of a half dozen early churches— you can find them in the letters addressed to the church at Corinth— and in the seven letters to the seven churches found in the book of revelation. If anyone wants to have a biblical church— all they need to do is sin like crazy— and shazzam! They suddenly resemble almost every congregation mentioned in the New Testament!

Seriously though, I know what you are getting at. You have it in your head that the church structure today is not the same as the church structure we see in scripture. And I would say you are blind to the point of ignorance.

The structure we find in scripture has nothing to do with buildings and meetings— but everything to do with being led of the Holy Spirit and recognizing the body of Christ. If you have a home church that does these things— you have a New Testament church. If you have a 'traditional' church that does these things— then you have a New Testament church. The key isn't to have the same 'model' that they had (as though you too were living in first century Palestine)— but rather to have the same Spirit they had.

There are many who have puffed themselves up by imagining that they have the correct model— that is they try and answer the question "how did the early church meet" as though the question were one of which model is correct— they are not only missing the boat, but divisive— pushing their home-made model as though it were biblical and every other model (including the traditional church) was less biblical.

Well, before I answer that question, let me say that there are churches today that meet just like the Christians did in the first century. So I will describe these meetings in the present tense. I belong to such a church.

WHAT?!??? That is a bit presumptuous don't you think? If God had one model that we were supposed to follow, you can be assured that it would be in scripture. How many chapters of the bible are dedicated to describing the layout of the temple? It is baffling to me that anyone could presume that God simply forgot to include the model we are to use when scripture records the intense attention to the most minute detail that God gave in the construction of the temple. The only sound conclusion we can draw is that God intentionally didn't give us a practical model, because such would be inappropriate. To insist that we follow any one model— rather than the Holy Spirit— is to seriously misunderstand how to apply the teachings in the New testament.

First, everyone in the church knows one another. And quite well. We spend time together outside of religious meetings. There is a fraternity of sorts among us. We are like family in many ways.

Second, we sing. But we have no worship leader, song director, or worship team. Instead, everyone is free to lead a song or request a song. And many of the people in the church have written many of our own songs. To be honest, our singing is very powerful even though none of us are professionals.

Third, when we meet, we don't have a designated person who gives a sermon each week. Instead, the ministry comes from anyone who wishes to share. So if you were to visit a meeting, you'd find many different people in the church exhorting, encouraging, testifying, and bringing a word that magnifies the Lord. So instead of hearing from one member of the Body each week (as is the case in your church), we get to hear from many members. And everyone is welcome to share.

Also, since our meetings are open, anyone can ask a question or add an insight when someone else is sharing. This happens quite frequently and it is spontaneous and very edifying.

Like yourself, I was disillusioned by the confines of tradition. I felt the church was a lumbering beast with so much momentum that I could do nothing to change it. I wanted to go and find a church that wasn't so tied to its forms and liturgies.

And I confess, home church was one of the options I considered— having attended one regularly for some time. But as this smaller home congregation was meeting in the evenings, I maintained my connection to my former congregation.

I saw this new “home church” for what it was – a knee jerk reaction to the formalization of Christianity into a powerless “religion.”

There was much talk about how the first century Christians did this and that – and most of it was absolutely unfounded, and non historic speculation – much of it in fact stood in direct contradiction to the word of God. There were indeed pastors in the first century churches, and they were spiritually responsible for the flock as I said earlier. The church met in houses yes, but also in synagogues and even in the temple. The notion that churches were living room affairs with everyone sipping coffee and chatting about the Lord is not biblical or historic.

The fact is we know very little about how the church organized itself – yet from what we do know we can see that the way the church is being portrayed by these well meaning but self proclaimed, and otherwise horribly unqualified ‘church historians’ is less than accurate (however trendy it may be at the moment)

Truly, your experience sounds typical of a healthy church – but you seem to presume it is healthy because of the way it organizes itself rather than because you are reliant on the Holy Spirit – and this is why you are in error.

Just like the first-century Christians, we don’t have a pastor. Instead, we realize that all of us are responsible to care for one another (we are the church). We make decisions together as a Body. We plan our meetings, our activities, and we decide how to handle our problems. We decide how to use the money we give. Tithing is not required (that was an Old Testament practice). But we do give. We give to the needs among us and to anything else the church decides to give to. We meet in homes so we don’t have the obscene overhead of a church building. And we have no clergy to support. Sometimes we bless the poor and needy. Other times we help other churches like ours to get off the ground. Other times the church here will put on something special for the community. And we give to that.

Ah, you tip your hand sir. In saying that it is obscene to own a church building, you are condemning God Himself for the building of the temple as a place to worship corporately? Surely the Jews could have met in homes? You imagine that you offer God service by meeting in your homes, and that doing otherwise is obscene. You have set yourself as a judge. A church is not defined by the building it meets in – but by the congregation that meets there. Likewise scripture teaches that a laborer is worthy of His or her wage, but you imagine that paying that wage is an overhead that you shouldn’t pay.

In this you paint yourself as the Pharisee painted himself – I thank God I am not like the traditional church, but instead I do this and that and the other, which in my opinion are pleasing to the Lord. Such reasoning may sell books – but is hardly convincing to anyone with eyes to see and ears to hear. This sort of ear tickling frightens me.

Yes. In fact, this is the kind of gathering the Bible is talking about when it says, "Forsake not the gathering of yourselves together . . . but exhort one another" (Hebrews 10:25). That is what we do. We exhort one another in our meetings. Because we are constantly encouraging one another in the church meetings as well as outside the meetings, our spiritual growth is not dependent on one man (a pastor). Instead, we have the privilege of getting fed from all the members of the Body . . . for every member of the church is encouraged to share in our meetings.

In my church this takes place all the time – it doesn’t happen Sunday morning though – that is when we meet corporately as one body. Really, you imagine that you must have one or the other, at that is pretty short sighted. You can have both – and I think you should have both. If any believer is in a congregation where he is not meeting the church on his level – he or she needs to make it happen (don’t be a fool and leave your church to try and find a better one (if God opens your eyes so that you see the danger while standing on the city wall – don’t abandon the city - sound the trumpet! That is, begin to meet with others informally for fellowship. You will likely find people as dry as yourself – absolutely willing to meet and fellowship in this way.)

Yes, there definitely is. We are free to function in our meetings as the Lord leads us. We believe that every member of the Body is gifted and has both the right and the responsibility to edify one another in the church gatherings.

Amen. I believe that also. When I meet with other believers it isn’t just a bible study or some church sponsored program – it fellowship the way we are instructed to fellowship – the purpose is edification of others in the body – and we all have gifts that differ in order to do this. This is quite different than a bible study or a Sunday school Class

It is very different. Your Bible study has a Bible study instructor or leader. And that person is under the pastor. While there may be more freedom to discuss things than a traditional church service, a Bible study is not a church meeting where

every member brings something of Jesus Christ to share with every one else. In a church meeting, there is no leader except for Jesus Christ! All gather under His Headship. In a Bible study (or a weekly "cell group"), everyone does not have the freedom to make decisions on how church money will be used, how church meetings will be planned, what the church will do for the community, or for the Lord Himself. Everyone does not have the freedom and the responsibility to get the Lord's mind on the affairs of the church. It is all prescribed by human leaders.

Sunday School is similar to a Bible study. You have a leader who is in charge. And you basically go there to receive from the Sunday School instructor, not to share or to give. Nor do you get the benefit of receiving ministry from the other people in the class. Plus, Sunday School is an event that is part of the larger church. So it has time-restrictions and is ultimately under the authority of the pastor.

One of the biblical qualifications to becoming an elder/overseer of a church is that one is filled by the Holy Spirit—that is, one is led, not of their own opinions or flesh, but by God's Spirit. Such a man is capable of distributing church resources. The early church came and laid their treasures at the feet of the apostles, and the apostles distributed to the people as they saw fit—and when the burden became too much for them, the people appointed deacons (who were likewise filled with the Spirit of God) to distribute to the needs of the church. There was no corporate agreement, other than to select men in whom God's Spirit was at work. Your 'model' sounds nice but doesn't sound at all like what we plainly read in scripture about what actually happened in the early church.

I cannot help but reiterate—you are right in identifying some of the error in the church, but you are going way overboard in responding to the error. You imagine that your response is biblical—but the only way you seem able to bolster that claim is by saying (with no other authority than your own opinion) that the early church did it this way or that way. I would think your opinions more weighty if they were not so easily dismissed from the clearly recorded history of the early church found right in our very own bible. Your church doesn't become more biblical than other churches just because you paint it as though it were. I agree the differences are many.

There are many. But I'll just list two. Your spiritual growth is dependent on the preparation, the study, and the insights of one man . . . the pastor. (If you attend Sunday School and Bible study, then it is dependent on three people.) It would also be dependent on the amount of will power you can muster up to spend time with the Lord during the week.

My spiritual growth is dependent on an entire Body of believers who minister the Lord to me every week. I also have the privilege of spending time with these people outside of scheduled meetings. We seek the Lord together. We fellowship throughout the week, and we mutually encourage each other. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ cannot express His fullness through one or two or three people. He needs a Body to do that. And that's what I enjoy in a very real way every week. Plus, I don't have to try to muster up my will power to seek the Lord during the week. My brothers and sisters in Christ help me with that.

The other difference is that in your church, the pastor is the head of the church. He ministers to the people, and he makes the final decisions. He is in charge of the order of worship, and he has the final say on how the offering money is used. In my church experience, Jesus Christ is the Head of the church in a very real way. We let Him lead our meetings. He has the freedom to function through any one of the members of His Body that He chooses. We look to Him to make church decisions, and we, as members of His Body, are all involved and responsible for getting His mind and sharing it with one another.

I agree that the spiritual growth of every believer is not dependant on the spiritual preparation, study, and insights of the pastor. Paul planted, Apollos watered, but God (as opposed to 'mutual edification') gave the growth. I can read the bible cover to cover a hundred times and I can listen to all the greatest sermons ever preached on earth, but that doesn't mean I am going to be a mature Christian. Being instructed in the truth is necessary for a strong faith—but spiritual growth doesn't come as a result of hearing the word—but as a result of doing the word. It is incorrect to suggest that growth comes from instruction or mutual edification and encouragement—growth comes from God empowered obedience. Edification and encouragement are appropriate for a right faith—it demonstrates a heart that puts others first. Having a church that is healthy in this respect is important—but it certainly isn't restricted to any particular model (home vs. traditional)

I'm curious. After hearing how your church experience differs from mine, do you think you would like to be part of a church like this . . . like the New Testament describes?

Well, you have failed to present anything more than your own speculation and opinion—but though you suggest that your

opinion is fact, I have shown from scripture that your conclusions and characterizations are not sound. Given that you teach what is false with zeal, I do not think I would like to attend your new-fangled, church.

Dan
Λ
Λ

(edited for clarity)

Re: church, on: 2005/8/4 16:23

Dann,

Good explanation of "church". Long ago the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) adopted the term "meeting house" to describe the buildings in which the church met. They intentionally made them as plain simple and unadorned as possible. They also frequently used the derisive term "steeple houses" to describe the buildings that other denominations called "churches".

Bub

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2005/8/4 17:02

Quote:
-----there is a growing number of "prophets" and "apostles" who believe Paul's words "the household of God is to be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets..." is speaking about modern men like themselves. I can tell you first hand that this belief invariably leads to abuse. Even if it takes 5-10 years, any man today who thinks he is a foundation for the church will abuse her sorely.

I agree with the first part of this quotation, but not the second. I am aware of some people calling themselves Apostles and Prophets who don't seem to truly be such. And I don't appreciate that at all.

But I also know of some who don't really refer to themselves as Apostles and Prophets, but I think they are. Their fruit and power indicates it, it's not just a title. And most of the ones who I think might fit into these 2 categories, especially Apostle, don't often (if ever) refer to themselves as such, but others consider them as such, and their lives indicate such, and so they might be known as such.

Although I too believe that there has been much abuse in this area, I don't think that justifies abandoning it. And how can you say it "invariably" leads to abuse? Are you in a position to say that? I can't see how any human could know such a thing. What has happened, perhaps, invariably in the past does not equal what will invariably happen in the present or future.

What spiritual truth hasn't been abused? Sure, it's risky, it will probably be quite messy (especially at first), but I think it's God's way nonetheless. The body of Christ must mature. We can't get overreactive and reject God's authority structure because it has been abused or is currently being abused. Historically, how many problems have been caused by reacting in such a way? Hasn't the Church suffered greatly by reacting to one extreme with another extreme?

I haven't read "Churchquake" by Wagner. In fact, I've never read anything by him. I've heard of the "Apostolic Reformation" but don't know much about it. What do they make of 2 Corinthians 12:12?

I think it's important here to distinguish between the office of Apostle, and an apostolic spirit. I don't believe "apostolic spirit" is an exact term in the Bible, but I think it's biblical. I believe that just like there's a prophetic spirit (Rev. 19:10), there's an apostolic spirit. Meaning, people can be apostolic, but not Apostles, just how people can be prophetic, they might prophesy, but that doesn't necessarily mean they are Prophets. I think people can function apostolically, but not be Apostles. We must keep 2 Corinthians 12:12 in mind here. It seems to me that it would be fairly simple to distinguish a true Apostle, from someone who is simply apostolic (even very much so).

Perhaps adherents of this "Apostolic Reformation" haven't made this distinction clear, or maybe they reject the idea. But I

t makes sense to me. What do you think about that?

*edit: Paul knew he was an apostle, and he wrote Ephesians so he knew he was foundational in the Church. Right?

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/8/4 19:59

Quote:

-----And how can you say it "invariably" leads to abuse? Are you in a position to say that?

Bro, until I see a positive case where claiming the title of "Apostle" doesn't lead to abuse, I feel justified in saying this. The burden of proof is on the one who would claim the title. I suppose I am not opposed to men who want to be Apostles, or even men who feel called to be Apostles. I am just leery of men who want to be called Apostles by other men.

Now, let's not mince words here. By Apostle I am meaning an uber-authority. I know some like to remind us that an Apostle is simply one who establishes churches...but this is slight of hand. I've known people start churches and they wouldn't dream of being called Apostles. Why? Because true Apostles can also administer church discipline with authority. They demonstrate and judge with power.

That is why these "apostles" want the title. These people feel that until apostolic authority is restored with power upon the churches, the "anointing" will never come. The problem is that our churches are too uncommitted to each other to warrant that kind of judicial apostolic network.

Therein exists the abuse I am talking about. Men, who want the flock to submit to them, yet are unwilling to lay down their lives for the flock are simple wolves. This is the very essence of wolvery. Asymmetrical loyalty is so common that we think it's biblical. Yes, the office of "Apostle" is biblical, but our modern version of it is most unbiblical.

I've encountered many "local apostles, vertical apostles, horizontal apostles", and even one "lead Apostle"! :roll: Not a single man among these apostles even came close to the sacrificial commitment to the body of Christ that New Testament Apostles gave. In our American church culture...an apostolic lifestyle from a top leader would indeed be a remarkable thing!

This is also why I appreciate what you said about some people behaving like apostles even though they don't claim the title. I think you and I can agree that there are Godly men of substance shepherding churches...I am thankful for that. I know many brothers who would qualify for what you described.

Now I will admit that I am erring on the side of caution. Personally I don't mind being a bit fundamentalist on this issue, and I just outright reject the title for use today. (Maybe there is an Apostle right now reading this. If there is, my apologies!) My position is like wearing a seat belt...there is a slight risk that wearing a seat belt may be the wrong choice but the odds are overwhelmingly in favor that seat belts save your life in a crash.

By the way...is there an apostolic spirit? This I am honestly asking, with sincerity.

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2005/8/4 20:53

Quote:

-----Bro, until I see a single case where claiming the title of "Apostle" doesn't lead to abuse, I feel justified in saying this.

Well, ok. I guess that's between you and God man. But I would be very weary of making absolute statements like that based on experience. I think that's dangerous.

Quote:

-----The burden of proof is on the one who would claim the title.

Yes! I completely agree. That's why I'm emphasizing 2 Corinthians 12:12. This is what I believe is needed for someone to be recognized as an Apostle, not just someone laying down their lives to serve. That's wonderful, but that person might not be an Apostle. We are all called to lay down our lives for each other. Right? Could there be a very rich Apostle? I don't see why not. But it might hinder them in their ministry just because of immature believers stumbling over the fact that they're rich. I think Paul went "above and beyond," so to speak, but I don't know if he *had* to do this out of obedience to God or if he just chose to out of his huge hungry heart.

I think 1 Corinthians 9 is very relevant for this discussion. Paul talks about how he actually has legitimate rights to their money, but he lays down that right (v. 9:12-19). He was running to receive the prize, first place. He did way more than was required of him, I believe.

Quote:

-----I am just leery of men who want to be called Apostles by other men.

Yes! So am I! But I suppose that's something that's not very easy to determine. To know someone's heart. Just because they might put the title on a card, etc., doesn't necessarily mean they *want* to be called an Apostle by men. What if God told them to do it? Although I might be more cautious in such a situation, I can't completely close myself off to the possibility of it being legit. But if they want me to consider them an Apostle, I want to see some apostolic qualifications (i.e. 2 Corinthians 12:12).

Quote:

-----Yes, the office of "Apostle" is biblical, but our modern version of it is most unbiblical.

Whose modern version of it? I do think that *some* people's versions of it might be unbiblical, but can we really make this blanket statement?

Quote:

-----This is also why I appreciate what you said about some people behaving like apostles even though they don't claim the title. I think you and I can agree that there are Godly men of substance shepherding churches...I am thankful for that. I know many brothers who would qualify for what you described.

I think this is where it will help to draw the line between Apostles and Pastors. Although I agree that church-planting, in and of itself, is not *necessarily* evidence of a true Apostle, I think it is *an* evidence. And I would think that the Pastors are set up by an Apostle. But most of all I think 2 Cor. 12:12 needs to be applied to this situation. If they are the real deal, I think it would be quite obvious as God backs up their claim to authority with mighty demonstrations of power. But even then, I don't think a true apostle would lord it over the people. But I don't really know how all of that would work out. I'm sure there's a million hypothetical scenarios we could think of. But I think what's most important is to get these foundations established and let God flow through His authority structure as He pleases. I wouldn't say this is the *only* way the anointing will flow, but surely it will be cause for a great increase in the Church.

Quote:

-----My position is like wearing a seat belt...there is a slight risk that wearing a seat belt may be the wrong choice but the odds are overwhelmingly in favor that seat belts save your life in a crash.

But what if God is the driver?

Besides, I think you're position is more like hiding in a bunker, because I think it's restrictive, not just safe. Of course, it's understandable to hold that position. But should we encourage others to secure themselves in the bunkers? Maybe for some it is better for now, because it's risky to hope and believe and people can get hurt, but I think it's about time to come out, trusting God to protect us and, if wounded, heal us. But that's easy for me to say because I don't feel I've been very wounded by church leadership in my life. So I sympathize with the cautious position.

Quote:

-----By the way...is there an apostolic spirit? This I am honestly asking, with sincerity.

Like I said, I don't think you're going to find the exact phrase in the Bible, but I think it's a perfectly biblical concept. Or, to put it another way, it's certainly not unbiblical, as far as I can tell. And since I think it's helpful in understanding this subject, I want to use it.

It's not like a person type of spirit, like the Holy Spirit or demon or angel, it's just an immaterial influence or force, if you will. Like Romans 8 talks about the spirit of slavery and the spirit of adoption, but I don't really think these are personal spirits, but simply immaterial influences and forces. 1 Corinthians 4:21 speaks of a spirit of gentleness. That's the kind of spirit I am thinking of. An apostolic spirit/influence/force type of thing.

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/8/4 20:59

Todd,

I appreciate your points. You stated them in the spirit of gentleness like the passage you mentioned at the end of your post.

Thanks bro,

MC

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2005/8/4 21:12

MC,

Thanks for your kind words. I have appreciated your points as well. And you are speaking from experience which I highly value. Thanks for all your input.

is this the key - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2005/8/4 23:33

If I may add another aspect to the mix. The authority aspect of an apostle is clear, but can it be said that it is actually the kind of relationships which he keeps that separates the false from the genuine?

I say that because, Dudley Daniel (Keiths brother) who lead the apostolic/prophetic team/fellowship which our church relates to, was such a person. The thing that made the 'movement' carry weight was the authority impact of application of scriptural truth and the depth of relationships which the guys working together had.

That I feel is the one thing that separates the men from the boys, how willing is the apostle willing to be seen for who he is.

What do you guys think?

Re: is this the key - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/8/4 23:59

You are welcome Todd!

Quote:

-----That I feel is the one thing that separates the men from the boys, how willing is the apostle willing to be seen for who he is.

I couldn't agree more ZekeO. Could we say that reasonable transparency is a hallmark of authentic leadership, while opacity is a hallmark of false leadership?

MC

Re: is this the key - posted by todd, on: 2005/8/5 0:41

ZekeO,

I think you're bringing up a relevant point. But I'm wondering how much it can be backed biblically. I also don't think I have a clear understanding of your question.

Are you saying that openness in personal relationships adds weight to someone's claim of apostolic authority? In that case I think I might agree with you, in a sense, but certainly this is not a major sign of an Apostle. But this clearly does seem important for any leadership.

But I think the thing that really carries weight in the realm of church authority is power. I just see it all over the New Testament. It really seems pretty simple to me. But I can see how the personal relations aspect would help give the person claiming authority more weight in an individual's eyes. That seems to be a very subjective assessment though.

I would say that the one thing that "separates the men from the boys", as you put it, is the raw power of God.

MC,

Quote:

-----Could we say that reasonable transparency is a hallmark of authentic leadership, while opacity is a hallmark of false leadership?

I don't know, but it's an interesting thought. But it seems very ambiguous to me. I mean, what is meant by "reasonable transparency?" Is this primarily a willingness to share weaknesses?

I also think we need to distinguish what type of leadership we are talking about here. Apostolic, prophetic, or pastoral? I would say that *the* hallmark of authentic apostolic leadership is power. While *the* hallmark of authentic prophetic leadership will be the accuracy and influence of the prophecies. But I think that the formula you suggest might apply especially to pastoral leadership.

That's kind of how I see it at this point.

Re: - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2005/8/5 1:48

Hey Todd,

really got me thinking, get back to you after work or at lunch. I have a few scriptures bouncing around my head at the moment.

Write later,

Re: - posted by free, on: 2005/8/5 3:32

Im really puzzling over the turn of our conversation. I had always understood that, at least in the New Testament days, ONLY those who have seen the risen Lord (in flesh) can call themselves Apostles. They were first disciples and then later became apostles. Sorry I dont know the verse to back this, maybe someone out there can help to clarify this.

Re: Apostles and Prophets., on: 2005/8/5 4:35

Have you ever played the "Telephone Game" in grade school ?

One person starts by whispering a short message in a person's ear and then that person whispers what the first person said to the next person, and from there, on it goes, and by time you get to the 20th person or so, the original message is nothing like what the first person had said. Ha ! It was a funny game.

Anyhow, that seems to be what folks have done to the definition of "Apostles" out there in church land.

An apostle, was nothing more than a male "Messenger", like what we call a Missionary or a Church Starter or Ambassador, now a days.

A Representative for Christ to bring His message to folks.

Here's some definitions and how & where it's used elsewhere.

G652 apostolos

From G649; a delegate; specifically an ambassador of the Gospel; officially a commissioner of Christ (Â“apostleÂ”), - apostle, messenger, "he that is sent".

G652

apostolos

Thayer Definition:

1) a delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders

1a) specifically applied to the twelve apostles of Christ

1b) in a broader sense applied to other eminent Christian teachers

1b1) of Barnabas

1b2) of Timothy and Silvanus and Epiphroditus Phil 2:25

Part of Speech: noun masculine

G652

apostolos

Total KJV Occurrences: 81

apostles, 53

Mat_10:2, Mar_6:30, Luk_6:13, Luk_9:10, Luk_11:49, Luk_17:5, Luk_22:14, Luk_24:10, Act_1:2, Act_1:26, Act_2:37, Act_2:43, Act_4:33, Act_4:36, Act_5:12, Act_5:18, Act_5:29, Act_5:34, Act_5:40, Act_6:6, Act_8:1, Act_8:14, Act_9:27, Act_11:1, Act_14:4, Act_14:14, Act_15:2, Act_15:4, Act_15:6, Act_15:22-23 (2), Act_16:4, Rom_16:7, 1Co_4:9, 1Co_9:5, 1Co_12:28-29 (2), 1Co_15:7, 1Co_15:9, 2Co_11:5, 2Co_11:13, 2Co_12:11, Gal_1:17, Eph_2:19-20 (2), Eph_3:5, Eph_4:11, 1Th_2:6, 2Pe_3:2, Jud_1:17, Rev_2:2, Rev_18:20, Rev_21:14

apostle, 19

Rom_1:1, Rom_11:13, 1Co_9:1-2 (3), 1Co_15:9, 2Co_1:1, 2Co_12:12, Col_1:1 (3), 1Ti_1:1, 1Ti_2:7, 2Ti_1:1, 2Ti_1:11, Heb_3:1 (2), 1Pe_1:1, 2Pe_1:1

apostlesÂ’, 5

Act_2:42, Act_4:35, Act_4:37, Act_5:2, Act_8:18

sent, 2

Joh_13:16 (2)

messenger, 1

Phi_2:25

messengers, 1

2Co_8:23

Prophets are just that. Eph 4:11 Just on the list with Pastors, Teachers, Evangelists & Apostles.

'Apostolic Authority' is something, that somebody just WANTS I guess, because these Scriptures don't point to any such thing.

The "Apostolic Authority" teaching started with the Catholic Teaching.

Guess some folks just need to feel "Special-er" than the most ... Ha !

Enjoying reading this discussion. Neat !

Re:Character - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/8/5 5:29

Quote:

-----I mean, what is meant by "reasonable transparency?" Is this primarily a willingness to share weaknesses?

I suppose "accountability" is a better term. I threw "reasonable " in there to be, well reasonable about it. (I think a leader should be allowed to keep a few things private!)

Quote:

-----But I think the thing that really carries weight in the realm of church authority is power. I just see it all over the New Testament.

I realize the demonstration of power is an accepted test for authority, but I've seen power before in men who steal other mens' wives. A demonstration of power may or may not be a sign of true authority. I'm not trying to be glib or dark here, but it is my unsettling experience that some men can seem to preach sound doctrine, prophecy with uncanny insight, lead men to salvation, heal sickness and other marvelous things...all at the same time being lifetime systematic liars to their very core. Don't ask me how these men rise in the ranks of church leadership, but they do.

Remember Judas presumably demonstrated power with the other Apostles. As one write called it...he was a dark riddle. (Forgive me for being such a wet blanket on this subject...I feel awful about discussing this frightful phenomenon.)

I've known some "dark riddles" that were so convincing as authentic men of God, that once their carousing in broad daylight was exposed, I fearfully examined my own salvation. "If they can deceive themselves and others so profoundly," I reasoned, "how can I trust my own heart?"

I think there is a better hallmark for authentic spiritual authority than power. This hallmark is character.

It is my strong conviction that only mature and abundant fruit of the Spirit can authenticate a true leader. This may be a hard truth because we are taught not to judge others...a fact that some may be quick to exploit. We are all accepted into the house of God by grace and mercy, but only men of the highest proven spiritual character and moral ethic should steward the house. After that criteria is met, some power would be great! :-)

MC

Re: - posted by Manfred, on: 2005/8/5 6:04

Hi everyone,

Just a very important question, echoing free's question:

Are there apostles today ?

Personally, I think that there are none.

Manfred

Re:, on: 2005/8/5 6:13

I believe there are no Apostles such as the originals... gifted as the originals, etc.

There is an apostolic ministry today in the sense that there are those who travel and plant churches, but they are not of the same variety as the Apostles.

For one thing, the Apostles mentioned in scripture all had one thing in common... they had all seen Jesus. Even Paul. He saw Him on the road to Damascus, and no doubt Paul had witnessed Jesus' earthly ministry... he just wasn't in favor of it at the time it was going on.

These are my convictions on it. I get nervous about someone who declares themselves to be Apostles. You see it increasing in Charismatic circles today: Apostle So and So. Putting themselves on par with the original Apostles. I understand that the original Apostles were mere men, but I think everyone understands what I am saying.

Krispy

Re: - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2005/8/5 6:52

Quote:

For one thing, the Apostles mentioned in scripture all had one thing in common... they had all seen Jesus...

That is at best an assumption based upon the silence of scripture or an ignorant untruth.

Quote:

----- These are my convictions on it. I get nervous...

Dude, I get nervous when a person of your personality has any conviction, and especially if it is a conviction that is based upon supposed truth.

Re: - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2005/8/5 7:03

Hi Manfred,

I am not in a position to call someone an apostle, but here are some scriptures about them that broadens the field a bit:

1) Jesus – “The Apostle”. Heb 3:1 – “...fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. He was “the” sent one. Jn 13:16; Jn 3:17

2) The twelve apostles.

a. They were also “sent ones”

b. They were “witnesses of Christ’s Resurrection”. Acts 1:22,26

c. The number was fixed. Rev 21:14, Matt 10:2; Jn 6:70,71

d. When Judas committed suicide, God led the other eleven to replace him. Acts 1:21-26

e. God accepted Matthias according to Acts 2:14

f. Paul was never intended by God to be one of “The twelve”. He did not meet the necessary requirements to become one of the twelve. He only became a Christian three years later. He distinguishes himself from the twelve in 1 Cor 15:5-8

3) Other Apostles in the New Testament.

The Father Â“sendsÂ” the Twelve- while here on earth

The Spirit Â“sendsÂ” others-now that Christ has returned to heaven, after His Ascension.

a. There are more apostles named in the New Testament than any other Ephesians 4 ministry: four prophets named, one evangelist, one teacher, no pastors!

b. There are nine other apostles mentioned by name:

i. Barnabas-Acts 14:14

ii. Paul-Acts 14:14

iii. Andronicus-Rom 16:7

iv. Junias-Rom 16:7

v. Silas (Silvanus)-1 Thess 1:1; 2:7

vi. Timothy-1 Thess 1:1; 2:7

vii. James, JesusÂ’ natural brother and not one of the Twelve-Gal 1:19

viii. Apollos-1 Cor 4:6, 9

ix. Epaphroditus-Phil 2:25

If the number was fixed at twelve, then there would not have been a possibility of others posing as apostles and deceiving the believers-Rev 2:2

This was some 50 years after Pentecost!

c. Also there are references to counterfeit or false apostles-2 Cor 11:13

4) There is far more said about the ministry of apostles than all other ministries combined

Re:, on: 2005/8/5 7:21

Quote:
-----Dude, I get nervous when a person of your personality has any conviction, and especially if it is a conviction that is based upon supposed truth.

That was uncalled for... When I say that is my conviction I am implying that it isn't the conviction of others. Someone asked a question, I gave a personal answer. There was nothing in my answer that was dogmatic. In fact, if you would care to read my whole post you will see that I am saying there is apostolic ministries... but you would rather jump on my back than honestly read my posts.

A simple "I don't agree with Krispy, and here is why..." would have sufficed. Taking jabs at me or my personality really has no place in this forum, Zeke.

Krispy

Re: - posted by Manfred, on: 2005/8/5 7:28

Hi Zeke0,

As I said before, everyone is free to believe whatever. I don't see any apostles today.

I have looked at and read from these modern day so-called apostles, my ! they don't even come near to what the Scriptures say what an apostle is. These pseudo-apostles are a shame to Christ and His Church, and I certainly don't want anything to do with them.

We studied this earlier this year in our assembly, if you wish I can send you the notes; but they are about two pages long, it might be too much to post here.

Manfred

Re: - posted by Manfred, on: 2005/8/5 7:39

Hi Zekeo,

Quote:

-----For one thing, the Apostles mentioned in scripture all had one thing in common... they had all seen Jesus...

Quote:

----- That is at best an assumption based upon the silence of scripture or an ignorant untruth.

Really ?

Acts 1: 21-22: "So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us--one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection."

1 Cor. 9:1 "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord?"

1 Cor. 15:7-8 : "Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me."

Do you call this "an assumption based upon the silence of scripture or an ignorant untruth" ?

I call it unquestionable Scriptural evidence !

Manfred

Re:, on: 2005/8/5 7:49

Thank you, Manfred. I was all set to post those exact verses... you beat me to it. :-P

This is what I base my convictions on. If someone bases their conviction on scripture that shows otherwise, then we will agree to disagree on this point. I have no problem with that.

Krispy

Re: My word - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2005/8/5 10:01

Quote:

This is what I base my convictions on. If someone bases their conviction on scripture that shows otherwise, then we will agree to disagree on this point.

That makes me nervous, a conviction is a firm belief. So if someone shows scripture that shows you different you will still maintain your position. Are you being serious, you of all people, quite frankly I am stunned.

Direct references:

Acts 14:14 Which when the apostles, **Barnabas and Paul**, heard of, they rent their clothes

Romans 16:7 Salute Andronicus and Junia my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, **who are of note among the apostles**

...

By implication:

1 Cor 4:6,9 And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred **to myself and Apollos** for your sakes; **that ye might learn in us....**verse 9 For I think that God hath set forth **us the apostles last...**

At best you could conclude from the silence of scripture that they may have seen the Lord, but there is not direct reference to this fact. Maybe you are only seeing what you want to see. At worst you are willing to have a conviction based upon a part truth which is error.

So it all depends on what you want to believe, if God really intended the only apostles to be those 'that had seen the Lord' he would have made it abundantly clear, and not left it to our deduction. Acts 14 and Romans 16 clearly call others apostles whose histories we can only speculate on.

Re: - posted by Nellie, on: 2005/8/5 10:32

There was a man who came into our Church, and told our Pastor that he was an Apostle.
He told him he would preach to a lot of people, and promised him all kinds of blessings, like Mercedes and etc.
Quite frankly, he is a false prophet.
He also named several of the prosperity preachers as being real men of God.
Our Pastor believed him.
He bought another Home, and said since this man had said he would get another Home, then he said the man was of God.
There is no where in the Scripture, to my knowledge, that the Apostles promised great wealth to the followers of Christ.
I know that Jesus blesses us, according to His Word, He wishes we prosper even as our soul prospers.
We need to get to the place, or I should say that I need to get to the place. that Jesus is enough.
That I may know Him is my plea.
I haven't met an Apostle, either.
God Bless you, one and all.
In His Service
Nellie

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2005/8/5 10:40

First of all, I understand that the word "Apostle" in New Testament times had a very clear connection to the Roman empire. An Apostle was one who was sent in after a Roman victory was won and their main purpose was to culturize the people to the Roman way of life. They did this because they realized that if they didn't, the next generation of the people they conquered would rise up in rebellion and try to break the chains of Roman rule over them. This is what I've learned. So this paints a clear picture of what an Apostle in the Church does, at least in large part. Jesus won the victory, then the Apostles are sent out to enforce it and culturize the people (making disciples of *all nations*) to the Kingdom way. That's how I see it. When you see it in that context, if it is in fact accurate, you see it means much more than simply messenger and "sent one." I think those are just the root and base meanings.

Now about the power evidencing authority issue. We *must* keep 2 Corinthians 12:12 in mind. I too know of individuals in high church places who exercise some measure of power, but that's not what I'm talking about. I'm not talking about occasional good prophetic words, salvations (at any number), or some basic kinds of healings. Those things are great, but I don't think that's nearly enough.

From how I read it, 2 Cor. 12:12 is talking about a *consistent* witness of *mighty* demonstrations of the power of God in miracles, signs, and wonders.

Like Paul's anointed hankerchiefs and Peter's shadow. I mean, it was pretty obvious, don't you think? And it seems that that wasn't even focused ministry. Like those types of things were just some stuff that was happening as extra, on the side, bonus. It wasn't even focused ministry, it seems. Imagine what happened when they focused more!

Now, I would consider Peter and Paul kind of like "super-Apostles", if you will. Because they clearly seem to be distinguished even among the Apostles. Like how Jesus called John the Baptist *more* than a Prophet. I would think of Paul and Peter as *more* than Apostles. So I don't think *everyone* who is a legitimate Apostle necessarily needs to be performing these kinds of miracles, signs, and wonders. But they better have some powerful results consistently going on in their ministry if they want me to consider them an Apostle.

It's also important to note that power is not an *absolute* proof of an Apostle, but I think it's the best we got. I know the false prophet will call down fire from heaven, deceive masses, etc. Ultimately we need to be mature and keep our hearts right with God and trust Him. I don't know if there are any absolute sure proofs in this area. I don't think there is. But we have some very powerful evidences, and I think it will be pretty obvious to those whose hearts are right, and I believe God will grant them "eyes to see and ears to hear."

But I also know of religions whose people are well known for tremendous character, morally, like Mormons I suppose. Character is clearly very important, but I don't think it's supported by Scripture as a major evidence of an Apostle. Maybe I'm wrong. If you have some verses to support that idea I'd be very interested at seeing them. It wouldn't shock me if you had some good ones. But then again I think of David here. Did he have good character? Yes, but he slipped up a few times. I don't know how well we can ever judge someone's character, as I believe you were getting at MC.

Lastly, at this point, I don't think I'd call anyone an Apostle that hasn't "seen" the Lord. I don't know to what extent the "seeing" is to be. Like it seems that Paul "saw" the Lord in visions sometimes but I don't think it's recorded that they ever met face to face in the natural.

Re:, on: 2005/8/5 10:53

Quote:
-----That makes me nervous, a conviction is a firm belief. So if someone shows scripture that shows you different you will still maintain your position. Are you being serious, you of all people, quite frankly I am stunned.

That's not what I said... if someone has some substantial scripture that shows I'm wrong, I will change. ON THIS TOPIC, I haven't seen any.

Krispy

Re:, on: 2005/8/5 11:13

How did we get off into this? I thought we were discussing house church / traditional church and fellowship??

Krispy

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2005/8/5 12:51

I suppose it naturally evolved yesterday as the issue of control and shepherding came up as well as the fact that this is about church structure and church life, right? I guess it just naturally happened.

If you look back at my post at 12:40 yesterday you can see where it kind of started to turn this way as I responded to King Jimmy about some points he raised.

Do you think what we are currently talking about is very relevant to the overall discussion?

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/8/5 14:18

I think the issue relates to an underlying discussion to church structure. It is my feeling that many people are drawn to house churches because they think the authority structure will be different or safer. (This is not the only reason of course.) My point in all this is to say that character of leadership is more important than structure. (Not that structure is unimportant.)

Mainly I say this: Don't run to the house church under the false hope that there you are less likely to be under poor leadership. Men of spiritual character affect the outcome...not methods. The church is the New Man, not the new manner.

Quote:
-----Character is clearly very important, but I don't think it's supported by Scripture as a major evidence of an Apostle.

Evidence? How about a fundamental requirement! Do I really need to support this with scripture? Have we been so conditioned by carnal leadership as to imagine that power is more important than character? (Not that I think the two can be neatly divided...but one must precede the other.) Let's look at just one scripture and see how difficult it is to be a Godly leader...

At the beginning of 1 Peter 5 we learn from Paul the following...

- 1) "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder,..." Paul, the Apostle, considered himself an elder, not some Romish "Prince of Apostles", or "Super Apostle."
- 2) "...and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:"
- 3) "Feed the flock of God which is among you," (
- 4) "taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly;"
- 5) "not for filthy lucre," I'll lay my card down on this one...considering that Paul's church then was entering into persecution, how much lucre could there be to go around? Clearly Paul did not think money was a private "heart" issue that was between God and the individual, or he wouldn't have mentioned it.
- 6) "but of a ready mind;" I don't think Paul was asking men to be scholars like him, although learning can be an asset. The real readiness of mind is sobriety and integrity for watching over God's people...
- 7) Neither as being lords over God's heritage,
- 8) but being examples to the flock. I think this is the summation statement for these verses. It tells me that leaders can be assessed. It's hard to admire a leader who says "Don't look to me as an example...I'm just a man like you!")

Obviously Godly character is not the same as the morals of a Mormon. I believe Godly Character is born of the Spirit for spiritual concerns. However, we should also have at least the ethical standards of a Mormon. Now all of us should desire Godly character, but I believe an elder must have already obtained it...to the extent that he can be a relative example for others.

I have no argument with 2 Cor. 12:12 but power is not more important than character. Personally I think character is a sign of power...but I know the term power often refers to miracles.

Quote:
-----It's also important to note that power is not an absolute proof of an Apostle, but I think it's the best we got...Ultimately we need to be mature and keep our hearts right with God and trust Him...But we have some very powerful evidences, and I think it will be pretty obvious to those whose hearts are right, and I believe God will grant them "eyes to see and ears to hear."

Aren't we saying the same thing? Isn't "keeping your heart right with God," a basic description of Godly character? By what method, other than judging character, do we determine "whose hearts are right?"

I think we are saying the same thing...it's a matter of settling which comes first: Godly character or Godly power.

I guess I've harped on this enough. I'll shut up now. :knockedout:

MC

Apostles in Scripture - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2005/8/5 16:06

Though in serious need of a revision of both the list (it needs to be expanded), and differing arguments (some of my position of folks have changed), check out:

<http://www.christiansteps.com/doctrine/apostles.html>

This study on my site lists about 20 named apostles in Scripture. To it I would primarily change the fact that I firmly believe Titus to have been an apostle because he was given the same charge the apostle Timothy was. I'd also add Apollos to the list of apostles, because of his name being mentioned in Corinthians in the context of other apostles e.g. I'm of Paul, Cephas, Apollos, Christ.

The notion that there were only 12 apostles + Paul is entirely bogus, and cannot be defended unless you totally ignore Scripture on the matter. History would also strongly disagree with the notion that there were only 12 apostles + Paul, namely in the famous document called the Didache, which gives instructions for discerning who is called as an apostle (and it doesn't simply name who those people are, as would be the case if there were only 12).

Check it out.

Re: character v charisma, on: 2005/8/5 21:16

Anyone can have 'charisma' as the world sees it, but, if I'm looking for eldership to whom to trust the care of my soul, then I'm looking for godly character first, and signs and wonders because of that character, not, in spite of the *absence* of it.

Krispy said leadership is about washing the feet of the saints - John 13. This ties in with Luke 7:8, where the centurion understands authority is bestowed by the one to whom he submits. In an elder's case - to God. (If Paul says an elder should be irreproachable before he is chosen as an elder, then 'irreproachable' he should be!)

Jesus talks about fruit in John 15 - the fruit of the Spirit, in terms of the branch abiding in the Vine; not much room for manoeuvre there, either!

ZekeO said

Quote:
-----In the church context, when I hear organisation I immediately think of saints, deacons, elders. The furthest thing from my mind is business hierarchy model of governance, I think that for me, the only exposure I have had of church leadership is where elders are in front (not below, nor behind, nor above the rest) of the congregation. The deacon team and the Saints slip in **behind** the as a body going forward. That is organisational church structure.

This ties in with Paul's comment that the church is built on the apostles and prophets. Therefore, I would change 'behind' to 'above', as the elders are, in one aspect of this picture, the *feet* of the local body, rather than the head. The Head, is Christ. The elders bear the weight and carry the little ones, the weak and the poorly. This is also the 'nurse' function, to which Paul refers in 1 Thess 2:7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:'

Re: Seeing Jesus, copying Jesus and bearing fruit like Jesus, on: 2005/8/5 21:49

I too believe there are apostles today and was slightly bemused by allusions to having seen Jesus as the criteria. Krispy suggested 'they had all seen Jesus. Even Paul. He saw Him on the road to Damascus'. But Paul himself has said,

2 Cor 5

16 Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

When Greeks came seeking to 'see Jesus', He said this strange thing, in reply.

John 12:20 - 32

24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.
25 He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.
26 If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.

This same spiritual seeing is alluded to by default by the writer to the Hebrews.

Hebrews 2:9, 10

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour ; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

According to Jesus in this and the parable of the sower, this *is* the way to 'bear fruit', along with abiding in the Vine.

Peter also noted 'He who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin' - a correlation between living the life (seeing Jesus) and bearing fruit worthy to be identified as 'good'.

(1 Peter 4:1, 2 Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.)

Re: Can women of God bear the fruit of an apostolic ministry?, on: 2005/8/5 22:25

Clearly, an elder bears not only the fruit of the Spirit, but is trusted by the Lord to minister to the world - not just within the local church.

Somehow, the idea has crept into church thinking, that a person has to be a Christian before they can be prayed for for certain basic blessings, but is it scriptural not to pray for them to meet God through healing or deliverance?

In this context I have heard, now, of three different women who were *sent* out as church-planters. Are they apostles - or not? I'm asking this because church planting has been mentioned as a specifically 'apostolic' gift. Is this correct - only apostles plant churches? If so, are there scriptural (as opposed to human and practical) reasons why women should *not do this work*? What does 'in Christ, there is no male nor female...' actually mean in practice?

I mean these questions seriously. Some women are working in spiritual situations where men who do not have their gift or commitment to evangelism, give oversight, but it is the women who are 'sent'. Are the men at fault for not doing the work of evangelism? Are the women 'apostles' in its generic meaning?

I realise this may seem to be drifting away from the original discussion of scriptural models of 'church', but, if within (house or cell) churches there arise opportunities for believers to share the Lord's leading or moving in their lives Monday to Saturday, then the question of whether there are some things which God never could have asked a woman to say or do, has to be considered, and the women helped to stop such error, or, they should be supported and judged by the same parameters by which fruit in a man's life should be judged. I believe.

Re:, on: 2005/8/6 15:41

With respect to my previous post, I should like to state clearly, I am not a feminist. I would far rather the men in the church go off and do what they are called to do according to the New Testament pattern, but, to make sense of there being neither male nor female in Christ, (and the other equalities) and the gifts of the Spirit as they are distributed by the Head, I do believe God's authority can be seen in the lives of those who are capable of wielding it, whether they happen to be male or female. Therefore, it is ok for a church to acknowledge and support even a woman in (her) ministry, as long as both she and the church hold such 'moments' with an open hand, according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. This is a safer course spiritually, than giving notional 'power' to a man who is not ready for the privilege it bestows.

Todd said

Quote:
-----But I think the thing that really carries weight in the realm of church authority is power. I just see it all over the New Testament. It really seems pretty simple to me.

I agree.

Does this mean that lack of power in a life can be directly related to the lack of authority which naturally follows when those who claim the Name of Christ are *not* submitted to God, *not* falling into the ground and dying (as a corn of wheat), *not* denying themselves to take up their cross to follow Him, and *not* being obedient when He gives them a task to fulfill? Seems a reasonable deduction to me.

I found an interesting scripture this morning, in **Luke 12**, in which the Lord refers to a servant who was not found doing what he knew to be his instructions. (Very sobering!)

45 But and if that servant say in his heart,

My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;

46 The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion ***with the unbelievers***.

47 And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2005/8/6 19:14

MC,

I think I haven't clearly explained myself. I am in no way saying character is not important or fundamental for leadership. I am saying that I don't see it given as an evidence of an Apostle. Sure, I think it's very important for every leader. But I think that is besides the point I am focusing on.

How well do you trust your abilities to judge character? How subjective is this? How trustworthy is this way of proving someone's authenticity?

I think power is clearly shown as the primary indicator of apostolic authenticity because it is so objective. There's less chance of getting it wrong because it is not as prone to subjective evaluations. Either it's there or it's not. I would think it would be very plain and simple to see. Whereas I don't think character is.

Quote:
-----Have we been so conditioned by carnal leadership as to imagine that power is more important than character? (Not that I think the two can be neatly divided...but one must precede the other.)

You know what, I am not sure what I think is more important, to be honest. Of course I don't think we ever have to make this choice, but if I did, I honestly don't know how I would choose.

Must one precede the other? I would think to an extent it most likely would. But, how much character had Peter recently shown when he got baptized with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and received power from on high? Hadn't he just recently denied the Lord not once or twice, but three times- and then basically given up and gone back to fishing?

Honestly, I don't follow your conclusions from 1 Peter. Also, wasn't 1 Peter written by Peter, not Paul?

Quote:
-----Obviously Godly character is not the same as the morals of a Mormon.

I agree. But can they look identical?

Quote:
-----Aren't we saying the same thing? Isn't "keeping your heart right with God," a basic description of Godly character? By what method, other than judging character, do we determine "whose hearts are right?"

I'm talking about us keeping our own hearts right and thereby avoiding deception. And, yes, I do think this might be a basic description of Godly character.

Barring supernatural revelation, I don't know if we can rightly judge another's character or know their heart. And I'd rather leave that between them and God, perhaps pray for them, and only move into judgment if God directly led me to. But to an Apostle this might work differently. I'm speaking from the level I feel I'm at right now.

Quote:
-----I think we are saying the same thing...it's a matter of settling which comes first: Godly character or Godly power.

See, I'm not following you here. I don't know about all that and what comes first, etc. I really don't know how all that works out. I'm trying to make the point that the primary way to evaluate the authenticity of an apostolic claim is by power. Though clearly I would expect an Apostle to prove excellent in character as well.

Dorcas,

Quote:
-----Does this mean that lack of power in a life can be directly related to the lack of authority which naturally follows when those who claim the Name of Christ are not submitted to God, not falling into the ground and dying (as a corn of wheat), not denying themselves to take up their cross to follow Him, and not being obedient when He gives them a task to fulfil? Seems a reasonable deduction to me.

I guess I would say it *could be* as you have deduced in some cases. But while this might be a reasonable deduction, I don't think it's a loving one, and I would hope not to reason this way in my heart with a real person. But I do think you might be touching an accurate principle.

Re:, on: 2005/8/6 20:29

Quote:
-----I am in no way saying character is not important or fundamental for leadership. I am saying that I don't see it given as an evidence of an Apostle.

By alluding to Peter's failures before Pentecost, you are using an Old Covenant standard to judge his New Covenant life. Is that fair? Isn't the whole point of Pentecost that it frees us from all that? Anyway, what about the Sermon on the Mount? That's basic. These are the sorts of things I'd be looking for.

And there are some principles that hold true because they are a fact of being human, such as, 'of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh', which can help us discern whether a leader is demonstrating moral fibre appropriate to the status he claims in the Spirit.

Quote:
-----I think power is clearly shown as the primary indicator of apostolic authenticity because it is so objective. There's less chance of getting it wrong because it is not as prone to subjective evaluations. Either it's there or it's not. I would think it would be very plain and simple to see. Whereas I don't think character is.

I don't get how it can be 'so objective' if it can look just the same as 'miracles' done by people who are not under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

While you're having difficulty working out how to judge character, I'm having difficulty believing you'd really lay that aside *because it's difficult* rather than use your natural faculties and listen to the Spirit for guidance. It's not wrong to come to a conclusion, even if you don't like what you find.

Quote:
-----And I'd rather leave that between them and God, perhaps pray for them, and only move into judgment if God directly led me to. But to an Apostle this might work differently. I'm speaking from the level I feel I'm at right now.

Why would an apostle be judged by different standards - unless they were higher, of course?

Quote:
-----But while this might be a reasonable deduction, **I don't think it's a loving one**, and I would hope not to reason this way in my heart with a real person.

Do you forget the Bible sets stringent standards for church servants, which is what they are supposed to have demonstrated under scrutiny, **before** they were ever set under the eyes of the world as an example? Anyone who has had their 'loving' faculty stretched and twisted to accommodate all kinds of non-Christian behaviour, under the guise of it being 'unloving' to judge, comes away from the experience actually abused, spiritually.

There is a need for outside (objective) scrutiny to help prevent this sort of thing going on for years, or the same faulty leadership will gradually undermine the strength and optimism of the believers who are thus stressed. We are *not* taking too much to ourselves to make this deduction if a leader's life has stopped (or never did) fulfil the basic criteria of character for apostleship.

I would add the story of Ananias and Sapphira, for a sharp distinction between words and actions, between transparency and deception, for a dividing of truth with stunning accuracy. (Acts 5, and Galatians 2:11 - Paul withstood Peter.)

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/8/6 22:08

Quote:
----- Also, wasn't 1 Peter written by Peter, not Paul?

:lol: oops. I was being very sloppy there wasn't I? No one will mistake me for a bible scholar. Those subtle details.

OK Mr. smartypants, who was buried in Grant's tomb? :-P

Seriously Todd, the more we talk the more I think we believe similar things, except we have different emphasis. I, like you, think leaders need to demonstrate suitable giftings and Holy Spirit power for their tasks. I imagine that you, like me, expect shepherds to be examples to the flock of Godly conduct in all areas of their lives.

We probably agree where it matters, and maybe our disagreement is only in focus.

Obviously we disagree as to whether there are modern Apostles in the fullest sense of the word. I've stated my own position well enough...that is to say that many of the functions of an Apostle continue to this day, such as planting churches or evangelism. I think for the sake of clarity it would be best to discontinue use of the term "Apostle" as it carries the authority of one who speaks for God, in a unique and literal way. It seems odd to me that so many want to be Apostles today, when not even Augustine, Luther, Wesley, Whitefield, or Finney claimed for themselves this title. I realize that many people use the concept of the "5-fold ministry" as derived from Eph 4:11 to prove otherwise but I remain unconvinced. (But hey, don't listen to me. I'm for losing the title "Pastor" as well. The term Elder, or plurality of Elders, contains all of the meaning required to define leadership in a church community.)

I think further display of my own beliefs here would only be for the sake of polemics.

A church leader is a bird who needs both wings to fly...power and character. I can live with that.:-)

Peace,

MC

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2005/8/7 0:43

Quote:
-----By alluding to Peter's failures before Pentecost, you are using an Old Covenant standard to judge his New Covenant life. Is that fair ? Isn't the whole point of Pentecost that it frees us from all that?

I don't know if I'm doing what you say. Who says the standards of character have changed? I get the feeling from what you said about Pentecost that maybe you think every believer today already has this blessing from Pentecost just by becoming a Christian or something. Do you think that? What do you mean Pentecost frees us? Maybe I can see how "it" freed *them*, in a sense, but even then it doesn't seem clear to me.

Quote:
-----Anyway, what about the Sermon on the Mount?

I'm not sure what you mean. I mean, I think I have a general idea, but it's not clear. What about it? Could you be more specific?

Quote:
-----I don't get how it can be 'so objective' if it can look just the same as 'miracles' done by people who are not under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

I think it might be possible for some high level occultists to perform supernatural feats that look like miracles, though I haven't personally witnessed it. But I think it would be very obvious that they are operating with dark power and it wouldn't be hard to discern that. Do they claim Jesus as Lord? I think it would be very easy to determine.

Quote:
-----While you're having difficulty working out how to judge character, I'm having difficulty believing you'd really lay that aside because it's difficult rather than use your natural faculties and listen to the Spirit for guidance. It's not wrong to come to a conclusion, even if you don't like what you find.

I'm not saying it's merely difficult. Like I said: barring supernatural revelation, I don't know if it's even possible. And I'd prefer not to bother with it in the sense of looking carefully into their lives and focusing on that. I think I'd only do it if God specifically led me to. As it is, I feel no general obligation to do such things. I prefer to just love, as naive as that may sound.

Quote:
-----Do you forget the Bible sets stringent standards for church servants, which is what they are supposed to have demonstrated under scrutiny, before they were ever set under the eyes of the world as an example?

I suppose if I'm in a place where an Apostle gave me responsibility to do my best in discerning someone's character as a requirement for eldership, or something along those lines, then I would probably do my best with the Apostles blessing. But I see that as an exceptional situation.

Quote:

-----There is a need for outside (objective) scrutiny to help prevent this sort of thing going on for years,

Perhaps there is a place for this, but I don't think it's everyone's responsibility to look at everyone else in this manner. I suppose it's best for certain people to keep certain people accountable. Certainly I don't think it's healthy to constantly be looking at each other in this way.

I'm not sure what you're getting at about Ananias and Sapphira, could you flush that out more for me?

Was the Galatians 2 incident more about character or the very integrity of the gospel? Also, on a lesser note, are you sure that's referring to Peter the Apostle? And even if it was, do you think it's relevant that one Apostle would confront another and not someone of lesser authority?

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2005/8/7 1:01

Quote:

-----OK Mr. smartpants, who was buried in Grant's tomb?"

Awww man, you got me there! And I got a degree in History! :-(

Quote:

-----It seems odd to me that so many want to be Apostles today, when not even Augustine, Luther, Wesley, Whitefield, or Finney claimed for themselves this title.

Well, as you know, I'm not real excited about people claiming the title for themselves, but clearly the men you mention here didn't come close to qualifying as Apostles anyway. I mean, I don't know if any of them demonstrated a single mighty miracle, sign, or wonder- let alone consistently.

Quote:

-----A church leader is a bird who needs both wings to fly...power and character. I can live with that.

Hmmmm, I don't know how I feel about that as a general statement. Since I felt like you were feeling there would be agreement on both of our parts here, I just wanted to clarify that. I am mostly trying to point out evidences of an Apostle I think, not leadership in general. I don't know if I would require demonstrations of power ("dunamis" kind) from *all* forms of leadership for me to accept their leadership- though that would be nice! ;-)

Quote:

-----I think further display of my own beliefs here would only be for the sake of polemics.

Ok, maybe you're right. I don't know. But maybe after my response you might want to respond to me again. Either way, I've enjoyed the discussion.

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/8/7 2:38

Quote:
-----I just wanted to clarify that. I am mostly trying to point out evidences of an Apostle I think, not leadership in general. I don't know if I would require demonstrations of power ("dunamis" kind) from all forms of leadership for me to accept their leadership- though that would be nice!

Yes. I was being simplistic. In order for my little bird analogy to apply I guess I would broaden power (dunamis) into effectiveness.

Quote:
-----Either way, I've enjoyed the discussion.

Me too. We'll probably have an opportunity to discuss this topic in some manner again. :-)

MC

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/8/7 3:21

Quote:
-----Yes. I was being simplistic. In order for my little bird analogy to apply I guess I would broaden power (dunamis) into effectiveness.

The distinctions between 'exousia-power' and 'dunamis-power' are significant, I think. Folks raised on the KJV can easily blur the two. 'dunamis' (Strong's 1411) is not 'bolt-on power' but 'inherent power'. It is used to give the 'strength' of an army. The 'strength/power' of the army would be measured in terms of its inherent quality; '60 man army'. A dog, for example, has 'dog-power' but you can never add 'dog-power' to a human being; it springs from its nature.

This is why we must never separate 'power' from 'character'. It is not only effectiveness but 'appropriate effectiveness'. I love the phrase "but ye shall receive power at the coming of the Holy Spirit upon you, and ye shall be witnesses to me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and unto the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8, YNG) Notice that this is the consequence of the 'Holy Spirit' presence upon them. Have we ever stopped to consider why the 'third' member of the Godhead has His character built into His name?

The consequence of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit is 'dunamis' and the consequence of the 'dunamis' is that they would 'be' something that they had not 'been'. It would have been so easy to use the verb for 'witnessing' here, in which case it would have read 'the power of the Holy Spirit to witness...' But this is not a 'bolt-on' power but an inherent 'power', so we have 'power... to be...

The verb which is linked to dunamis is dunamai (Strong's 1410); it is translated variously in the English versions most frequently as 'can' or 'able'. It is good to keep that idea alive when using the word 'dunamis-power'. It would, for example, be quite justifiable to have translated the verse above as "you will receive enabling to be my witness". This conveys a slightly different impression than the word 'power'.

You can tell how people are thinking from their illustrations. How often have you heard someone say "dunamis - is the word we get dynamite from. You will receive dynamite power...". Apart from this being an example of running history backwards, dynamite is not a good illustration of the word 'dunamis'. If you want a modern word I suggest 'dynamo'. Dynamite is instant, explosive and often very destructive - not a good illustration of dunamis. Dynamo, on the other hand, is sustained and reliable and speaks of process rather than crisis. Dynamite is here and gone in a moment; dynamo is sustained enabling.

I am tempted to say that the Church has had quite enough dynamite-dunamis and is in great need of dynamo-dunamis.

Re:, on: 2005/8/7 3:44

I have a question...can one who claims the title apostle also pastor a church? So can one be a Apostle AND a pastor and execute both roles's effectively?

Quote:
----- Anyone who has had their 'loving' faculty stretched and twisted to accommodate all kinds of non-Christian behaviour, under the guise of it being 'unloving' to judge, comes away from the experience actually abused, spiritually.

Yes, this is very true. Also i believe there are many who are too afraid to judge and confront the issue and believe they are alone and so are 'bullied' in a sense. They try to handle the situation in a godly way but the situation overcomes them and they can react to it in the flesh. To people on the outside it all seems a bit too extreme, they wonder why that person doesn't just 'get out' or 'confront the issue' but to the person in the situation it becomes almost the norm to them hence why no one says anything. It isn't until one person stands up and confronts the issue, seeking the Lord always in the matter and praying for wisdom in the situation and for His will for you.

I believe one of the ultimate fruits a pastor and apostle must show is love at all times. If there is no love then im sorry how is that person supposed to execute their office/calling. Are they even called at all? Another thing if a pastor or apostle (or both) exhibits a tremendous amount of pride are they ready to claim their title? :-(

In His Love,
geraldine

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/8/7 3:44

Quote:
-----I am tempted to say that the Church has had quite enough dynamite-dynamis and is in great need of dynamo-dynamis.

Philo,

In your hands the sword of the Word always seems like a keen-edged French Cutlass. (In my hands it's more like a dull meat cleaver!)

I sincerely appreciate your presence in these threads.

MC

Re:, on: 2005/8/7 5:18

Quote:
-----by geraldine:
Yes, this is very true. Also i believe there are many who are too afraid to judge and confront the issue and believe they are alone and so are 'bullied' in a sense. They try to handle the situation in a godly way but the situation overcomes them and they can react to it in the flesh. To people on the outside it all seems a bit too extreme, they wonder why that person doesn't just 'get out' or 'confront the issue' but to the person in the situation it becomes almost the norm to them hence why no one says anything. It isn't until one person stands up and confronts the issue, seeking the Lord always in the matter and praying for wisdom in the situation and for His will for you.
I believe one of the ultimate fruits a pastor and apostle must show is love at all times. If there is no love then im sorry how is that person supposed to execute their office/calling. Are they even called at all? Another thing if a pastor or apostle (or both) exhibits a tremendous amount of pride are they ready to claim their title? :-(

Very Good points Geraldine. But you've presented us here with a paradox.

We are to "judge and confront", but all that you said is true of what comes to the person who does so, afterwards ... "Bullied", as you've said, plus a whole lot more.

And then we must have "love and no pride", as you've said, but you combine the love and the no pride with "confronting"

, and the person will only find themselves very alone.

One must 'count the cost', and from what I've seen, 'the crowd' will follow just the opposite of what you've described.

People fear following the persons you described, or even to be caught talking with them, for fear of losing the crowd that they've chosen to keep company with.

I've seen people talk a good talk about 'defending truth', but if they begin to lose popularity and are ostracized because of it, they go back to the crowd or pack mentality, that's so prevalent in the fallen human nature.

There are few John the Baptists or the Prophets of old, now a days, who were/are willing to stand alone or even be killed for the truth.

God forbid, they may lose their com-padres.

To appear "loving" is different than to Love as Jesus or any man in the Bible did.

They loved with divine love, which meant, they were willing to stand alone, completely if need be, to 'tell the truth'.

Yet, if they tell the truth in these days, they are labeled "unloving". Or false accusations are thrown at them.

Even Jesus' disciples bailed out on him, except John, at the cross.

"How we appear before men", matters more to Christians than any 'truth'.

"Knowledge puffs up, but Love Builds up."

We judge by outward appearances, according to the flesh, and not by the Heart of God.

Love takes no thought for itself. And Jesus' Love is not the kind this Church wants.

They even think that they can get to Heaven without Loving their brothers or loving the Lord enough to be ostracized for His Truth.

Many just go after Christ, the way children chase the Ice Cream truck down the road.
Their mere pittance in their hand to give in return for some sweets.

He said, "count the cost" ... apparently from what He's said about 'the most and the few', the most don't count the cost.

If you tell the child chasing the ice cream truck, that the truck will definitely kill them, they won't follow.

To take up our cross and follow Him, is death to self, and that brings about all you've said, but with it, total isolation for some. That's the cost.

We talk lots about "revival", but that won't come unless we are willing to count the cost.
To take up the cross, and "die for Love".

No we'd rather follow the crowd.

Re: the Interview - todd's questions to dorcas, on: 2005/8/7 10:17

Quote:

-----dorcas: By alluding to Peter's failures before Pentecost, you are using an Old Covenant standard to judge his New Covenant life. Is that fair? Isn't the whole point of Pentecost that it frees us from all that?

todd: I don't know if I'm doing what you say. Who says the standards of character have changed? **I get the feeling from what you said about Pentecost that maybe you think every believer today already has this blessing from Pentecost just by becoming a Christian or something. Do you think that?**

(Quick answer to the bold question: todd - YES!)

dorcas: Anyway, what about the Sermon on the Mount?

todd: I'm not sure what you mean. I mean, I think I have a general idea, but it's not clear. What about it? Could you be more specific?

I'll try, beginning with the Sermon on the Mount.

There is a principle in the way anyone (including us) speaks (Jesus) or writes (New Testament and non-fiction authors), which is that they address what they see as ignorance or error (or misunderstanding) on the part of their audience.

You've heard of taking tea to China? or selling freezers to permafrost-dwellers? and Jesus used the same idea when He said it is not the 99 righteous in the fold who need to be found. So, when He spoke, I believe He was addressing 'thinking' and 'doing' errors, on the part of His listeners (which included the Pharisees), often. For example

Luke 6:38

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

Thus, we see that the character of a man affects his dealings with everyone, and very specifically if he is a storekeeper, everyone with whom he does business. From this, he gets his reputation.

Jesus was addressing the state of a person's heart, in many of His points in the Sermon. We know, therefore, that He was using non-verbal communication to tell them He knew they were, for instance, not giving good measure, pressed down and running over. He knew why, and that they could not keep the Law unless they had a change of heart. Same problem, just a different example.

So when I referred to judging Peter by his behaviour before Pentecost, I was suggesting Peter had undergone a serious change of heart, through having received the Holy Spirit - this power you are keen on seeing in action. My point is, whether it shows up in the keeping of the Law instinctively, or, in big-show miracles, what philologos kindly explained about the inseparability of character from power (his last post in this thread) is to be expected, not just in apostles, but in every recipient of the Holy Spirit. Hence my shorthand reference to Pentecost. Is that clearer?

Re: the Frank Viola Interview - todd's questions to dorcas, on: 2005/8/7 10:22

Quote:

-----What do you mean Pentecost frees us? Maybe I can see how "it" freed them, in a sense, but even then it doesn't seem clear to me.-----

I mean that when Jesus conquered death and led captivity captive, He broke the chains which keep the prisoners (of sin and death) in their prisons, and, when the Holy Spirit comes to a believer, He brings the power / character to overcome sin and death **in his own experience**.

I noticed you mentioned 'experience' in three consecutive sentences in an earlier post, about what is going on in house-churches. And I was a little mystified, because the house is where the church meets and the believers who go there to worship, bring themselves with all their victories and failures, and their standing by faith with access to the Father (Romans 5) by which to engage with Him in a particular way, to move on in the life He has given, through the Spirit. So a Christian exercises his gifts at house-church, because that is natural in the Spirit. People pray for each other. Many small miracles such as changed minds, hearts and healings flow *naturally* from the context of this kind of worship in the Spirit.

Further on the question of apostleship, I would draw your attention to this interesting extract from Matt 10

2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these.... 4....and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him. 5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not....'

As this was the beginning of His ministry, the word apostle here surely means 'sent'. Yes, He had given them power for their specific mission but, it is clear they received power permanently after receiving the Holy Spirit. So, when He told them to 'Go into all the world...', was He effectively making anyone who obeys this command, 'an apostle' in its simplest meaning?

Let me suggest that if new believers met in homes (as Krispy and Manfred and others do) they have become 'church' in their locality and anyone leaving on a journey to spread the gospel further than their locality, has become 'an apostle'. :
-o

Re: the Frank Viola Interview - todd's questions to dorcas, on: 2005/8/7 10:30

Quote:
-----And I'd prefer not to bother with it in the sense of looking carefully into their lives and focusing on that. I think I'd only do it if God specifically led me to. As it is, I feel no general obligation to do such things. I prefer to just love, as naive as that may sound.

I don't think I'm expecting anyone to pry. NOr is it clearly a command from the Lord. But, it seems to be a naturally occurring phenomenon, that when one is considering what to eat, one looks for the plant which bears that fruit. To some extent, this is what you are talking about, except, so far you seem to have thought that the nature of the plant is not relevant to the fruit which it bears. Maybe you are beginning to see this could be an unrealistic stance.

Normally, when you look at a plant, you can tell what it is by its leaves. What Jesus says here is even more specific, because He is suggesting we have a right to be fruit inspectors and maybe implies we can taste, too. This picks up on Old Testament concepts with which everyone in Israel would have been familiar - Isaiah 55:1 - 3 - but applied to the future (now our present, since Pentecost).

Matthew 7:16

Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

Matthew 7:20

Wherefore by their fruits **ye shall know them.**

Deuteronomy 23

24 When thou comest into thy neighbour's vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill at thine own pleasure; but thou shalt not put in thy vessel.

25 When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn.

Psalms 34:8

O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

Re:, on: 2005/8/7 11:39

Quote:
-----dorcas: Do you forget the Bible sets stringent standards for church servants, which is what they are supposed to have demonstrated under scrutiny, before they were ever set under the eyes of the world as an example?

todd: I suppose if I'm in a place where an Apostle gave me responsibility to do my best in discerning someone's character as a requirement for eldership, or something along those lines, then I would probably do my best with the Apostles blessing. But I see that as an exceptional situation.

Maybe it is not your responsibility right at this time, but it will become a natural part of caring for the flock, as you grow. It seems to be a big deal because there was a lot made of 'submission' back in the 1970s, way over the weight given to it in the New Testament, but actually, it's common sense. You check your fruit before you eat it. Same with ministers who

make claims for God on His behalf. You need to know whether God backs them up?

Quote:

-----I'm not sure what you're getting at about Ananias and Sapphira, could you flush that out more for me?

I mentioned them to show that it is ok to judge a saint's motives and actions by the standard of Truth in the Spirit, just as Paul did with Peter (it was the apostle Peter). By implication, it is ok to for sheep to judge shepherds by the same Truth which they claim to preach. This is scripturally endorsed.

1 Timothy 5:1

Rebuke not an elder, but intreat as a father; the younger men as brethren;

Matthew 18

15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

16 But if he will not hear, take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

1 Corinthians 6

Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?

2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? 3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?

4 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.

5 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?

Paul seems to expect *even* the Corinthians to get their heads round this task. It seems important to him.... I'm sure facing up to Peter can't have been easy, considering Peter was THE Church leader, but isn't that the whole point of Paul recording it for us. He knew if it could happen to Peter, no-one was exempt from being corrected.

Re:, on: 2005/8/7 11:45

This captures something of what is being discussed here.

Disposition And Deeds

“Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 5:20

The characteristic of a disciple is not that he does good things, but that he is good in motive because he has been made good by the super-natural grace of God. **The only thing that exceeds right-doing is right-being.** Jesus Christ came to put into any man who would let Him a new heredity which would exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus says - If you are My disciple you must be right not only in your living, but in your motives, in your dreams, in the recesses of your mind. You must be so pure in your motives that God Almighty can see nothing to censure. Who can stand in the Eternal Light of God and have nothing for God to censure? Only the Son of God, and Jesus Christ claims that by His Redemption He can put into any man His own disposition, and make him as unsullied and as simple as a child. The purity which God demands is impossible unless I can be remade within, and that is what Jesus has undertaken to do by His Redemption.

No man can make himself pure by obeying laws. Jesus Christ does not give us rules and regulations; His teachings are truths that can only be interpreted by the disposition He puts in. **The great marvel of Jesus Christ's salvation is that He alters heredity. He does not alter human nature; He alters its mainspring.**

Oswald Chambers

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/8/7 12:31

Quote:
-----Let me suggest that if new believers met in homes (as Krispy and Manfred and others do) they have become 'church' in their locality and anyone leaving on a journey to spread the gospel further than their locality, has become 'an apostle'.

dorcas

I think this may be a little too simplistic. an apostle is not someone who has 'left' or even 'arrived' but someone who has been 'sent'. An 'apostolos' was an official emissary of the ruling power. It has within it the sense of 'sending' and specific 'destination'. By destination I don't necessarily mean locality, but a specific goal. Rom. 10:15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! where 'sent' is 'apostello'; apparently a preacher has to have a 'commission'.

I have wondered whether or not a local church could do the 'sending' but on reflection I think it has to be the Lord himself. "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate (Strong's 873) me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away (Strong's 630). So they, being sent forth (Strong's 3992) by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus." (Acts 13:2-4, KJVS) ..has caused people to speak in terms of the 'sending church' but the verbs are much more precise than that.

The phrase 'they sent them away' is 'apoluO' (Strong's 630) which really means to 'release away from'. The church in Antioch simply obeyed the word spoken in their midst and 'let them go'. I find this very moving to see God at work within the local church and, in a sense, waiting for their consent. The next word translated 'sent' in this passage is 'pempO' (Strong's 3992) which is used as a synonym for 'apostello'. It is important to see who does the 'sending' here: the Holy Spirit. So the pattern observable in Acts 13 is...

God says 'separate' (this is apohorizO Strong's 873) which is used in the sense of setting something apart for a particular purpose.

The church 'releases' Barnabas and Paul to their God-given commission.

and the Holy Spirit 'sends' them. This word, btw, was used in classical Greek of commercial exports; we might even say 'the Holy Spirit exported them'. ;-) Anyway the point I was making is that 'leaving one place for another' does not constitute 'apostleship'. An apostle is a 'sent one'. One does not 'become' an apostle as a consequence of geographical change, but as a result of a divine commission. As Hudson Taylor said 'a sea journey does not make a missionary'.

Re: - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2005/8/7 12:41

Quote:

philologos wrote:
One does not 'become' an apostle as a consequence of geographical change, but as a result of a divine commission.

So why has there been some much controversy about these things from the time of the biblical apostles till now? It seems you mention apostles and all the wrong ideas pop up, when it is such a big part of the New Testament. It's in the bible, so what's the story? :-?

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/8/7 12:54

Quote:
-----So why has there been some much controversy about these things from the time of the biblical apostles till now? It seems you mention apostles and all the wrong ideas pop up, when it is such a big part of the New Testament. It's in the bible, so what's the story?

Zeke

I think it is a delayed reaction from the 'shepherding' era when 'apostles' were regarded as the top of a hierarchy. The d

angerous line of thought was

Paul was an apostle and he exercised authority like this.

John Smith is an apostle so he has the same kind of authority that Paul had.

Paul excommunicated people and told them how to live their lives, so John Smith can do the same.

I think there is still a lot of hurt washing around from those days, and 'once bitten...'

Re: - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2005/8/7 13:30

Quote:

I think there is still a lot of hurt washing around from those days, and 'once bitten...'

I think I can understand why Paul was so keen not to build on someone else's foundation. Always looking for fresh territory, so he could start from scratch, without having to destroy and pull down incorrect mindsets about the church and its governance.

Re:, on: 2005/8/7 13:34

Happy Day All.

Brother Dorcas, you've brought out so many good points, that I don't know where to begin, but I think what seems to be going through my mind the most, and the last time I was on the computer, some years ago... is that "whenever 2 or more are gathered together" in His Name, He would be in the MIDST of them.

I always thought of Christian Forums as CHURCH, whether we like that thought or not ... I like it a lot.

We are the Church as we've all said at one time or another ... but this "gathering together", is Actually, what we are doing here, on this forum, and shouldn't all the same rules etc., apply here as they would be in any other "Fellowship" ?

I meant to ask Krispy this earlier, either on this thread or the other about "the Church", but got distracted for a while.

What's y'all's feeling on this ?

Thanks.

GOD IS GOOD.

GOD IS GOOD.

GOD IS GOOD.

Blessings !

Re: - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2005/8/7 13:36

Quote:

I think there is still a lot of hurt washing around from those days, and 'once bitten...'

Just had another thought, which ties into something I mentioned earlier in this thread, its relationships between people and leaders with others which validates any of this. That factor I think, separates a business model from a church model.

Paul's relationship with the churches that he spoke in to was intense. If there was not that heart link there could never have been a receptivity to what he was saying.

Re: the Frank Viola interview - commissioning of apostles, on: 2005/8/7 15:16

Quote:
-----I think this may be a little too simplistic. an apostle is not someone who has 'left' or even 'arrived' but someone who has been 'sent'. An 'apostolos' was an official emissary of the ruling power. It has within it the sense of 'sending' and specific 'destination'. By destination I don't necessarily mean locality, but a specific goal.

philologos,

I'm so glad you've explained this properly for me. I knew there is something wrong with people beginning to call *themselves* apostles, and when I was writing that paragraph you quoted, I was actually thinking, 'this sounds too simple' (believe it or not!) but had no idea what was missing - the *commission*.

Why is it then, if 'the commission' was to the eleven, is this Matt 18: 18 - 20 preached on as if it is to every single believer to go into all the world? Is this a particularly clear case of taking the Lord's word out of context?

Re: Frank Viola interview - apostle and pastor?, on: 2005/8/7 16:15

Quote:
-----The phrase 'they sent them away' is 'apoluO' (Strong's 630) which really means to 'release away from'. The church in Antioch simply obeyed the word spoken in their midst and 'let them go'. I find this very moving to see God at work within the local church and, in a sense, waiting for their consent. The next word translated 'sent' in this passage is 'pempO' (Strong's 3992) which is used as a synonym for 'apostello'. It is important to see who does the 'sending' here: the Holy Spirit. So the pattern observable in Acts 13 is...

philologos,

Does a true apostle ever take on one of the other titles, such as evangelist, teacher, prophet or pastor?

Re: questions and comments - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/8/7 16:35

Quote:
-----It seems you mention apostles and all the wrong ideas pop up, when it is such a big part of the New Testament. It's in the bible, so what's the story?

My own skepticism towards modern Apostleship isn't because of a lack of example in scripture...

Quote:
-----The dangerous line of thought was...
Paul excommunicated people and told them how to live their lives, so John Smith can do the same.

I think there is still a lot of hurt washing around from those days, and 'once bitten...'

This reminds me of a conversation I once had.

A church leader once complained to me "The modern Christian doesn't want to submit to authority."

I replied, "The modern authority doesn't want to submit to Authority."

Quote:
-----Just had another thought, which ties into something I mentioned earlier in this thread, its relationships between people and leaders with others which validates any of this. That factor I think, separates a business model from a church model.

I think this is a key issue. I believe we live in an age when business and financial concepts of structure influence all industry, including art, war, education, and church. Communities aren't "official" until they are registered business entities.

A case in point...a church I was deeply involved in was visited by leadership scandal with conspired cover-up. Confidence in the remaining elders fell, but they refused to yield their positions nor agree to an independent "apostolic" audit. In about a year our community was almost totally reconstituted with new people, including some new leadership. Eventually, the old elders did leave embittered. Yet no one considers this a new church...after all we still have the same name on the building and on the building loan.

For almost a year, the leadership valiently struggled to avoid shutting the church down. (Some like myself suggested selling the building but the idea was never seriously considered.) It was only after the bank officer was satisfied, that the new punch-drunk leadership breathed a sigh of relief. The church has "survived." Now, in all honesty I can sympathize with their plight. Financial pressures have a way of squeezing out other important concerns. So, our living church may have been dissolved, but the legal entity remains intact.

Can there really be Apostles in such an age, when the gravity of business priorities pull and distort the spiritual mission of the messenger? How reasonable is it to expect that people (not demographics) will continue to matter more than monthly business obligations to a large church leader? Can an Apostle be an apostle if he is entangled in a conflict of interests?

How can an Apostle warrant us his commitment to see a spiritual house built, with hand picked precious and lively stones, if he has also signed a promise to the bank for a physical house built with expensive brick and mortar?

I hope my questions don't sound angry...even if there is a little despair in the tone.

Re: - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2005/8/7 16:37

Quote:

Does a true apostle ever take on one of the other titles, such as evangelist, teacher, prophet or pastor?

Not Ron, but I have heard that in the five-fold the apostle is like the thumb of a hand, able to touch the other four fingers. In other words able to operate in and with the other four gifts. I think from their gifting they have a keen understanding of what is needed and ties the other gifts together. I don't have scriptures, so this could be pure speculation. :-)

I think also, that this role along with the others in the mix, are more functions than titles. I think you asked earlier if an apostle is an elder in a church what then? I think more than anything it is in the 'being sent' that the function becomes more evident.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/8/7 16:39

Quote:

Why is it then, if 'the commission' was to the eleven, is this Matt 18: 18 - 20 preached on as if it is to every single believer to go into all the world? Is this a particularly clear case of taking the Lord's word out of context?

This is easier than it seems. The commission was "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." (Matt. 28:19-20, KJVS) This commission is not completed until the 'disciples' have been taught to observe Christ's commandments. But one of Christ's commandments trusted the 'eleven disciples' (v16) is to disciple the nations. So that means that the 'new disciples' are also to fulfill his commission. It is a cycle where the full turn is only accomplished when it has been passed on to others who have passed in on to others... follow me?

Re: - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2005/8/7 16:40

Hey MC,

I hear you, I have hope though, because Jesus said he is building his church and in spite of all our shananagings :-? he will do it.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/8/7 16:43

Quote:

-----I hear you, I have hope though, because Jesus said he is building his church and in spite of all our shananagings he will do it.

I was once told that the greatest proof of the church's divine origin was that it had survived the collective damage of its leaders for 20 centuries. Just joking ;-)

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/8/7 17:01

Quote:

-----I think also, that this role along with the others in the mix, are more functions than titles. I think you asked earlier if an apostle is an elder in a church what then? I think more than anything it is in the 'being sent' that the function becomes more evident.

haven't we talked about this before... a couple of dozen times? :-?

Personally, I don't think there is any evidence that these functions were ever used as titles in the early church. ie those listed in Eph 4. I am genuinely puzzled as to the way we regard 'positions' in the local churches. I recall someone suggesting that we should have special meetings for the "elders' wives" because they had a unique place in the local churches. I mischievously asked whether we should have special meetings for the "elders' dogs" on the same basis.

I just don't 'see' any of these words as titles, but simply as descriptive functions. BTW I think I can conclusively prove from the grammar that the five-fold is actually four-fold. There is no record of a 'pastor' being resident in a local church and I think of all the descriptions in the list as being 'itinerant' in their function. In that case a man who was recognized in a local setting as a 'elder' might well be recognized as a 'prophet' in a wider scene.

The 'apostle' is very difficult to pin down in terms of the others in this list. It is not difficult to guess what a prophet might do, nor an evangelist... but what does an apostle do? I think an apostle almost functions as everything in one; Paul clearly functioned in all the functions in Ephesians 4:11 and so did Peter.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/8/7 17:06

Quote:

-----Does a true apostle ever take on one of the other titles, such as evangelist, teacher, prophet or pastor?

dorcas

I don't think you were around when Zeke and I have discussed some of these things earlier, but my position is that I don't really regard these as 'titles' but rather as functions within the wider church. To answer your question directly; 1Tim. 2:7 Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

2Tim. 1:11 Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. The word 'preacher' is really a 'herald' so that's another function to add to the total list.

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/8/7 17:09

Quote:

-----Hey MC,I hear you,

I have hope though, because Jesus said he is building his church and in spite of all our shananagings he will do it.

Thanks much Zeke0. I have hope also brother! My skepticism towards some who claim apostolic titles does not extend to the whole kitten kaboodle! I know many fine men and women of God, who while still imperfect human beings, are perfect examples of God's love. My doubts are focused and limited to a few issues...that's all.

For what it is worth, I remain friends with many of the elders from that church. We talk honestly about the difficult situation...vent strong feelings on the issue from time to time...but in the end remain brothers. I share lunches with one of these men, a friend, on an ongoing basis. Just the other day as we were discussing work and family, for the first time, the subject of our old church never even came up.

Quote:

-----I was once told that the greatest proof of the church's divine origin was that it had survived the collective damage of its leaders for 20 centuries. Just joking

That's funny! I would add to this evidence for divine origin, my own testimony of God's grace upon me in spite of the damage I have brought to His Church as well. :-)

MC

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2005/8/7 17:33

I feel like this topic has become quite complicated and lost a clear focus. And I feel I've contributed to this problem as well. Does anyone else feel this way about the thread? Hopefully we can narrow down a focus, exhaust that one, and then perhaps move on to another.

I'll let others involved here share their thoughts on that and then we can decide what to do. I just think getting more focused will be a big help, at least to me! :-?

I would like to just share a couple things in response before stopping for now. I feel like if these concepts are agreed upon it will help a lot. If not, then maybe this would be a good place to exhaust before moving on. So here's some suggestions for focused discussion.

One, I don't think the John Smith type of scenario would be a problem if 2 Cor. 12:12 is applied. I think this is a good example to look at for understanding why power is so important in determining authenticity.

Second, Paul and Peter (and perhaps others in the New Testament) knew they were Apostles and referred to themselves as Apostles. Therefore, while we may be sceptical, we have no right to automatically rule out the legitimacy of someone doing the same thing today, right?

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/8/7 17:37

Quote:

-----focus

there's an interesting idea. :-?

Re: Frank Viola interview - clarification of functions, on: 2005/8/7 18:55

Quote:
-----This commission is not completed until the 'disciples' have been taught to observe Christ's commandments. But one of Christ's commandments trusted the 'eleven disciples' (v16) is to disciple the nations. So that means that the 'new disciples' are also to fulfil this commission. It is a cycle where the full turn is only accomplished when it has been passed on to others who have passed in on to others..

Yes this is much clearer, thanks. And thanks to you, philologos and ZekeO for answering the other questions about functions...

As for focus, we've discovered that an 'Apostle' is unlikely to be a regular church leader. That's progress! :-P

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2005/8/7 21:16

Quote:

I feel like this topic has become quite complicated and lost a clear focus. And I feel I've contributed to this problem as well. Does anyone else feel this way about the thread?

Lol, no kidding. I step away for a couple days from this thread which I was really enjoying, and I'm now 4 pages behind, and don't have much plans for being able to catch up... ah well.

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/8/7 22:49

Hey guys,

I think most of the distraction in this thread was fueled by my issues with Apostleship. At the time this tributary seemed natural as it followed along the lines of church authority. But in hindsight, while the topic of Apostles may be adjacent to the topic of House Churches, it seems clearly outside the scope of the thread's intent.

I apologize...I really think the home church movement is quite interesting. I hope we can discuss this topic more in this thread...

Blessings,

MC

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2005/8/8 1:03

Ok, so it seems like the Apostle aspect of the discussion is done for now, at least on this thread. Right? I mean, I don't care either way but it would be nice to get back to some kind of focus and it seems everyone is done with that aspect of the topic for now. So, if anyone wants to bring it back more directly to the house church, etc., of course that's fine. And of course, anybody is free to post whatever, I'm just trying to help facilitate good discussion. I think I'm done with this one for now.

Putting on glasses - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2005/8/8 1:08

Ok, heres a question. What is the difference between a house church and homegroups/cell groups/ small group happenings? Is the format any different, is what is done any different?

Re: Putting on glasses, on: 2005/8/8 6:01

Quote:
-----Ok, heres a question. What is the difference between a house church and homegroups/cell groups/ small group happenings? Is the format any different, is what is done any different?

Thats a good question... but it's hard to answer. Every house church is different. Every small group is different. It's like asking whats the difference between living in Buffalo NY or Jacksonville FL. In some cases... probably none because both cities have Taco Bells, McD's, highways, etc... in on the flip side, Jacksonville FL never gets any snow, but Buffalo NY gets buried in snow every winter.

Krispy

Re:, on: 2005/8/8 6:03

Quote:
-----Ok, so it seems like the Apostle aspect of the discussion is done for now, at least on this thread. Right? I mean, I don't care either way but it would be nice to get back to some kind of focus and it seems everyone is done with that aspect of the topic for now. So, if anyone wants to bring it back more directly to the house church, etc., of course that's fine. And of course, anybody is free to post whatever, I'm just trying to help facilitate good discussion. I think I'm done with this one for now.

Ummm... this discussion was not intended to be about the office of Apostle anyway. It was always intended to be about house churches, Todd. If you want to discuss Apostles, start a new thread. I'm sure you'll get a lot more responses... it was kinda buried in the middle of this thread where it won't get noticed much.

Krispy

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/8/8 6:44

Quote:
-----Ummm... this discussion was not intended to be about the office of Apostle anyway. It was always intended to be about house churches, Todd. If you want to discuss Apostles, start a new thread.

Just for the record, the Apostle distraction was more my doing. Todd made a passing comment without any intention to discuss Apostles, but I fanned it into the larger discussion with my rant on CP Wagner. Sorry about that.

Bowing out quietly now...

MC

Re:, on: 2005/8/8 8:13

Hi Guys,

As I was in this thread over the weekend, and looked it back several times to see what had been said, to 'focus' my posts, I'm not really happy to let Compton take lone responsibility for a discussion which naturally flowed from the comments of several of you. In the first quote, Todd is *responding*. These are just snips from between Pp8 + 10 to show how much interest the topics of authority, power and apostleship had generated.

Quote:
-----todd: As far as Shepherding vs. Control, I think, again, you make some good points.

Quote:
-----krispy: He told me that if we ever decided to attend his church on a regular basis, I would need to bring that Bible study under his authority, and he would appoint one of his underlings to run it.

Quote:
-----Compton: your comments stirred up some experiences that I have had that I feel are common enough From their fruit alone, it is easy to conclude these men are not prophets like Prophets and apostles like Apostles.

Quote:
-----KingJimmy: Modern day false apostles like.... A true apostle is interesting in doing nothing else but establishing Christ.

Quote:
-----todd: We must keep 2 Corinthians 12:12 in mind here. It seems to me that it would be fairly simple to distinguish a true Apostle, from someone who is simply apostolic (even very much so).

Quote:
-----ZekeO: If I may add another another aspect to the mix. The authority aspect of an apostle is clear, but can it be said that it is actually the kind of relationships which he keeps that separates the false from the genuine?

Quote:
-----GrannieAnnie: 'Apostolic Authority' is something, that somebody just WANTS I guess, because these Scriptures don't point to any such thing.

Quote:
-----Compton: It is my strong conviction that only mature and abundant fruit of the Spirit can authenticate a true leader. This may be a hard truth because we are taught not to judge others...a fact that some may be quick to exploit. We are all accepted into the house of God by grace and mercy, but only men of the highest proven spiritual character and moral ethic should steward the house. After that criteria is met, some power would be great!

Quote:
-----Manfred: I don't see any apostles today.

Quote:
-----Nellie: There was a man who came into our Church, and told our Pastor that he was an Apostle. He told him he would preach to a lot of people, and promised him all kinds of blessings, like Mercedes and etc. Quite frankly, he is a false prophet.

Quote:
-----todd: I don't think I'd call anyone an Apostle that hasn't "seen" the Lord. I don't know to what extent the "seeing" is to be. Like it seems that Paul "saw" the Lord in visions sometimes but I don't think it's recorded that they ever met face to face in the natural.

Subsequent posts attempted to show what is the basis for apostleship, which included a major digression over whether Christian character is a necessary qualification for an apostle - which begged the question about whether it is necessary for church leadership - any church, house or otherwise. philologos gave clear scriptural grounds by which 'character' and 'power' (dynamis-dunamis ;-)) cannot be split, which has been given a mixed reception.

I'm going to take Krispy's advice and set up a thread somewhere, hopefully to discuss the way a church may recognise (and release) one called to 'apostleship', if this be possible, in our day.

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2005/8/8 11:39

Quote:
-----Ummm... this discussion was not intended to be about the office of Apostle anyway. It was always intended to be about house churches, Todd. If you want to discuss Apostles, start a new thread. I'm sure you'll get a lot more responses... it was kinda buried in the middle of this thread where it won't get noticed much.

Yeah, sorry about that, it just kind of happened. I think most of the fault is mine. I think it would have been wiser to start a new thread when the Apostle thing started getting more attention. After 2 years on this forum, I'm still learning better ways to communicate on it.

Re: An Interview With a Modern-Day, Sunday-Morning-Church-Going Christian - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/8/8 1

I've just reread the first few posts and I am now completely confused as to what this topic is really about. Is it intended as a comparison list between 'house church' and 'formal church'? Personally, I didn't like Viola's style in this. It seemed too contrived. The classical straw man; set up to be knocked down.

I have been 'housed' in 'house churches' for almost 35 years now, and most of my time is spent in this kind of setting, other than conferences. There are some 'house churches' which are more formal than 'formal churches'. So I think this kind of generalisation is not really very useful. I have also been in very 'formal churches' where there were very precious moments of spontaneity. But the silliest things happen when 'house churches' try to behave like 'proper churches'. I once preached at a 'house church' on a housing estate in England. They had moved the meeting into their integral garage. The 'garage' had been fitted out as a 'proper church'. (Remember this is a single car garage approx 8 feet by 20 feet.) The 'fire exit' was the up and over door at the rear. They had installed a pulpit and had space for about 12 chairs. They had a 'worship band' and amplification! The meeting was 'led' by man with a roving microphone. (remember we are still in the garage!) The meeting began with a traditional opening prayer, hymns, testimonies and finally the visiting speaker! I resisted the temptation of saying 'can you hear me at the back? If you can't there are some empty seats at the front.' :-)

It seems that Viola has put all the worst aspects of the formal church together. I am sure there are places like this, but I am equally sure that there are 'house churches' which are just about dead on their feet but still going through the motions.

Krispy, your statement that pastor = elder is not really accurate. I am not pleading for hierarchy (hope you know better than that) but elders (noun) have the responsibility to 'pastor' (verb). (I presume you are thinking about Acts 20:28ff?) But then all believers have the responsibility to evangelise but that doesn't make them all evangelists. In fact, if we have the Spirit of the Pastor in us we should expect every saint to 'pastor' others to some degree; it's in our nature.

or have I missed the focus again?

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2005/8/8 15:17

Quote:

if we have the Spirit of the Pastor in us we should expect every saint to 'pastor' others to some degree; it's in our nature.

Indeed. Thus, I personally believe there is quite a blurring in the ministry gifts, for they are all ultimately different manifestations of Christ, who is present in all believers, shepherding the flock. Thus, each gift in use is a different aspect of Christ's shepherding function.

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/8/8 15:19

Quote:

-----The 'garage' had been fitted out as a 'proper church'.

Philo, this is the the thread for house churches, not garage churches. :-P

Quote:
-----Krispy, your statement that pastor = elder is not really accurate. I am not pleading for hierarchy (hope you know be better than that) but elders (noun) have the responsibility to 'pastor' (verb)... In fact, if we have the Spirit of the Pastor in us we should expect every saint to 'pastor' others to some degree; it's in our nature.

If others might agree...

I think this topic seems within bounds, as my impression is that one aspect of house churches is how the pastor/elder role is positioned differently than "traditional" or "western" churches. I idea is that the house church desires to "return" to a more biblical model for these roles.

Honestly, I am a little unclear on how different things could really be from a traditional church to a house church in this regard. I would be curious to listen in on some smart people discussing this issue! (Notice my own role would be listening to the smart people. ;-))

At the risk of asking a question that is too general... do house churches have something to teach traditional churches regarding the role of pastors and elders in a local community of Christian believers?

MC

edit: I couldn't stop chuckling at the thought of a dozen people sitting in a garage with an amplified praise band blasting away. So this is how traditions get their start eh?...we keep doing a certain thing even when it's original purpose is forgotten... :knockedout:

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2005/8/8 15:46

It was Finney's position that the building, song books, meetings, etc. are all 'measures' for the purpose of carrying out the great commission and getting the Gospel of Christ before the eyes of the people. Actually Lecture 14 that I am editing right now for audio goes into this in depth. It was his contention that there is no real pattern of 'measures' set forth in the New Testament scriptures, but that it was up to the ones taking the message to determine prayerfully and at the leading of the Spirit what 'measures' would be used for the promotion of the True Religion. He chronicles a brief history of changes in 'measures' by 'new innovations' beginning in the early Church until his day. It is a very interesting and I think insightful Lecture because it tackles man's preoccupation with the means by which they express their faith in each generation and how the next generation resists changes as though their methods were given by 'divine mandate.' He talks about the superstition associated with many old 'measures' as though they had been taken up by a "thus saith the Lord."

After studying this Lecture for some time I conclude that we as believers militate against each other between cultures and sub-cultures as to how we express our faith. Not just culturally, but generationally. I see this in the fact that in nursing homes we may use an old hymnal that is despised in places where the crowd is younger. But as Finney reminds us there was a time when hymnals were rejected as an 'innovation' also.

His basic point is that scripture is silent on the topic and there is no set structure of how to build buildings, preach, sing, or if these things regularly happened at all in the early church in a set structure to be duplicated. The Old Testament had a set structure of worship through the Temple and Festivals. Yet, these things were done away with in Christ and now it is up to us as we are led of the Spirit to provide appropriate measures to get the Gospel before a lost world. When the 'measure' is stereotyped it is time for an 'innovation'. So on and so forth. I look forward to discussing this when the Lecture is complete as I see it is very timely.

One thing stands out, he believed that one of the great reasons Church or churches go into declension is that the 'old school' folks refuse new innovations and that those who desire new innovations press the issue to the point of destructiveness. I thought that was quite a point.

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2005/8/8 16:17

Quote:
-----it was his contention that there is no real pattern of 'measures' set forth in the New Testament scriptures, but that it was up to the ones taking the message to determine prayerfully and at the leading of the Spirit what 'measures' would be used for the promotion of the True Religion. He chronicles a brief history of changes in 'measures' by 'new innovations' beginning in the early Church until his day. It is a very interesting and I think insightful Lecture because it tackles man's preoccupation with the means by which they express their faith in each generation and how the next generation resists changes as though their methods were given by 'divine mandate.' He talks about the superstition associated with many old 'measures' as though they had been taken up by a "thus saith the Lord."

That sounds good.

It seems to me that the Early Church met in buildings at one point (at least the Temple) and then, as circumstances no longer allowed for it, they adjusted to the new circumstances as seemed best and started meeting in houses more. Right?

But then I think about how in America we are free to worship Jesus in public so we don't *need* to be scattered in houses, but of course it's not wrong to meet in houses. And at the same time, we don't *need* to meet in formal buildings, but it's not wrong to meet in them. And every person can choose to do what seems best to them in this regard.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2005/8/8 16:26

Yes. Finney viewed all these things as 'measures' that were to be altered as necessary as the Spirit would lead. Meeting here or there were all 'measures'. Methods and such were 'measures'. The Gospel and the mandate never changed, but the measures have. New innovations stacked on top of one another and even removed here and there have brought us where we are. The measures are not mandated by God to be modeled for all times; to believe so is to be superstitious-not spiritual. You have to know what God is wanting to do and seek Him for some new measure or innovation when the effectiveness of the old ones is gone. I have heard many say we need to start meeting out in open places like the Temple to get the Gospel before the people; but this was a 'measure' in the early church also. There was a time when it lost its effectiveness and had to be changed. A man can shout every week from the same spot on the square and at some point the people will become used to it and numb to it. A new 'measure' or innovation for making the Gospel be **bold** before their eyes must be implemented. God must be the source of these methods not man's device, but it must be simultaneously understood that they are not concrete, but dynamic measures that change with the leading of the Spirit. When the cloud moves- we have to move with it.

Re: Frank Viola Interview, on: 2005/8/8 16:37

Quote:
-----It seems to me that the Early Church met in buildings at one point (at least the Temple) and then, as circumstances no longer allowed for it, they adjusted to the new circumstances as seemed best and started meeting in houses more. Right?

todd, fyi, here is the account from straight after Pentecost, that they did both. It wasn't a linear progression.

Acts 2

44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, as every man had need.

46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2005/8/8 16:56

dorcas,

Thanks, that's helpful. But I think there still was linear progression, just maybe differently than you're thinking of it.

So in the very beginning, the church was meeting in both houses *and* the Temple. But did they continue to meet in both, or did they *progress* to only meeting in houses later on?

So the progression seems to be from meeting in both, to only meeting in one.

So the progression might be something like (I not sure of the dates but the point should be clear):

33 A.D.- Church meets in the Temple and in homes.

35 A.D.- Church only meets in homes.

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2005/8/8 17:11

Sister Grannieannie wrote:

Quote:

-----Love takes no thought for itself. And Jesus' Love is not the kind this Church wants.

They even think that they can get to Heaven without Loving their brothers or loving the Lord enough to be ostracized for His Truth.

Many just go after Christ, the way children chase the Ice Cream truck down the road.
Their mere pittance in their hand to give in return for some sweets.

He said, "count the cost" ... apparently from what He's said about 'the most and the few', the most don't count the cost.

If you tell the child chasing the ice cream truck, that the truck will definitely kill them, they won't follow.

To take up our cross and follow Him, is death to self, and that brings about all you've said, but with it, total isolation for some. That's the cost.

We talk lots about "revival", but that won't come unless we are willing to count the cost.
To take up the cross, and "die for Love".

No we'd rather follow the crowd.

I believe these words point to something that has not yet been seen in this thread. It is the Word of God mixed with faith that causes death in those who believe. Those who submit to this work begin to share in "like experiences." It is this "substance," that brings us together in the likeness of our Savior. This "substance" forms the bonds of fellowship. We share in the sufferings and joys that our Savior brings into our lives. We share "His Life."

Everything pertaining to "methodologies" is carnal by the time it becomes a "method."

In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2005/8/8 17:13

Sister Dorcas,

I have read this entire thread, and alas I am not the only one to call you brother.

In Christ,
Jeff

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/8/8 17:28

Quote:
-----So in the very beginning, the church was meeting in both houses and the Temple. But did they continue to meet in both, or did they progress to only meeting in houses later on?

I think we need to be clear what 'meeting in the temple' means. The colonaded area of the temple courts was the outer limit of the court of the Gentiles. This functioned somewhat like a 'forum' or market place for social gatherings. Jesus taught here; not in the area where Israel's formal ceremonies were conducted. They would have been able to continue their 'gatherings' here until the polarisation took place which closed these facilities to 'the sect of the Nazarenes'.

I'm not sure that 'progression' is the right word. I think it was both and would have continued as both if the Temple facilities had not been denied them. This is not a 'development' in their thinking or practice but just that one door closed to them.

Re: Frank Viola Interview - meeting places, on: 2005/8/8 17:39

Quote:
-----I think there still was linear progression, just maybe differently than you're thinking of it.

todd, I wasn't sure if you were familiar with those verses, as in your earlier post, you seemed unaware the Christians met in both places interchangeably. We remember that from 120 people on the morning of Pentecost, the Church was quickly swelled by 3,000 more. These would not all have been in the temple at the same time, or even in houses at the same time. It was an organic situation which was moving on apace day by day. I'm not sure about making a stab in the dark about a date believers stopped going to the temple.

Elsewhere in SI, someone suggested that they went to the temple to evangelise, which would not have been a worship meeting at all. Hopefully someone will put us both right on this point.

EDIT: philologos answered this in the post before, I now see. Thanks.

Re: Frank Viola Interview - "like experiences", on: 2005/8/8 17:51

Quote:
-----I believe these words point to something that has not yet been seen in this thread. **It is the Word of God mixed with faith that causes death in those who believe. Those who submit to this work begin to share in "like experiences."** It is this "substance," that brings us together in the likeness of our Savior. This "substance" forms the bonds of fellowship. We share in the sufferings and joys that our Savior brings into our lives. We share "His Life."

Everything pertaining to "methodologies" is carnal by the time it becomes a "method."

rookie,

Eloquently expressed. You're right, we should not lose sight of this.

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2005/8/8 18:53

Ron,

Quote:

-----I'm not sure that 'progression' is the right word. I think it was both and would have continued as both if the Temple facilities had not been denied them. This is not a 'development' in their thinking or practice but just that one door closed to them.

I completely agree with you. I was using the word "progress" to relate directly to dorcas' post. I'm just talking in terms of linear (chronological) progression, not quality progression, by any means. I think it's clear that having both options available is ideal.

And it seems you enforce the point I am making. They probably would have continued meeting in the Temple had it not been denied them. Thankfully, today we have more options in our countries where we can gather freely in the name of Jesus. And I don't think one setting for "having church" is necessarily more spiritual than another. They're just different. And we can try and make the best of the circumstances we find ourselves in. Are we in agreement?

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2005/8/8 18:55

dorcas,

Quote:

-----It was an organic situation which was moving on apace day by day.

Exactly. That's how I see it as well. I think that word "organic" is very helpful in understanding the Church and spiritual things in general.

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2005/8/8 19:54

Just an obvious observation (but one that seems to be easily forgotten), but when people meet in a house church, they are also meeting in a room with 4 walls. When people meet in a "sanctuary," they likewise meet in a room with 4 walls. The saints and the Holy Spirit are just as free to move in either.

Frankly, it doesn't matter where you meet. I know one man who God told to start a church by meeting under a big tree in the middle of a field late on one weekend night about midnight... and from what one brother tells me... they had church!

I might be wrong, but I think Viola is probably likes his method because it's a good way to make money. Though it's been a while since I've read some of his books, I remember him saying that elders should not get any pay for their work, yet apostles/house church planters such as himself, should get paid for the work they do. I mean goodness, the only reason he believes we should ever divide fellowship with others is not over any reason of doctrine, but simply over the matter of house churches! Such seems entirely absurd to me.

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/8/8 20:32

Quote:

-----...when people meet in a house church, they also are meeting in a room with 4 walls. When people meet in a "sanctuary," they likewise meet in a room with 4 walls. The saints and the Holy Spirit are just as free to move in either.

I agree and hope this point is obvious. If it isn't it should be now.

All along, I have been assuming that the house church movement isn't built upon the flimsy idea that homes are more more spiritual or correct than church buildings. Somehow I never thought we were talking about the merits of location or t

he physical properties of buildings. (Why not meet in pyramid structures....don't they channel spiritual energy? Just kidding!)

Instead, I was hoping to hear theological or idealological underpinnings that motivated home church advocates to leave their former churches. I imagined it was along the lines of better stewardship of resources, (no big building costs) or along the lines of restoring new Testament patterns of church life modeled after ancient communities instead of modern corporations.

In short, I believe the house church movement in, in part, a rejection of the technocratic machinery or corporate authority structure that seems to engulf many, but not all, "traditional" churches. By rejection, I also mean a desire to discover a more "organic" and pure church life untainted by worldly systems of control and finance. These are the kinds of reasons I thought the house church movement has gained so much momentum. Although I was being very simplistic in my description...am I missing something?

Re: Frank Viola interview - why house-church?, on: 2005/8/8 21:38

Compton,

Here are a few thoughts, which I hope will prove theologically stimulating, if not deep.

One attraction of house-churches can be the freedom to use the gifts of the Spirit which apply, in times of worship and others, (but of course, these too can be suppressed by insecure leadership or if there is confusion about how they should operate). It was more of a move towards the life of God than an escape from materialism.

In another thread, philologos wrote this in answer to a question. It fits well after the recent discussion here, but, is not the whole answer, or, why any other house church exists.

"I distinguish between leadership and authority, but I do not formally recognise the concept of 'a pastor or minister' who is responsible for 'shepherding' a congregation. I know you don't understand what I am saying here but you are asking me to describe 'apples' with questions like 'how many wings does it have?'.

Let me share my experience. In the congregation to which I belong we would never consider sisters in roles of overall "authority" for that congregation. However we discover 'leadership' gifts in our sisters in many contexts, not least the meetings. Our meetings are open and without structure. We have a company of elders who are answerable to God for the particular 'house of God' in which He has made them stewards. They 'watch over' the gatherings of the saints and give account to God for our condition as a congregation. Sometimes a sister will pray and the prayer will capture the meeting which will follow; she has just exercised 'leadership' but not 'authority'; the 'elders' will 'follow' her 'lead' if they discern the Spirit of God in her prayer. Sometimes a sister will bring a prophecy or an interpreted tongue which will direct the course of the meeting; again the elders will 'follow' her 'lead' as appropriate.

The responsibility for 'pastoring' the flock of which I am part does not rest with one person; I am not convinced that in the 1st century it ever did. The elders have joint responsibility for the oversight of the church. So the concept of 'a pastor' in a local congregation is not the way I ever consider things. Some others of our congregation have shepherd hearts and shepherd gifts; the elders encourage such to enrich the church with those gifts. Some of them are sisters. However these are not 'roles' or 'positions' they are simply instinctive functions in our local body. If God has put such giftings within our midst we would be churlish to refuse them." *(End of quote)*

For me, house church was always about the times of worship and the preaching I heard, which was enlightening and challenging in different ways.

Frank Viola said:

Quote:
-----we sing. But we have no worship leader, song director, or worship team. Instead, everyone is free to lead a song or request a song.

Quote:
-----we don't have a designated person who gives a sermon each week. Instead, the ministry comes from anyone who wishes to share

e.

Quote:
-----Jesus Christ is the Head of the church in a very real way. We let Him lead our meetings. He has the freedom to function through any one of the members of His Body that He chooses. We look to Him to make church decisions, and we, as members of His Body, are all involved and responsible for getting His mind and sharing it with one another.

This last point also covers the 'Business Meeting', where important decisions are not rushed. Yes, it may mean returning for another Business Meeting..... Our money - the Lord's money. We made the effort to wait for a sense of direction from Him.

Compton, is this very different from 'non'house-church?

Krispy,

Is this anything like your house-church?

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/8/8 21:46

Quote:
-----It was more of a move towards the life of God than an escape from materialism.

Important distinction!

Quote:
-----The responsibility for 'pastoring' the flock of which I am part does not rest with one person;...The elders have joint responsibility for the oversight of the church.

Compton, is this very different from (your)'non'house-church?

Only in practice...;-)

MC

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2005/8/8 22:00

Quote:

All along, I have been assuming that the house church movement isn't built upon the flimsy idea that homes are more spiritual or correct than church buildings.

Well, Viola and many house church advocates are actually in strong favor of a house vs. sanctuary, because the traditional building is viewed as intimidating, imposing, uninviting, authoritarian, controlling, and thus bent towards quenching the Spirit and life of the Church. There is some idea behind the simplicity of a house vs. sanctuary, and stewardship.

Though it is interesting regarding stewardship, my Church is getting ready to build a 60 x 100 ft building, where the sanctuary will sit about 200 some people (not to mention some classrooms, office space, storage, etc, all for about \$100,000 (though we've long owned the land our current site is on).

I don't know of too many middle-class homes these days that even go for such a small amount, yet alone able to house that many people, and is much more practical and convenient. So, if we want to talk about stewardship, it is not a big waste of money to buy such a building with about 100 people supporting it financially, with a 20 year loan. Easily payable.

Telling people how to get to a centralized location as such will also be much easier than telling people how to drive to your house and where they can park on the street (if even allowed in some areas).

Quote:

In short, I believe the house church movement in, in part, a rejection of the technocratic machinery or corporate authority structure that seems to engulf many, but not all, "traditional" churches.

I believe it is mostly a reactionary movement (and a very attractive one) to the "machine" and "corporate" mentality of the churches in America these days. Especially as many become increasingly more and more charismatic/pentecostal in outlook.

Often it has been said that the typical business like church steeped in formalism and beeping out at 12 noon every Sunday don't allow the Spirit to function. To some degree, that is true. However, if you are a believer, you are free to move in the Spirit as the Spirit leads you, regardless of the institutional pressures. But one might have to pay a cost these days, and face rejection.

I'll never forget at one church I attended for some time where I was asked to take a Sabbatical by the pastor from speaking up (in a non disorderly way) impromptu through the leading of the Spirit. A missionary visited once from Russia, and he told the missionary he was free to preach as long as he wanted, but reminded him that we let out at 12. I guess it ultimately depends if you are going to obey the Spirit, and if you are willing to pay the cost. You might be rejected by men and told to shut up or go start your own church if you want to preach... but if you are seeking to simply follow the Spirit, then do so.

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/8/8 22:14

Many good points KJimmy.

Quote:
-----many house church advocates are actually in strong favor of a house vs. sanctuary, because the traditional building is viewed as intimidating, imposing, uninviting, authoritarian, controlling, and thus bent towards quenching the Spirit and life of the Church. There is some idea behind the simplicity of a house vs. sanctuary, and stewardship.

So, some people feel the architecture or the aesthetic design of a forward facing sanctuary with an elevated pulpit, regal decorations, ect. is psychologically reinforcing an unbiblical understanding of church. Is this a correct rendering of the problem that home church advocates have with traditional buildings per se?

Quote:
-----...if you are a believer, you are free to move in the Spirit as the Spirit leads you, regardless of the institutional pressures. But one might have to pay a cost these days, and face rejection...You might be rejected by men and told to shut up or go start your own church if you want to preach... but if you are seeking to simply follow the Spirit, then do so.

Let me ask...if we say we endorse "traditional "church" models, while retaining the right to speak and act out of synch with the leadership of these churches...do we really endorse them? I have wondered about this at times...

MC

Re:, on: 2005/8/9 13:22

Quote:
-----So, some people feel the architecture or the aesthetic design of a forward facing sanctuary with an elevated pulpit, regal decorations, ect. is psychologically reinforcing an unbiblical understanding of church. Is this a correct rendering of the problem that home church advocates have with traditional buildings per se?

For me? Yes... this would accurately describe one issue I have with traditional church buildings. Ironically, in my line of work I am involved in the both the architectural and construction phase of building many church buildings. The problem isn't the building itself... the problem is that most people associate "church" as a building. It is not. God's house is not made of wood and stone... but of His people.

Krispy

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2005/8/9 13:36

Quote:
-----So, some people feel the architecture or the aesthetic design of a forward facing sanctuary with an elevated pulpit, regal decorations, ect. is psychologically reinforcing an unbiblical understanding of church. Is this a correct rendering of the problem that home church advocates have with traditional buildings per se?

I think this question illustrates the point Finney was making in Revival Lecture XIV. It was his position, based upon the lecture, that any 'measure' should be discarded when it has lost its effectiveness to bring about the desired end. Pulpits are measures. Specialty dress codes for ministers are measures. Song books, choirs, meetings, singing, sermons, etc. are all measures. Instruments and buildings are 'measures.'

At the end of the day it seems clear to me that the defining question is not about location, inanimate objects (buildings, books, instruments, etc.), or any of that. Many Messianics would love to make every church a synagogue I suppose and try to return to their rendition of the first century church. We all want to be authentic, right? But what makes a meeting authentic? Did Paul ask Corinth if when he came he was going to check out their house or facility? He would examine their song codex or scrolls? He would see if they had an altar bench, anxious seat, or a pulpit? None of these things are in view. He was coming looking for the finger of God in the meeting. And I must agree with Finney that either for or against certain 'measures' we often hold these things with superstitious reverence. A pulpit or 'setup' in an assembly that somehow emulates popery or paganism without that specific intent- is no different than the issues such as eating food sacrificed to idols, etc. Everyday of the year is a pagan holiday to somebody. And how long and hard will we be preoccupied with making up some 'measure' that is totally unlike anything else- just so we can say "ours is not popery or pagan"? Again, it is not the setup that makes a 'church' it is the manifestation of God's presence and the fellowship of the saints as it works out in love. If God is not allowed to move what difference does anything else make? The vessel is no greater than the contents. What more doth God need than a group of individuals bent on being the habitation of God?

Re: Diotrephes loves to have first place. - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/8/9 14:05

I'm not sure whether or not this is the right place for this but I didn't want to start another thread which was quite so closely related.

Patterns of service in the church have been a source of controversy since apostolic times. The rise of the single leader is documented in the third letter of John. The whole section is a wonderful glimpse into church life at the end of the first century. "Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well, because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.

"I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore,

if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.Â” (3John 1:5-10, NKJV) Hospitality in the early church was a vital factor in their evangelistic thrust. John commends the behaviour of Gaius in his provision for the itinerant servants of the churches, but has some comments to make about a key figure in the local assembly. In the original Greek, John describes him before he names him; 'the loving-first-place one' among you, Diotrephes. This grammatical construction indicates a characteristic trait; Diotrephes loves the place of power and recognition. It is his character trait.

The verb meaning 'to be first' (prOteuO - Strongs 4409) is only used, biblically, in Colossians Â“And himself is the head of the body Â— the assembly Â— who is a beginning, a first-born out of the dead, that he might become in all Â— himself Â— first,Â” (Col. 1:18, YNG) Youngs Translation shows that this is 'being' something rather than 'having' something. The reference in 3 John adds the prefix of 'phileO' to give us 'philoprOeuO (Strongs 5383) 'a lover of first place'.

In modern western culture 'competitiveness' is regarded as a virtue; perhaps it is time we examined that assumption. Something in Diotrephes' character drove him to excel in comparison to his fellows. This is not personal discipline which strives for the best possible for its own sake, but competitiveness which cannot be satisfied with objective excellence but has to be 'better' than others. It is the consequence of measuring one with another. Paul once said "Â“For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.Â” (2Cor. 10:12, NKJV) This 'comparing' is ruinous to genuine faith.

I have no doubt that Diotrephes was a 'strong leader'; in his own estimate at least. Like all leaders who have to 'maintain' their 'lead' he had to eliminate anything which he perceived to be 'competition'. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.Â” (3John 1:10, NKJV) I prefer the strength of the old KJV here "casting them out of the church". It is the word used of 'expelling demons' or 'formal excommunication' or Christ's expulsion of the traders from the Temple courts. Occasionally, in today's church life, you hear a disturbing note in the sayings of 'leaders'; "I wouldn't have someone like that in my church. Get rid of him." I suspect we would have heard that same note in Diotrephes; 'my church'.

It is instructive to see how Paul dealt with the need for excommunication as we find it in 1 Corinthians 5. The act of excommunication here was the consequence of the cooperative decision of an apostle AND the church in Corinth. Paul knew he could not 'throw out' the offender; he knew that the church in Corinth was not 'his church'! He was a key person in its foundation and continuation, but this was not 'St Paul's Church' and he knew it. However, at St Diotrephes' everyone knew who was in charge, especially St D himself and he was determined to keep it that way.

There may be a Biblical post script to this. The Revelation has two references to the Nicolaitans. Rev. 2:6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Rev. 2:15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

The first of these words is addressed to Ephesus and the second to Pergamos, and there is an observable development in the way that things are expressed. At Ephesus the 'deeds' of the Nicolaitans had been 'spotted' by the church in Ephesus which had turned its face against their practices, but at Pergamos the 'doctrines' of the Nicolaitans had taken firm hold. The church at Ephesus was commended for rejecting the 'deeds' of the Nicolaitans and the church at Pergamos was accused of harbouring those who held this 'doctrine'.

Let's be open and honest about this. No one really knows what this means. You will hear preachers speak with great confidence about the Nicolaitans but no one really knows who they were, what they did, or what they taught. So what follows now can only be an hypothesis. You must decide yourself whether or not you can provide a better hypothesis. My line of hypothesis is to presume that we are not talking about a man called Nicolais nor or a group that had become identified with him, but that the term Nicolaitan is descriptive. The Greek word 'nikaO' means to overcome, conquer, or to win; hence the word 'nike' on your sports trainers - winner! and the Greek word 'laos' means 'people'. Hence the strict translation of Nicolaitans would mean 'people-conqueror'. This is why I say there 'may be' a post script to Diotrephes in the Revelation. Is this a derogatory description of a practice which slowly became a doctrine?

The progression from 'deeds' to 'doctrine' is well documented. People do something once and it works, so they do it again. It quickly becomes the pattern. When it becomes the pattern someone will inevitably provide a justification for the practice; a teaching/doctrine. It is certainly a possible hypothesis that what we have referenced here is the spread of the single person pastorate, not just a single Diotrephes but a whole Diotrephes 'movement'. The 'people' now have a 'winner' and are 'conquered'.

Whether or not this hypothesis is the correct one, we may never know, but we have some documents from the late 90s and early 2nd century which provide a history which would certainly accommodate this hypothesis. There are three documents in particular which are important evidence in this sense.

The Letter from the Church in Rome to the Church in Corinth, usually known as 1st Clement. The letter is usually dated about AD 95-97; pretty much contemporary with the letters of John and the Revelation. The occasion of this letter, from its contents, was a serious disruption in the life of the church in Corinth. The eldership there had apparently been endorsed by Paul, but over the time others had been added to it. As a result of some contention it appears that 'younger elements' within the church had 'deposed' the 'eldership/oversight'. The letter contains 'advice' from the church at Rome to the church at Corinth. (58:2) This makes it plain that there was no Papal system operating at this time, and that no one church could exercise 'authority' over another. It is also instructive in that the letter is not addressed to a 'pastor' in Corinth, (nor even the elders!) but to the church. There was plainly no 'pre-eminent' one in the church at Corinth; neither was there such a one in the church at Rome. Remember however that this is historical evidence not biblical fact.

Another fascinating document is the Didache or the Teaching of the Twelve. This document is also fascinating historical evidence. It purports to be the written account of the Teaching of the Apostles; not written by them but written as though they would have endorsed all its teachings. It has been called a manual of church order and practice. There are practical details about baptism and how to respond to 'itinerant' servants of the church. This is reminiscent of 3 John with its visiting 'servants' but has obviously moved on from there somewhat. The churches have obviously been the victims of 'false apostles and prophets' (11:3) and the 'manual' gives some advice on spotting the fakes. An apostle or prophet was "not to stay for more than one day, unless there is need, in which case he may stay another. But if he stays three days, he is a false prophet". (11:5) There is another interesting section which reads "appoint for yourselves overseers and deacons worthy of the Lord, men who are humble and not avaricious and true and approved, for they carry out for you the ministry of the prophets and teachers. You must not, therefore, despise them, for they are your honoured men, along with the prophets and teachers. Furthermore, correct one another, not in anger but in peace.." It is very likely that the date of this document is close to that of 1 Clement and John's later writings, i.e. in the 90s.

Again there is no appearance of a presiding elder or single person pastor, but an expectation of a multiple eldership/oversight. The little quotation about 'correcting each other' is another powerful evidence of the absence of a presiding/ruling Diotrephes character.

Then we have Ignatius and his letters! He appears on the scene suddenly without explanation or biography. He is known from a series of letters than he wrote while en route for Rome to die as a martyr. He was very anxious that no one should interfere with his target martyrdom. He is, in fact, obsessed with two themes; his impending martyrdom which he thinks will prove his faith and church order. The date of his martyrdom has been calculated to be between 107-117 AD. We can position in another way in that one of his letters is to Polycarp. Polycarp was also martyred somewhere around 150 AD and had possibly been a convert of John the Apostle. In Ignatius we have moved into the first post-apostolic generation and his letters show how much had been lost in that time.

Ignatius wrote to the Ephesians, the Magnesians, the Trallians, the Romans, the Philadelphians, and the Smyrnaeans and in each of these letters he strongly advocates a 'single monarchical bishop' pattern for church order. Whereas in the Didache we have the church choosing its elders, in Ignatius we have the instruction to do nothing without the presence of The Bishop. The bishop is the vicar of Christ and everything must come under his rule. The fact that Ignatius works so hard at this shows that he is trying to convince people, some of whom saw things very differently. You don't have to work this hard in propaganda unless the battle is still raging. And from the names of the churches he wrote to he is referring to the geography that would have been familiar to John at the time of the Revelation; Ignatius wrote to three 'Revelation' churches.

If we can forgive the word, there is an obvious 'evolution' at work here. The rise of the 'first man' concept of church order is first documented in 3 John with evident disapproval. Our hypothesis traced the development from 'practice' to 'established teaching' in the Revelation. Then the historical evidence of the 'apostolic fathers' which shows the absence of 'Diotrephes' type church leaders, until a generation (or two) later we have a fully formed agenda in the writings of Ignatius.

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2005/8/9 14:11

Quote:

So, some people feel the architecture or the asthetic design of a forward facing sanctuary with an elevated pulpit, regal decorations, ect. is psychologica
lly reinforcing an unbiblical understanding of church. Is this a correct rendering of the problem that home church advocates have with traditional buildin
gs per se?

Yes, many strongly take this view, that the design of the building is going to have a psychological effect that ultimately sc
reams a contrary Biblical message. No doubt, some buildings are built to create a certain response, much like any piece
of art, e.g. awe. But, those of us who are guided by the Spirit don't have to remain silent in our services just because the
building's "psychology" encourages us to do such.

One is rather nearsighted if they think such is limited to traditional institutional church buildings. A home meeting might
be equally intimidating psychologically. For example, because you are sitting in the house of a person you know, you mi
ght shy away from sharing a hard word of correction with the person whose house you are meeting in, out of fear you mi
ght insult (in their own home of all places), and then be promptly asked to leave.

One could also argue the same with open-air meetings e.g. the Sermon on the Mount. It could be argued such an enviro
nment would also just be too intimidating, especially if somebody wanted to speak up, but was simply just too soft spok
en to speak.

Quote:

Let me ask...if we say we endorse "traditional "church" models, while retaining the right to speak and act out of synch with the leadership of these chur
ches...do we really endorse them? I have wondered about this at times...

I don't think any more than Jesus endorsed the Pharisees in whose synogogues he met with. It is seldom that one will al
ways agree with decisions those in leadership positions have made. We can still affirm them as a leader, even if we dis
agree with them on some points.

I think many leaders are afraid that open services and such might get out of hand, and they recognize that they really ha
ve no way to control what happens in such a service. Many I believe also wrongly (and perhaps arrogantly) assume that
if anything is going to happen in a service, the Holy Spirit is going to tell them everything that is going to happen that is o
f the Spirit before somebody does it. Thus, if anybody does anything that the Spirit does not tell them about first, or they
don't want to happen, then that person is viewed as a threat and deemed out of order and in rebellion. This is a sort of
water-funnel theology that is created, where those in leadership view everything that happens within the church having to
happen through them. Thus, if the Spirit is going to do anything, it will be through them and with their knowledge. This i
s nowhere found in Scripture though.

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2005/8/9 14:25

Quote:

Occasionally, in today's church life, you hear a disturbing note in the sayings of 'leaders'; "I wouldn't have someone like that in my church. Get rid of hi
m." I suspect we would have heard that same note in Diotrephes; 'my church'.

It is instructive to see how Paul dealt with the need for excommunication as we find it in 1 Corinthians 5. The act of excommunication here was the con
sequence of the cooperative decision of an apostle AND the church in Corinth. Paul knew he could not 'throw out' the offender; he knew that the churc
h in Corinth was not 'his church'! He was a key person in its foundation and continuation, but this was not 'St Paul's Church' and he knew it.

You nailed it exactly here Ron. This is something I have learned the hard way. At a previous church I attended, I gave a word from the Lord to my previous pastor. His response to me was "This is MY church, and these are MY sheep, you shall not offer them any rebuke, that is MY job alone." After much tear filled prayer, the Lord really began to let me see that the Church was not any man's but His, as He alone was the head of the Church. This last pastor asserted that he had special rights with our church that future pastors would not have, because he was the founder of this church. Such was as far from the attitude of Paul.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2005/8/9 14:54

Hi Ron,

Quote:
-----Hence the strict translation of Nicolaitans would mean 'people-conqueror'. This is why I say there 'may be' a post script to Diotrephes in the Revelation. Is this a derogatory description of a practice which slowly became a doctrine?

It sounds strikingly to me like Nimrod. Is there any way to look at the LXX and tell if the description between the two are at all similar?

Where does the 'Buck' stop? - posted by RobertW (), on: 2005/8/9 15:04

Quote:
-----One is rather nearsighted if they think such is limited to traditional institutional church buildings. A home meeting might be equally intimidating psychologically. For example, because you are sitting in the house of a person you know, you might shy away from sharing a hard word of correction with the person whose house you are meeting in, out of fear you might insult (in their own home of all places), and then be promptly asked to leave.

I have been in house meetings where this actually happened, but along a little different lines. Who is in authority in the house? If I were there and things became indecent and in disarray I would expect the owner of the house to take action. Maybe it's a cultural thing. Yet, it seems that our Lord even addressed the owners of homes with which He had to 'rebuke' with 'respect' (so to speak). Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee... sounds almost like a request to finish the saying. Not that He needed permission for anything- but yet there was still an order to it all.

A passage comes to mind:

...submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of God. (Ephesians 5:21 YLT)

This is an attitude overall as a believer. It seems to also closely relate to the passage on preferring the other before ourselves or esteeming the other 'better' than ourselves (Romans 12, Philippians 2).

Understanding these things as I do and being a native of Harry Truman's home state, "where does the 'buck' stop" when no one is in authority? (i.e. the notorious "pass the buck" situation to which was the retort- "The Buck Stops here!" -Harry Truman)

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/8/9 15:35

Gentlemen,

All of these posts are quite instructive and helpful! I think if all of this information concerned with these subjects could be presented in book form, it would be very useful for many of us. Regardless of the type of church we belong to, I think these historical glimpses help us get our compass bearings.

My ears are pinned to the screen to learn more...

MC

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/8/9 17:53

Quote:
-----Yes, many strongly take this view, that the design of the building is going to have a psychological effect that ultimately screams a contrary Biblical message. No doubt, some buildings are built to create a certain response, much like any piece of art, e.g. awe. But, those of us who are guided by the Spirit don't have to remain silent in our services just because the building's "psychology" encourages us to do such.

During WWII the Houses of Parliament were badly damaged and discussions were held as to the possibility of changing the format of the main chamber. Perhaps folks outside the UK don't know but our Parliament is built on an adversarial concept. The opposing parties are separated by a fixed distance which was two drawn swords plus 12 inches. Some folk thought a change might be appropriate.

This is a genuine quotation from Winston Churchill who opposed changing the format: we shape our buildings and thereafter they shape us

Re:, on: 2005/8/9 19:39

Quote:
-----KJ said: A home meeting might be equally intimidating psychologically. For example, because you are sitting in the house of a person you know, you might shy away from sharing a hard word of correction with the person whose house you are meeting in, out of fear you might insult (in their own home of all places), and then be promptly asked to leave.

Quote:
-----Who is in authority in the house?

Robert,

This is a great question.

I was part of a large house-fellowship once, where the owner of the house was pushed forward for eldership by a more senior brother (regular visiting preacher) after many years of functioning without being an elder, having felt led to open his home for this and other work for the Lord. He was never comfortable after, and probably I should leave it at that.

There is a subtle division between ministries sometimes, which we need to be open to discern, I believe. The homeowner should be owed bags of respect for his generosity, faithfulness, and sacrifice, but I'm not sure that qualifies him as a 'church leader'. I'd like to understand this more though.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2005/8/10 8:44

Quote:

-----we shape our buildings
and thereafter they shape us

I was thinking about all this and recalled that in one of our house meetings we have our music stands set up when we lead in singing on the step past the door that is elevated from the folks out front by about 6 or 8 inches. It is sort of like a 'platform' I suppose. Sometimes we minister down on the floor level. Honestly I don't recall that any one of us ever gave it a thought though. Maybe it is a very subtle thing. For us we it is more of a convenience thing.

One thing I will say about those meetings is that we all meet together and there is no real sense that anyone is 'in charge'. The whole ministry is one of mutual submission. This has been like this for some 10+ years now with little difficulty, but the circumstances are a bit different because there is no money involved. Ahah! I said it. Is that the real issue here?

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/8/10 10:42

I have theory about architecture and the layout of our buildings.

If you see a Roman Catholic building you will see that it elevates the sacraments. A special area, the sanctuary, is closed off from ordinary folk and has become the special territory of the specialist; the priest. The seats are usually designed for the spectator and no real contribution is necessary from any other than the priest. If there is a pulpit it will probably be at the side, off-centre; the preaching of the word is an addition to the main purpose of the meeting.

The Reformers brought in the pulpit and, in classical settings such as Spurgeon's Tabernacle and the great preaching centres, the pulpit took centre stage. In fact, the pulpit filled the whole front of the building and the 'big' seat, occupied by the elders, was positioned 'under the authority of the word'. They had elevated the preaching of the Word above the sacraments and given it centre stage. The sacraments of baptism and breaking of bread are accommodated 'incidentally', tucked in at the foot of the pulpit or hidden under the floorboards. The seats are still designed for the spectator.

The early Christian Brethren gathered 'not as people around a priest but as priests around a person' (Christ). They favoured a square or a circle or a three sided square. Their focus was, in reality, fellowship. The chairs were arranged so that you could see each others faces which facilitated a more 'open' meeting. There was no elevated platform for sacrament or preacher.

I reckon I can guess the theology of a church within 30 seconds of seeing its indoor architecture! I have been a long time attendee of a large annual conference. The preaching platform was simple structure to give everyone an opportunity to see the preacher. Music was provided by a piano at the side; it accompanied the meeting. Then a worship band was added, still to the side, almost in a corner. Then the platform was extended so that the worship band could use it; now it is resplendent with microphones and drums and keyboards and lights and is the real focus of the room in which the meeting is held.

What theology do I read into this? The meeting will be music-led; the worship will be in the hands of the specialists. The ministry of the saints themselves will have to find its spaces in between the music. The people most equipped to provide this kind of musical lead will be those who have learned their music skills rather than a sensitivity to the moving of the Spirit in the meeting. The meeting passes into the hands of those who are expert at creating atmosphere.

Of course, God can break through any of this. He is not limited by our architecture. However, I think our own expectations are often limited by our architecture, and I think God is often 'limited' by our expectations.

Re:, on: 2005/8/10 11:17

Our pastor has just purchased a community building (one in which my friend and i prayed the Lord would use for the church in fact)and has big plans for it. The sanctuary will have beautiful lighting, hidden sound room at the back, a platform at the front for the worship, a new pulpit is being carved from a certain wood with an engraving on it the list goes on. Huge amounts of man power are going into getting the building ready to be officially 'opened' in September.

My question is is it really all worth it? There seems to be at the moment more vision for the 'building' than there is vision for our area. I'm not trying to be a pessimist and find fault in what we are doing it's just that all focus seems to be in the wrong direction and in the mean time those who really do need help in the body with their own homes and lives(one of which house is literally falling down around her) are being neglected.

I'll probably get rebuked for saying this but to me it seems all wrong.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2005/8/10 11:23

Quote:

-----Then the platform was extended so that the worship band could use it; now it is resplendent with microphones and drums and keyboards and lights and is the real focus of the room in which the meeting is held.

I recently went into a church where the electric piano was sitting dead center of the platform and facing the crowd as if it were a pulpit. I have to admit I felt quite uneasy about this. It sent the message to me that the music is front and center. Just being honest here, I was seeing, "look at me- look at me - look at me..." I'm playing the piano. I can't say much though because there was a time at our church when the double bass drum set was sitting high up above the platform in almost an exalted state like a rock band or something. The kicker was- I was the drummer! that was years ago and was done to make room on the platform for the choir, etc. Now I look back and almost feel like a blasphemer! Thank God we live under grace. The drums were actually blocking the cross. Then again, maybe I am just attaching superstitious reverence on all these things and God could really care less?

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2005/8/10 11:35

Brother Robert wrote about 3 pages ago:

Quote:

-----Everyday of the year is a pagan holiday to somebody. And how long and hard will we be preoccupied with making up some 'measure' that is totally unlike anything else- just so we can say "ours is not popery or pagan"? Again, it is not the setup that makes a 'church' it is the manifestation of God's presence and the fellowship of the saints as it works out in love. If God is not allowed to move what difference does anything else make? The vessel is no greater than the contents. What more doth God need than a group of individuals bent on being the habitation of God?

The last sentence is the summation of what is necessary for "The Church" to exist.

"What more doth God need than a group of individuals bent on being the habitation of God?"

Much of what has been discussed in this thread pretains to methods. The methods are a result of a work of God that once was His work. As time passes, man seeks to relive what once was real and Spirit led. But now, these methods are transformed by men into the "Talmud" of today. Just like those who wrote the Talmud more than 2000 years ago, we too suffer the same bondage of religion. You see, those who wrote the Talmud knew that God once spoke commands to their forefathers. They realised that there was something missing in their pursuit of God. So they filled that emptiness with "works of men."

May I suggest that we too must begin to seek "Freedom From Religion." The substance of what we are discussing, does it consist of methods, or do we really want to know what Brother Robert has spoken of?

Remember the story of the generation that lived with Moses. The people told Moses that they feared the voice of God. Are we like those people? Are we looking to the "leadership" of today just like that generation?

Just a thought.

In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2005/8/10 11:42

This is good stuff here.

Quote:
-----Of course, God can break through any of this. He is not limited by our architecture. However, I think our own expectations are often limited by our architecture, and I think God is often 'limited' by our expectations.

This is so true.

It is amazing that in some meetings an 'atmosphere' of faith is created by a skillful worship leader. Not to say that the worship leader is not being sensitive, but the collective faith is aroused by a stirring song. It is an amazing dynamic to see.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/8/10 14:18

I love singing, especially hymns, but I have to ask myself what place hymn singing had in the early church. (I know they sang a hymn en route to Gethsemane. Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26) I have a Russian friend who grew in Moscow at the most severe time in the persecutions faced from the communist authorities. I recall her saying that her parents taught her to 'sing' in meeting so that she could hear the voice of the person next to her rather than her own. In effect, this meant 'whisper-singing'. I know that this has also been practised in the ongoing move of God in China where, again, hymn singing would bring them to the attention of the authorities.

The early church certainly sang hymns I'm sure, but at times I am equally sure that they kept as quiet as possible. As far as I can recall these are the references in the Church era to the singing of hymns; Acts 16:25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

1Cor. 14:15 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. I don't think this is congregational hymn singing

Eph. 5:19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

James 5:13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. I don't think this is congregational hymn singing either "making melody in your heart" is an interesting concept?

I am not trying to ban music from our meetings, only to assess the relative importance, biblically and in contemporary practice, of music and song in our gatherings. There has, for example, long been a tradition of solo singing in evangelistic meetings, and of 'celebrations' which are mainly song orientated meetings. I am just curious that there is so little about these things in the scripture. I suppose I have in mind the quoted comment of Watchman Nee in his visit to the UK. He was asked what he thought of the churches in the UK. His simple answer was 'too much little book, not enough big book'. (ie hymns and bible respectively)

Thoughts?

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2005/8/10 15:06

In our pentecostal circles there used to be an attempt made to enter into the presence of God through praise and worship singing, etc. It is believed that God inhabits the praises of his people so then a systematic method modeled after the wilderness tabernacle has been used to lead folk in praise and worship as if they were passing through the various 'courts'. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise, etc. These things rely heavily on interpretations of Old Testament types and shadows.

It is difficult to articulate here in a few paragraphs, but suffice it to say that there is an attempt to praise and worship God in song- in unity for the purpose of God revealing Himself throughout the services. I recall earlier the term 'atmosphere'. I don't know if this is what I am referring to or not. Yet, there is a desire that God would manifest his presence in the worship service.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/8/10 15:19

Robert

Yes, I am familiar with that line of thought, and of the later charismatics with their 'building God's throne by praise'. I note however that the Psalm refers to... Psa. 100:4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. ... entering His gates 'with' thanksgiving rather than 'by' praise, and entering His courts 'with' praise rather than 'by' praise.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2005/8/10 15:28

Yes. I see the distinction. So then what should we make of the whole "entering into the presence of God" thing? The old school pentecostals would 'rev up' a service with high speed songs and such until there was a great excitement. When I came to Christ in 1991 the trend was towards slower and more solemn songs. I suppose the slower songs are more of the 'atmosphere' ones. Are these just measures that can vary from place to place or culture to culture or is there more light on all this that I may be unaware of?

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2005/8/10 15:44

I too have experienced "a church" that disappoints. I too have been caught up in religion. I too have pursued leadership positions within "a church." I too have seen others pursue and strive for position. It all leaves a bitter taste like that of wormwood.

"The Church" I have found is not like the things of the past. It is something new and refreshing. I have found a few men here at work whose lives are being transformed by the Word of God. Fellowship happens because we have something to share with each other. The "substance" of what we share continues to point us towards Christ. We begin to share our hearts, our shortcomings, our needs. We teach each other about the ways the Word of God gives us understanding in the day to day routines that we have. As Brother Ron has pointed out before, the definition of "The Church" can be understood as the "ones that are called out."

I have begun to see the works of God in this way. The substance of what we hope for cannot be satisfied by the ways of this world. We leave the things we once hoped for because the substance of what God provides in our daily lives far exceeds anything this world offers. The joy of fellowship with those who have found the path is very satisfying.

A group of people that meets once or twice a week at locations which have predetermined methods of worship and teaching seem strange to me now. Living daily with others who walk this path framed by the Holy Scriptures continues to taste like honey. The truth we learn as we share with each other daily of what is happening in our lives provides the "substance" of what we hope for. The evidence of the work of God in our lives reflects the light that is in us.

Have you experienced the work of God that separates?

In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2005/8/10 16:01

Quote:

This has been like this for some 10+ years now with little difficulty, but the circumstances are a bit different because there is no money involved. Ahah! I said it. is that the real issue here?

Ha!!! Had anybody been home when I read this they would've wondered why I was laughing so nuts. I think there is something to the entire money deal though, and a big need for certain individuals i.e. the pastor, to dominate a meeting. I've noticed that most pastors have a sense of "control" when it comes to the meeting, because if there is any major problem during a service, especially in regard to performance, then they are likely to start suffering in the offering plate. But, if you simply get them around a group of believers over the dinner table, they lose this sense of control that they otherwise feel they must have. They don't feel the need to control the "order of service" when we are sitting around eating a hot dog and drinking a soda. \$\$\$ perhaps has something to do with it.

Re: Interview with Frank Viola - worship, on: 2005/8/10 16:02

Quote:
-----The old school pentecostals would 'rev up' a service with high speed songs and such until there was a great excitement.

In a way, I've wondered what that was about... I thought it was just denominational culture, as opposed to a particular strand of theology.

Quote:
-----When I came to Christ in 1991 the trend was towards slower and more solemn songs. I suppose the slower songs are more of the 'atmosphere' ones.

There is a writer Dr Andrew Walker, who came from a pentecostal upbringing, who has settled into the Russian Orthodox church (*very slow songs*). He believes he has shaken off his personal 'religious' traditions, to be absolutely real with God.

Quote:
-----'...is there more light on all this that I may be unaware of?

I believe so, but I hesitate to try to explain it. ;-) However, I would say there is great blessedness in being given the freedom by the elders, with them, to pray and worship as the Holy Spirit sparks between one and another and sometimes, a gathering can be lit up amazingly - like the fire really has fallen - by the right hymn or chorus, which the Holy Spirit has asked for.

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2005/8/10 16:18

Quote:

What theology do I read into this? The meeting will be music-led; the worship will be in the hands of the specialists. The ministry of the saints themselves will have to find its spaces in between the music. The people most equipped to provide this kind of musical lead will be those who have learned their music skills rather than a sensitivity to the moving of the Spirit in the meeting. The meeting passes into the hands of those who are expert at creating atmosphere.

It is interesting you mention this stuff about the location of the pulpit and what not. I took an entire class at Bible college called "The Ministry of Worship" in which we spent a good deal of time in this abbreviated summer time class talking about things such as the position of the pulpit, sacraments, etc. There is indeed, a great theology behind much of the madness.

Of course, some of it is just accidental, and when some churches have been built in times past, people just placed things

s in certain locations because that's how they always saw it done. For example, had I built a church prior to taking this class, I would have likely put the pulpit in the center of the stage, just because that's how I had always seen it done, not because I had a theology behind it.

At my last church, we met in a rather small building. We experimented with several different layout styles, until we came to what was perhaps the most interesting I had ever seen: We had the praise team and altar and pulpit area in the corner of the room, and stationed the chairs on a slant as you entered the front so they were facing towards the left corner of the room, in a slight elliptical pattern. Our screen which we used for announcements and music lyrics was actually on the front wall, and not directly behind the band. We didn't have a formal pulpit lectern, my pastor simply took one of the music stands from the band after they were done, and usually placed it to the side instead of in front of him.

Frankly, meeting in such cramped quarters as we had, we simply were going for what was the most practical. We were going for what would accommodate the most bodies, and the best way we could hide the various wiring for the sound system and computer that we used for power point. But it was interesting to see that once my pastor removed the wooden altars from the general preaching area, and some people thought him moving them out of the way and putting them in our storage room was nothing short of blasphemy (they saw theology behind such)... yet he was simply doing it because we were in such cramped quarters, and when he preached he liked to be able to move around a little and not trip. For that matter, from a practical point of view, nobody ever really used the altars as it is. Our layout was simply designed for what was the most functional.

Re: traditions...from functionality into formality. - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/8/10 17:42

This thread is very interesting.

Quote:

-----...when some churches have been built in times past, people just placed things in certain locations because that's how they always saw it done....Our layout was simply designed for what was the most functional.

I have a friend whose family is Greek Orthodox. He told me that during the Eucharist or Divine Liturgy, a priest may ceremoniously wave a white handkerchief softly over the bread and wine. I asked him if there was some spiritual property to this act. He told me not really...in former times, that was the only way they could keep the flies off the bread.

MC

Re: traditions...from formality into functionality., on: 2005/8/11 14:29

Quote:

-----a priest may ceremoniously wave a white handkerchief softly over the bread and wine. I asked him if there was some spiritual property to this act. He told me not really...in former times, that was the only way they could keep the flies off the bread.

It is remarkable there is a meaningful explanation for this slight difference in practice!

Once the move is made into a home setting, is it a little thing to decide who should bake the bread, how simple it should be or whether it should come from a shop?

Does it need to be in the same room as the worshippers at the beginning of the 'service' or, can it wait in the kitchen to save the space of a table?

Does this lead to yet another question, of whether breaking bread *should* be a meal together, or a time of open worship?

I've never 'broken bread' as part of a meal with fellow-believers. Does anyone do this these days?