

010 The Church to be The Church Part 1

Is The Church of today the Church of the New Testament?
Can we say that we are truly reflecting the heart and design of church life that the Lord intended?
Are we following the real pattern that the Holy Spirit laid out in the Scripture?
Did Christ, who is the head of the church, know what he was doing through the Holy Spirit when in scripture he gave us the pattern of church life?

These are very important questions that we must ask ourselves and come to some very clear and honest conclusions. Then we must make some major decision as to how and where we go from here.

If we believe that yes we are living today according to the New Testament, Holy Spirit designed church life, then why are we so ineffective in the world?

It has been recorded that the church in the US has not grown at all in the past 16 years. All we have done is shuffle the cards and deal them out in different piles.

Now it is easy to point out that there are differences in the world today, that society is more sophisticated, more this and different that, but the scripture tell us clearly that the *“Kingdom of God IS NOT of this world.”*

We are of a different society now, a different order of things. We live by different rules and principles under a different Leadership. The Leaders name is Jesus.

He also clearly states, *“I am the first and the Last, the Beginning and the End”. “I am the Lord and I change NOT”. “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever”.*

These are Kingdom principles that never move. We stand our whole faith and life on these truths.

1 Cor 3:16

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?

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1 Cor 6:19-20

*Do you not know that **your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?** You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.*

Eph 5:29-32

After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church -- for we are members of his body.

"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."

This is a profound mystery-- but I am talking about Christ and the church.

When we read words like these that tell us who the Lord is, then who and what we are as temples and a body and then we are told where HE dwells – IN US – as temples and HIS body, then what in the wide world are we talking about relating things to this culture, that sophistication, this difference or that difference. It does not fit.

Col 1:25-29

I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—26 the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.

27 To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is- Christ in you, the hope of glory.

28 We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. 29 To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

So then we have to ask ourselves this question.

Are we making **excuses** for our own ineffectiveness?

Or do we still not understand His divine principles in our lives.

Have we not yet grasped, ‘who we really are’?

Going back to our study on the Temple

We have to understand that WE are;

“**none other than the house of God; the gate of heaven.**”

We are as it were;

“**the curtains held together by the golden clasp’s so that the tabernacle is a unit.**”

We are the place;

“**where the Lord fills this temple with His Glory cloud.**”

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We are the;

“Place where he will grant peace”

It is through us;

“that he will give expression of the harmony of Him being King and Priest.”

The people in this world, in your street, living right next door to you are asleep. They are totally unaware that right there in their midst is such a dynamic presence, the very presence and dwelling place of the Lord of Glory.

They have no notion that you are incredibly the door for them to see the very Kingdom of God.

They have no idea that through you, God himself is living in their street.

They are unaware that every time they talk to you they are face to face with Jesus.

The tragedy of this is neither are we aware, to the measure we should be.

If all this I am saying is true, then I come back to my original question, **“why are we so ineffective in the world?”**

Let me ask another Question here.

How many of you really do want to invite new people to come to church?

You see that is the very root of the problem. We have a conceptual framework, a way of thinking that is totally wrong. Wrong concepts, wrong teaching, wrong understanding of the church have been fed to us over many years and generations.

We have a wrong understanding of ministry rolls and functions. We have strayed so far away from the original pattern and design of the Holy Spirit, that it will never work until we face ourselves, stop making excuses and fully embrace His divine principles in our lives. There has to be massive change, and God say He doesn't change so who has to?

Yes we do.

There is no teaching what so ever in the Scripture about inviting any one to a building to hear any one preach.

To the contrary, the Scripture is full of instruction for us to go and be Light, Salt, Life givers, Prayers, and Gossipers of the gospel in our own communities.

You see a so-called church building in whatever town or location has absolutely no relevance or influence with any one within a ½ mile radius of the building.

So you see a building doesn't make it happen either.

And please get this very clear. God has no investment desire in buildings. No so called church buildings are built to the glory of God as we have been led to believe over the centuries, otherwise he would have instructed us to build them, they are an extension of the Herod Temple mentality.

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God does not fill a building with His presence. It's as we release His presence in us that His Spirit flows from one to another. So please don't make a building some Special Sanctuary because it's not. It is just a room where the saints meet for celebration and be thankful to God it is better than the early church meeting in the catacombs and caves.

It's you and I being the church at home, in our street, in our communities, in our school, in our work place, in the shops we visit. Wherever you are, you are it, you are the temple, I am the temple, the very place where all humanity has the opportunity to meet Him and see His glory, to see the real Kingdom of God in action.

That is the exciting challenge and call upon our lives. That He, the most Holy God lives in us, this temple of His and through us He has chosen to touch peoples lives with his Power and Grace. What a joy and privilege. What a calling, what a commission He has given us.

Do you not realize WE ARE THE CHURCH, even in the shower!

Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.

All the believers were together and had everything in common.

Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Here we see in a capsule form the kind of every day life of the body of Christ the coming together as the corporate expression of the Church. After a short time they were thrown out of the Temple court and that was the last Holy Spirit action to finally cut off anything related to the Old Covenant.

Now there were 6 common things in the New Testament church.

- 1. Teaching done by the Apostles.**
- 2. Fellowship in real life terms.**
- 3. Breaking bread in a meal context at their homes.**
- 4. Prayer continuously.**
- 5. Giving generously.**
- 6. Increase daily.**

The remainder of the New Testament talks and deals almost entirely with these 6 points.

1. TEACHING

One of the qualifications of an Elder in the body is to be able to teach

Titus 1:6-9

An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.

Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless-- not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.

Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.

He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

But as you read the Scripture it is the Apostles and Teachers that set the teaching and correct any heresies and miss understandings.

Rom 12:6-7

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach;

1 Cor 12:28

And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers,

Titus 1:10-11

*For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced, because they are ruining **whole households** by teaching things they ought not to teach-- and that for the sake of dishonest gain.*

You can see even from these few scriptures, and there are many more, how vital it is that **ALL** teaching is covered by the Apostolic and Teaching ministry gifts.

2. FELLOWSHIP.

Gal 2:9

James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship.

1 Jn 1:7

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

I'm sure you have heard the Greek word Koionia. It is the Greek word translated 'fellowship' in the scripture. Here is a definition of the word.

- Koinonia (koy-nohn-ee'-ah); partnership, i.e. (literally) participation, or (social) intercourse, (to) communicate, communion, distribution, fellowship.
- Then there is the word Koinos (koy-nos'); common, i.e. (literally) shared by all or several,
- Now the word 'Sun' (soon); a primary preposition denoting union; with or together, i.e. by association, companionship, process, resemblance, possession, instrumentality, addition, etc. completeness

Too many people go to a fellowship, but do not have, and are not in, real fellowship. It is a true participation, a partnership in, some thing shared by all, Companionship. There becomes a resemblance of Christ in each other. We give each other a sense of completeness. If this were the real case in our relationship there would not be so many break up of church groups and fellowship divisions.

a) ENCOURAGEMENT

1Thes 3:2

We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith,

1Thes 5:11

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Part of our fellowship together is to be encouragers and to ensure that through our encouragement, we build each other up in all things.

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b) PARTICIPATION

1 Cor 10:16-17

Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of, or participate in, involve ourselves in the one loaf.

1 Cor 12:26-27

If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

We are participants in each other's life. We are composed of the same BREAD being Christ; therefore we ARE in fellowship not a fellowship.

c). CARE

1 Cor 12:25

.... so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern (or care KJV) for each other.

Phil 2:3-4

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Phil 2:19-21

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare, (or who take care of your well-being KJV), For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

If out of our fellowship with each other we had the same care for each other as is expected by the Lord, we would not have a needy person among us. We would know what it is to love and serve each other in a spirit of loving humility.

The trouble is we don't all get on with other temperaments and there are some people perhaps that we don't even like.

But that is not the issue. Like and Love is not the same thing. Have you ever thought that with your attitude, your awkwardness's, your disobedience's, your moods, your stubbornness' that even Jesus himself doesn't LIKE you.

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But not for one moment does he not LOVE you or care for you and want for your best.

Grow up people. Forget your past, your pettiness, forget what YOU want and LIKE. What does Jesus want? He wants you to love and care and lay down your live for one another, and nothing less than that is good enough for him.

d). Activities.

Col 3:15-17

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Col 2:16-17

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.

***These are a shadow of the things that were to come;** the reality, however, is found in Christ...²⁰ Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules:*

"Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch"?"

*These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on **human commands and teachings**. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.*

Learn to share life together. Enjoy life. Get involved in life. Life is for living and we should be the envy of the world as to the way we live life together to the full, yet without being corrupted by it. Its great to do things together and have others bring balance into our lives. If you are spending far too much time in front of the TV or playing games on your computer then get involved with others of the body so that activity doesn't get a hold of you.

3. BREAKING BREAD

Mark 14:22-24

And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, this is my blood of the New Testament (or New Covenant), which is shed for many.

Jesus took hold of the Passover supper and gave it its true and full meaning. That He was the Lamb of God and that it was His blood to be shed to redeem mankind from the curse of sin.

a). THE ENVIRONMENT

Where did it start?

Exod 12:3

Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household.

Exod 12:7

Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs.

Matt 26:18

He replied, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.'"

Where did it start? In the House

Where did Jesus have the last Passover? In the house.

Acts 2:46

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,

Where did the early church break bread?

From house to house.

2). THE MODE.

Again what was the mode of the Breaking of Bread?

Exod 12:8

And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.

Luke 22:7

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover."

The context here was still that of a meal and it was during that meal Jesus took the bread and gave the cup and explained their meaning.

1 Cor 11:20-23

When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you.....,

33 So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment.

So even years later the church was breaking bread in the context of a meal. Albeit, Paul had to bring some stern correction because some were abusing the time and the meal.

3). THE PURPOSE

You see the custom was that when an agreement or covenant had been struck it was seal over a meal together. Every time we have a meal together in this way we are declaring the Covenant that was made in Christ.

1 Cor 10:16-17

Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

The purpose is our declaration of our oneness in Christ being united together in Him.

4). THE RESULT.

1 Cor 11:23-32

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.

But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment.

When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.

The result is that as we share our lives together and confirm our covenant with Him and each other in a spirit of love and humility we are judging ourselves and setting ourselves apart from the attitudes of the world being reminded that we no longer walk in sin and bondage but have been set free to be the people of God as we celebrate this moment together.

4. PRAYER

Luke 6:12

12 One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.

There was something about Jesus praying that stands as a standard to us as to the importance of prayer. He knew the Father intimately and was one with the Father yet He was so committed to prayer and talking with His Father at any time, even all night. Here He was going to choose the 12 apostles and He did it after a whole night of prayer.

THE FREQUENCY.

Luke 18:1

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

He takes this example and teaches His disciples that they must have the same approach to prayer as He does, to be constantly in that attitude of prayer.

Even when we want to give up He encourages us never to give up in prayer.

Paul teaches the same principle.

1Thes 5:17-18

17 pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

THE WHO?

1 Tim 2:8

I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.

James 5:16

16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

2 Cor 1:11

as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.

The encouragement is for all to pray. Men lifting holy hands. Each other praying for each other, all praying for those in ministries and in need.

It is the call and the privilege for all to have communion with the Father just like Jesus, and the joy of sharing each other's burdens and needs.

So it is a continuous practice that is for all of us.

We shall follow these thoughts through in the next study.