

General Topics :: The Problem of the Modern Pastoral Role**The Problem of the Modern Pastoral Role - posted by myfirstLove (), on: 2010/4/9 14:16**

I found this article in a friend's blog. I've never read anything from Frank Viola, but only this article. I find this article very good and biblical.

God Bless, Lisa

The Problem of the Modern Pastoral Role

... the commonly accepted notion of "sola pastora" (single pastor) is at odds with the NT. The Bible knows nothing of a person who stands at the helm of a local church, directs its affairs, preaches to it every Sunday, conducts its baptisms, and officiates its communion (or Lord's supper).

The highly specialized, professional "pastoral role" of modern Protestantism is a post-biblical novelty that evokes a tradition of humane (but not so helpful) sacerdotal-ism! It is essentially a carry-over from Romanism (the priest). As such, it better reflects the weak and beggarly elements of the Levitical priesthood than anything found in the NT.

Just as serious, the pastoral role warps many who fill this position. Those who get seduced by the trappings of clerical professionalism are virtually always tainted by it. God never called anyone to bear the heavy burden of ministering to the needs of the church by themselves.

Perhaps the most daunting feature of the modern pastoral role is that it keeps the people it claims to serve in spiritual infancy. Because the pastoral role usurps the believer's right to minister in a spiritual way, it ends up warping God's people. It keeps them weak and insecure.

Granted, many who fill this role do so for laudable reasons. And not a few of them sincerely want to see their fellow brethren take spiritual responsibility. (Many a pastor live with this frustration. But few have mapped the problem to their profession.)

Yet, the modern office of "pastor" always disempowers and pacifies the believing priesthood. This is so regardless of how uncontrolling the person who fills this position may be.

Since the pastor carries the spiritual workload, the majority of the brethren become passive, lazy, self-seeking, and arrested in their spiritual growth. In this way, both pastors and congregations alike cannot help from being spiritually lamed by this unbiblical office.

While the NT calls Paul an "apostle," Philip an "evangelist," Manaen a "teacher," and Agabus a "prophet," it never identifies anyone as a pastor! In fact, the word "pastor" is used only once in the entire NT (see Ephesians 4:11). And it is used as a descriptive metaphor, never as an ecclesiastical office. This flies in the face of common practice. To day "the pastor" is regarded as the figurehead of the church. His name is exclusively splashed on church marquees all across America. (One wonders why other ministries do not appear on these marquees when they are given far more attention in the NT.)

In the final analysis, the modern pastoral role undermines the Headship of Jesus Christ. It has a spiritually crippling effect on the church. It robs God's beloved priesthood (of all believers) of its full employment. Further, its mere presence diffuses and stalemates those "ordinary" believers who are equally gifted to shepherd and teach the flock. (Never mind that the Bible teaches that every church is to have multiple shepherds. Or that all members of the Body are to bear pastoral responsibility.)

Typically, if someone other than the pastor dares to shepherd or teach the sheep (even if he may be trustworthy, mature, and gifted), the pastor will feel threatened. He will then snuff it out under the guise of "protecting" the flock!

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To be more specific and pointed, the present-day conception of "the pastor" is far removed from the thought of God. It puts the dynamic of NT community into an Old Testament straitjacket.

Yet regardless of the spiritual tragedies it engenders, the masses continue to rely upon, defend, and insist on the existence of this most unbiblical role. For this reason the so-called "laity" are just as responsible for the problem of clericalism as is the "clergy." As Jeremiah 5:31 says, "The priests rule on their own authority; and my people love it so! But what will you do at the end of it?"

If the truth be told, many Christians prefer the convenience of having someone other than themselves shoulder the responsibility for ministry and shepherding. In their minds, it is better to hire a religious specialist to tend to the needs of the brethren than to bother themselves with the self-emptying demands of servant-hood and pastoral care.

The words of the old prophet capture the Lord's displeasure with this mindset: "They have set up kings, but not my me: they have made princes, and I knew it not..." (Hosea 8:4a).

In light of these sobering facts, one may intelligently ask how it is that the modern pastoral role remains to be the commonly accepted form of church leadership today. The answer lies deeply entrenched in the history of the Reformation. And it continues to be reinforced by current cultural imperatives.

In short, our 20th-century Western obsession with offices and titles has led us to superimpose our own ideas of church order onto the NT. Yet the very ethos of the NT militates against the idea of official-elders.

Scripture is equally at odds with the "senior pastor" concept. This is the common (but unscriptural) practice of elevating one of the elders to a prominent authoritative position. Nowhere does the NT sanction the notion of *primos inter pares*— "first among equals." At least not in any official or formal way.

This disconnect between "the pastor" and the other elders was an accident of church history. But because it meshes perfectly with our acculturated Christian mindset, modern believers have little trouble reading this false dichotomy into Scripture.

In sum, the modern pastoral role is little more than a one-size-fits-all blending of administration, psychology, and oratory that is packaged into one position for religious consumption. As such, the sociological role of pastor, as practiced in the West, has few points of contact with anything or anyone in the NT!

Re: The Problem of the Modern Pastoral Role, on: 2010/4/9 15:02

all i know is this: the most annointed meeting i ever attended, was when the pastor was prevented from being there, by a 100 ton rock that fell atop our two lane mountain canyon road. My brother (who was leaving for missions in the Pacific Rim, still there) and i looked at each other, and the Holy Spirit lead me to humbly ask Jesus to Pastor this meeting of 25 saints in a crazy rainstorm.

This meeting was unlike anything i ever attended before or since, decently, in order, and the Sweet Fragrance of Messiah swept the saints to glory,.... to give a recount of what happened?

well, just try it sometime,that's all i can say for now, Jesus is a Wonderful Pastor.

neil

Re: The Problem of the Modern Pastoral Role - posted by michigan, on: 2010/4/9 17:47

God Bless Neil/Lisa

I thought the article Lisa in the main to be absolutely on point.Its sad that many in the body of Christ hold to this one man at the front tradition and i agree that it leaves many believers spiritually immature and lazy. I know that many pastors really do love the Lord but are trapped in this system which I agree with Frank Viola is unbiblical. I dont know who Frank Viola is but i have reached my own conclusions from scripture aswell as looking at other articles. This strikes a chord with me because I used to be in a position of leadership and i know how my heart changed from sincerely serving the flock to having the flock serve me and silencing or getting rid of anyone or anything that threatened my position. Because it happened to me I recognise it and see it so many times in different churches how that kind of power eventually corrupts. I'm so

glad I'm free from that and my prayer is that Jesus would have His church back and believers would be free to worship in spirit and in truth.

Lloyd

Re: The Problem of the Modern Pastoral Role - posted by twayneb (), on: 2010/4/9 23:12

Interesting post.

As far as I can tell, nowhere in scripture do we find a local body or church having a person called a pastor. Apostolic leadership always ordained a plurality of eldership in each local body. It is entirely possible that some of these elders were called to be pastors, but most of them probably were not. Apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher are equipping gifts given to the body to bring the body into maturity and to equip and edify them and are not necessarily the same as eldership.

Local bodies or churches were always defined by the city in which they were located. The city I live in has, by Biblical example, only one church. It is the church in Joplin. Because of the size of the city there are many parts of the local church that meet in different places. Unfortunately most of these parts of the local body see themselves as separate churches and are divided by all sorts of differences.

We are far from the Biblical example of the church that operated in first 100 years or so after Christ ascended. There is a Biblical governmental structure that I believe we would do well to get back to.

Travis

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2010/4/9 23:15

According to 1 Peter 5, Jesus Christ, our "Chief Shepherd" alone is our "Senior Pastor." Such is not a role he delegates to others in His absence here on earth. It's a role He occupies locally and universally. It's His position alone to occupy.

Re: The Problem of the Modern Pastoral Role - posted by mguldner (), on: 2010/4/9 23:41

This is something that I have battled with and have found my answer and peace of mind about it. I actually got into a small disagreement with my head pastor over this because I challenged his authority with Christ's authority. I asked him who the head of the church was, he advised me under Christ he was the head, at which I disagreed and said Christ is the head. He asked me what the Senior pastor was and I said fingers and toes just like everyone else. After much thinking on this question I still haven't really put my finger on what "body part" a senior pastor is in the body of Christ.

The term pastor means elder, overseer, priest, bishop, and shepherd etc. The Catholic church I believe is the one that started separating these titles and putting more emphasis on certain titles such as Bishop and Priest. The Elder, Priest, Pastor, Overseers, Bishop, Shepherd, etc were all the same office and in most cases each Church had more than one Overseer or Elder to make sure power wasn't abused.

God Bless,
Matthew

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2010/4/9 23:54

Many pastor/elders have a misunderstanding of their function within the body of Christ. They think they are supposed to run a church and its programs, and preach a sermon. They think they are supposed to "cast a vision," and a lot of other things. Biblically speaking, elders never did any of these things. Rather, they lived lives that demonstrated what the Christian life was supposed to look like, and taught others how to do the same, providing oversight to the souls of those in their care.

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Re: , on: 2010/4/10 4:01

you guys all have a point and I agree wholeheartedly. It's just more human influence infiltrating christianity. Kind of like like at work where it's the dichotomy of the boss and the underlings. And where there is a dichotomy, there will be politics.

There is a guy named John Fenn who although I don't know of his credentials and what not. He does propose that we go away from a structure of the modern church and get smaller into house churches where everyone leads on a ration whether it be in message, praise, prayer or whatever that person's gift may be.

Where ever there is power to be had, there will always be a power struggle underneath it.

<http://www.supernaturalhousechurch.org/aboutus.html>

Re: , on: 2010/4/10 4:13

Quote:
-----This strikes a chord with me because I used to be in a position of leadership and i know how my heart changed from sincerely serving the flock to having the flock serve me and silencing or getting rid of anyone or anything that threatened my position. Because it happened to me I recognise it and see it so many times in different churches how that kind of power eventually corrupts.

@Lloyd

I've been called to have characteristics for a fair leader, I don't like to be in the limelight, I choose what is right over something even if it hurts me, and I've been told I'm modest but if you put me in a position where I have power like a dictator and no checks and balances, I can quickly turn into a tyrant.

What I'm saying is that POWER can deceive even those who seem to be able to resist it the most. It's like money and sex.

I think as the church, we should not put anyone in that amount of temptation or pressure.

I think the whole premise of christianity is that we're sinners and we're in our very nature evil. As the church, we should do everything we can to prevent each other into falling in traps because I don't know anyone that is holy enough not to fall into these traps.

Re: - posted by twayneb (), on: 2010/4/10 10:49

Watchman Nee wrote a fantastic little book on this issue. It is called the Normal Christian Church Life. I would STRONGLY recommend it. I did not see eye to eye with him in that he made the pastor/teacher one role. But, I can see how it can be defended scripturally and is not a really big deal. Otherwise his assessment of the Biblical teaching on church leadership and structure was spot on in my opinion. I know Nee was heavily influenced by TA Sparks, and that Sparks was very kingdom minded rather than denominationally minded. I have searched for teachings on church structure by Sparks and have not found much. However, what I have found by him is very powerful.

By the way, you can find it and read it online. No need to search for a paper copy.

Travis

Re: The Problem of the Modern Pastoral Role - posted by narrowpath, on: 2010/4/10 12:07

This article is spot on! Many pastors hold the role of the CRO, the chief religious officer. Regardless how godly and christlike these people are, if we deviate from the bible in church government, we cannot experience the fullness of what God had in mind. Rolfe Barnard said rightly, that reformators like Calvin and Owens were dead wrong to say that the church is where the gospel is preached, but rather the assembly of the saints.

We need new wineskins to hold the new wine of apostolic Christianity. Actually this wine predates the reformation by far. The pulpit-pew, clergy-laity model shaped assemblies will not be able to serve any longer.

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I am coming more and more to the conclusion that the Holy Spirit cannot properly operate in such an environment and will be at best restricted to anointed preaching.

We had the Charismatic renewal in 3 waves and the house church movement in the last century. They recovered long forgotten truths that we must embrace. Just because these movements had flaws (some serious) does not mean we have to write them off and retract into a safe, boring doctrine centred mode of Christianity.

Can God send revival if we stubbornly hold on to man-made structures?

We need the 5 fold ministry as extension of Christ's ministry well as elders and deacons in the to govern the Body of Christ in all aspects.

See Eph 4:11, Eph 4:12, Eph 4:13, Eph 4:14, Eph 4:15, Eph 4:16

Re: The Problem of the Modern Pastoral Role - posted by hoohoou (), on: 2010/4/10 13:07

I don't see how the problem is in the structure of the church. I'm of the opinion that the normal Christian life is a Spirit-filled and Spirit-led life. I'm also of the opinion that the normal Christian life is holiness and anything less is sickness. That being said, I don't think it matters what "format" we use. Purposefully changing the format so that it looks Biblical is no different than keeping the format because that's just how it's done. The only thing that matters is that the pastor is Spirit-filled without an ounce of pride. The problem isn't that a single man is in charge, the problem is that the man isn't Spirit-filled.

God called me to be a pastor. I don't know what that means and it doesn't sound like anyone else does either. We can talk till we're blue in the face about how a church service is supposed to look, but the Bible really isn't that specific on the topic. I get a little tired of people pointing out problems and offering no solution. If you're going to sit down and take the time to write an article the least you can do is offer some type of answer. I can sit back at any church service anywhere, I don't care who's preaching, and absolutely pick it apart. Finding fault is easy, finding solutions is the hard part. All I know is that I was called to be a pastor and I'm going to walk with what light I have knowing that the Holy Spirit will lead me into what it really is.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom. Our problem isn't 3 songs and a message, our problem is spiritual dryness. God saved me in a closet hanging up a shirt, in a split second. He doesn't need us to do anything any certain way. He needs us to love Him with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. We do that and He'll handle the details.

Re: - posted by myfirstLove (), on: 2010/4/10 14:36

EDIT

Hi Hoohoou,

I don't think anyone here is trying to pick a part, point out the problem with no solution.

The problem is really traditional leaders are the ones who do not want to break Roman style/Old Testament ways.

The Pastor isn't the only one CALLED to help mature the sheep. Maybe God did call you to be a pastor, to help with others called to feed the sheep. Doesn't mean Pastors are called to overlord and be the main guy using his gift. Others are called too. Others feel God is calling them to be a Prophet, Apostle, evangelist, Teacher for the body, to help mature the sheep. But, many Pastors will not allow these other giftings to share the "main stage" with them. These other giftings are not side giftings as many pastors treat them. All 5 gifts (Eph.4:11) are MAIN giftings to help mature the body. If the Pastor is the only one leading its not helping the body mature. The body needs all 5 main gifts to mature. So, yes it is important to do it the biblical way and not man's opinion what he thinks is o.k.

I've seen many pastors try to be the evangelist too which causes a lot of problem and confusion because many do not have the evangelist gifts. So many have treated evangelism more relational causing many sheep to think that open air is wrong. Pastors are natural in relationship so when they try to be the evangelist also they teach its more relational. Many pastors try to be all giftings and it just messes everything up and confuses the sheep.

Most pastor will not let other gifting be use because they fear it might be abused, false, ect....Paul who is an Apostle did n't seem to worry about that with the immature Corinthians. Paul encourage all gifts to be used, but orderly and that the p rophets is able to judge right prophecy. Its important to let others use their gifts also, not just the pastor/teacher. all gifts are needed to help edify the body. Elders are there to oversee/help bring order not over lord. Big difference.

Re: - posted by hoohouu (), on: 2010/4/10 15:36

myfirstLove, I think you should have written the article. Your post actually deals with the problem, not just mention the pr oblem. Still, the problem isn't the structure, but rather the execution of the office. I'd agree that a church doesn't have to look like every other church, but that isn't the issue. The issue, as you've stated, is prideful, worldly minded pastors. Wo rldly doesn't necessarily mean evil, it can also simply be getting caught up in tradition. It's still wrong and sinful.

Your response though doesn't address the article or the office of pastor. It addresses something lacking in the Church, and that is Spirit-filled leaders.

Re: - posted by InTheLight (), on: 2010/4/10 15:59

Quote:
-----I don't see how the problem is in the structure of the church. I'm of the opinion that the normal Christian life is a Spirit-filled and Spiri t-led life. I'm also of the opinion that the normal Christian life is holiness and anything less is sickness. That being said, I don't think it matters what "for mat" we use. Purposefully changing the format so that it looks Biblical is no different than keeping the format because that's just how it's done. The onl y thing that matters is that the pastor is Spirit-filled without an ounce of pride. The problem isn't that a single man is in charge, the problem is that the m an isn't Spirit-filled.

Amen! As you point out the article's focus is on the form the church takes when the real issue is a spiritual one.

We all know of plenty of examples of churches past and present with the senior pastor form which the Lord has used gre atly because they are broken men who are spirit-filled and led.

This is where we need to direct our prayer for the churches.

In Christ,

Ron

Re: , on: 2010/4/10 16:42

Quote:
-----I don't see how the problem is in the structure of the church. I'm of the opinion that the normal Christian life is a Spirit-filled and Spiri t-led life. I'm also of the opinion that the normal Christian life is holiness and anything less is sickness. That being said, I don't think it matters what "for mat" we use. Purposefully changing the format so that it looks Biblical is no different than keeping the format because that's just how it's done. The onl y thing that matters is that the pastor is Spirit-filled without an ounce of pride. The problem isn't that a single man is in charge, the problem is that the m an isn't Spirit-filled.

Actually the problem would be structure as well as if someone is not Spirit filled. I can't find any example in the scripture

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where one man (even if he's Spirit filled) comes into a meeting of believers and delivers an hour message week after week while the rest of the "body" just sits there and listens. I would hardly call that a functioning body. Which is you don't see that example in scripture. What you see is each member able to contribute and be used of the Lord and able to exercise the gifts God has given them.

The command Christ gave was to make disciple. Not to gather a group of people who will listen to you preach week after week. In the typical church set up believers are hindered in their walk with the Lord by not being able to exercise the gifts God has given them in the believers meetings and to grow into maturity in this area.

It's really sad to see people who say they want to make disciples spend all their time preaching and teaching "supposedly" sound doctrines yet they won't put into practice a fellowship that incorporates all believers as we see practiced in the scriptures. What we see today is what is said in the article... "sola Pastora". It seems to be the unstated but officially accepted practice of the Reformation and should probably be listed with all the other "sola's".

Re: , on: 2010/4/10 17:00

Quote:
-----We all know of plenty of examples of churches past and present with the senior pastor form which the Lord has used greatly because they are broken men who are spirit-filled and led.

Simply because God blessed a certain fellowship with an unbiblical structure is in no way an endorsement by God. God is simply merciful and loving and tends to bless men with the light they have and walk in. I've know some men who have been born again at some pretty apostate fellowship but that doesn't endorse the fellowship.

What we have today is people who will settle for what has seemed to work in the past instead of looking to the scriptures as our guide.

hoohou , on: 2010/4/10 19:48

i feel bad terming you as "hoohou" especially when you write:

Quote:
-----God called me to be a pastor.

what i write i write without rancor or ill will, but i was struck by your testimony, again:

Quote:
-----God called me to be a pastor. I don't know what that means and it doesn't sound like anyone else does either.

which begs this question; if you dont know what "that" means, did God call you to be a "pastor", or perhaps did He call you to be "servant"?

i spoke briefly about a house meeting, the likes i have never been as privledged to be at, since or after, but what i left out were the details:

my dear brother, who is now in a muslim nation, was my dear prayer partner in very very dark new agey part of southern california...oh, the times we had! just Glorious! prayer walks at midnight thru a canyon community with active satanic covens, etc. a regular house prayer meeting on Thursday's at a dear widows house, that lasted for 4 years, where we were allowed by God the Holy Ghost to scale the heights, and storm the gates of hell, all around us. God allowed us such anointing that the enemy actually sent demonically possessed people to disrupt these meetings, this was when we were holding the prayer meetings in the only "church" in this canyon, before the "board" got the devil up in them and chased us out.

Did we do anything WRONG, that the board should do as such? No. this meeting was just usually 5 saints interceding for a most hellish community, with love and tears, and it drove the enemy wild, the manifestations, the unholy spirits sent to attack this Work of God. You should have seen it! I would say "unbelievable", but in the world of hell, these attacks are very believable, they are to be expected. one night, after the meeting closed, one of these poor souls, so bound by satan, started to manifest, and spewed out deadly threats of physical violence at me...out of nowhere. Now i might be 5'8", but friends that know me, know that is unwise to breath such threats, as i have had family members murdered....and the "old man" would react swiftly and without hesitation.

..and i was looking right into this person's eyes, impassive, and for a brief second, i thought, "son, i could kill you right now", but in another second, Jesus schooled me, and i took that awful thought captive to Christ, smiled at this poor demoniac, turned on my heels, walked out the door, and towards my truck, with this bound soul at my heels, spewing venom, but he kept his distance. The four other brothers, including the pastor were petrified with terror, rooted where they stood. I wasn't terrified, i was fighting the evil urge to split a skull, or worse when i got to my truck. (yes, i'm a yankee jew bubba).. .but God told me in that moment, "thats what the evil one WANTS you to do, stay your hand, stay your anger, and I, LORD God will get the Glory". So i got in, drove away....forgive me for the aside, but that is the spiritual atmosphere we were dealing with, Pastor Jack Hayford himself told me that area we ministered, was "the darkest area he had ever been thru in his life".

the point to my testimony is that my dear brother/prayer partner had been raised by dear parents, who were highly placed within a well known missions sending parachurch, and he had known Messiah, since a very early age, he had seen the North American evangelical church for YEARS, and had been soured on the hypocrisy, and the pro forma going thru the motions aspects of the evangelical church, and since i was "new", at times we would discuss his views, which i thought bordered on rebellion, i took that one must be "in submission" to church leaders, pastors, but at the same time, i could see the "cracks" in the witness, in the ecclesiology. i remember, at the Leading of the Lord, begging my home church pastor, to reconfigure our sanctuary to where instead of the row after row of seats, into a square, just like brother Seymour did at the Azusa Street Mission. i thought that a wonderful idea, so that we could SEE each other, SEE our brothers and sisters faces.....no, that was not to be. The very mission that the denomination, AoG was birthed at, Azusa, where they sat in a square on boards propped up by old nail kegs was not how my dear brother wanted HIS church configured, so i submitted and continued to stare at the back of someones neck..back to "rome". my home church has a beautiful institutional kitchen, you could feed 200 to 300 people out of it, (which we did when Teen Challenge came by with their "Lunch for the Lost"..to raise funds) and led by the Lord, i offered to spend Sunday mornings with one or two helpers to cook a simple meal, for the saints to enjoy together after Sunday meeting, an agape love feast, so the saints could enjoy one another's fellowship, be blessed by this, cement communitas, instead of the weekly rituals of huddled "cliques", whispering at where they would take lunch at, Dennys, Applebees, or wherever, when the "sermon" ended. i implored my dear pastor, allow me to serve, BE A SERVANT, in this way, and we will blossom into community. I also made the firm commitment that i would do it every single Sabbath, i'm a very good cook, as many hungry men were feed by a ministry, "the burrito ministry", the Lord blessed me with, can attestify. These were undocumented latino day laborers who gathered in my canyon, and hadn't found their work that day, and were hungry. (yeh thats right, "undocumented", or as many within "evangelical" circles call "illegal aliens", voices dripping with fleshly scorn. Heaven forbid, they should imagine that God in His Mercy brought the mission field up to US, in the U.S.)

but my pastor didn't gravitate towards that ministry, i didn't fuss, after all, it's HIS church, right?

mind you, i love this dear man with all of my heart, but it's his church, he's in charge, or maybe he felt that this "wasn't from God"..i don't know. i harbored no rancor. Was i disappointed? yes, because i felt, even in my lack of knowledge that i had stumbled onto something, a Divine Concept, that "church" is not a building, "church" is not some dry roman modeled clergy/laity counterfeit, where we walk in for a 45 minute lecture on Sundays and waltz out, or twice a week, for the Wednesday Bible "study", which is really just a mini version of Sunday Service, another shorter lecture. No, Church is Family. Indeed, the Church IS the Body of Christ, but if you are my brother, my sister IN Christ, we are FAMILY, and a family works together, eats together, laughs together, cries together, trusts not only in God, but trusts one another so completely, it is safe to confess together, and testify together. Life Together. Its a Divine Concept, a Divine Model, Its Upper Room all the way. but the model of rome holds the protestant church in its ecclesiastical bondage to this very day. its all rather tragic....and that tragedy is underlined by some of the threads i read on this forum, no offense, just speaking my heart. But i rest easy in this Truth, God does know what He's doing.

i got off topic, but i wrote as i was led.....neil

Re: hoohouu , on: 2010/4/10 21:45

instead of my plethora of words, i should have just posted up two Compilations that Jesus gave me, the first is (<http://www.fireonthealtar.com/compilations/neil%20g/Shake%20the%20Nation.mp3>) "Shake the Nation" and the second is

(<http://www.fireonthealtar.com/compilations/neil%20g/01-A%20kingdom%20of%20Priests%20-%20Neil%20G%20+.mp3>) "A Kingdom of Priests" to let my son know who he is IN the Lord.

Re: - posted by osandoval, on: 2010/4/11 10:44

For those interested in more information on this topic, here a great website that has lots of free resources (articles, audio s, videos): www.ntrf.org
God bless.

Re: - posted by twayneb (), on: 2010/4/11 12:14

hoohouu:

This might be a round-a-bout response to what you have written, but hopefully I will get there.

Paul speaks at least ten times of his apostolic calling as, "the grace given unto me." One of those times is Ephesians 4. He says, "I am going to say these things through my gifting and calling of apostle." He then goes on to tell us that every man is given grace gifts to be used in ministry. After saying that he outlines five specific and unique grace gifts that are given for the edification, maturing, and equipping or fitting out of the body so that the body can effectively do the work of the ministry. Some call these the "five fold". They are grace gifts given to the body and not offices to be held by people. It is only in this context that pastor is ever mentioned in the New Testament. On one or two occasions the similar word shepherd is used.

A survey of the New Testament about these people (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher) will reveal that for the most part these people function in the body in general rather than the local church specifically. God never ordained a pastor as leader of the local assembly, and the "corporate pyramid" structure that we often see in our modern American churches is notably absent from the early church.

The structure that God established in the early church was that apostolic gifts ordained those whom God revealed to them to be elders in each local body as it was established. God chose men to serve as overseers, and apostles ordained them with the laying on of hands. A plurality of eldership was always ordained. I believe this to be for a good reason. When one person establishes the "vision" and calls the shots, he can easily get into the flesh and establish his own vision rather than God's. When two or more must lead together, they must agree. If they do not, one or both has not heard from God and much prayer must go into coming to agreement as to what God's will is in the body.

It is entirely possible for a man with the gifting of pastor or teacher to be chosen by God for eldership, but this is not required.

Apostles and evangelists seem to never be based in a local fellowship, prophets and teachers may or may not, and pastors seem to function almost exclusively in a local body.

Pastors have the unique ability to minister the love and grace of God to people and to lead them into maturity in the area of ministry to others. We see this when we use terms such as, "He has the heart of a pastor" or other similar sayings. Pastors are not meant to be the "leader and direction setter" in a local body Biblically, elders are. Again, it is possible for a pastor to serve as an elder, but his gift is not aimed at eldership or oversight, but rather at bringing the body into maturity in an area of unique ministry from the love and heart of God. We have changed this Biblical role into a sermon preparer and deliverer, hospital visitor, funeral and wedding officiator, and direction setter for a local body. This is not borne out Biblically.

So does it matter? I think yes. When God ordains a structure, it is for a reason.

Is it possible for the modern American structure of senior pastor, associate pastors, assistants, etc. to function and bear fruit? Absolutely, but never to the degree that the body could bear fruit if we were to adopt the Biblical model. Remember

er, pastors are just one of five unique gifts meant to equip the body. Without all functioning, the body cannot come into balanced maturity and will be hindered in effectiveness of ministry. The body is the ministering entity, not the five who are called specifically to prepare the body. God longs to have His people develop in their grace giftings and effectively impact the world around them, and I believe proper structure is key in this happening.

Just some thoughts.

Travis

Re: - posted by narrowpath, on: 2010/4/11 13:02

Over the last 10-20 years many ministries that started well have apostatized, and I believe this is partly because of their man made structures. I do believe that we now live in times where even some of the most truth-loving ministries that hold on to man made structures will start to tumble and fall. Recently we have seen a couple of them shaken up, you can check some of the posts even here.

The Lord can for a time and season bless these churches and ministries, but if they are based on man made foundations and platforms they will be shaken up, destroyed and hopefully rebuilt God's ways.

This may sound horrific, but the result will be glorious. There are so many ministries especially in America that are build around a man's gift and even bear his name.

1 Peter 4:17

For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

Quote:
-----Is it possible for the modern American structure of senior pastor, associate pastors, assistants, etc. to function and bear fruit? Absolutely, but never to the degree that the body could bear fruit if we were to adopt the Biblical model. Remember, pastors are just one of five unique gifts meant to equip the body. Without all functioning, the body cannot come into balanced maturity and will be hindered in effectiveness of ministry. The body is the ministering entity, not the five who are called specifically to prepare the body. God longs to have His people develop in their grace giftings and effectively impact the world around them, and I believe proper structure is key in this happening.

Very well said. This is not just an American structure, you find it almost everywhere except some small pockets of apostolic Christianity.

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2010/4/11 14:02

Though God has blessed the church in spite of its unscriptural ecclesiastical practices, this should not be taken as God approving of these structures anymore than God approved of Abraham going into Hagar, and bringing Ishmael into this world. No doubt, Ishmael was a source of blessing to Abraham, as all children are a blessing from the Lord. But Ishmael was not what God had in mind. God was only interested in the child of promise.

The same goes for the Church. We have had many great men of God occupy positions in episcopal structures, amongst other structures. But God never so intended this would happen. He has blessed in spite of our carnality and immaturity. But the truth of the matter is we must all yield to the supremacy of Christ in all things. When we occupy pope like positions, we take away from the glory that belongs to Christ alone, as the head of the body. He alone is our chief apostle and senior pastor. There is no "pope" but Christ.

When popes arise, no matter how well meaning, we introduce a fleshly element into the church that literally keeps the church from growing into full maturity. We have introduced an Ishmael into the equation, and history proves how costly such carnality can be. Remember, every member must function properly for the body to operate as it was created to operate. If something is out of joint, then the entire body will suffer. Remember, we have two feet, two legs, two arms, and two hands, but we have only one head. When somebody tries to occupy the place of head, which belongs to Christ alone, a deformity has been introduced, and things cannot be as they ought to be.

Re: , on: 2010/4/11 15:56

The last three responses so blessed me. Very God, very God.

Re: Now your scaring me., on: 2010/4/11 18:41

"When popes arise, no matter how well meaning, we introduce a fleshly element into the church that literally keeps the church from growing into full maturity. We have introduced an Ishmael into the equation, and history proves how costly such carnality can be. Remember, every member must function properly for the body to operate as it was created to operate. If something is out of joint, then the entire body will suffer. Remember, we have two feet, two legs, two arms, and two hands, but we have only one head. When somebody tries to occupy the place of head, which belongs to Christ alone, a deformity has been introduced, and things cannot be as they ought to be. "

King Jimmy! your scaring me; this was so good! Right ON!...

And NARROWPATH!

amen!!ty

Re: , on: 2010/4/11 19:53

Quote:

-----The last three responses so blessed me.

indeed. Jimmy, Travis, "narrowpath", wise words, indeed, amen.

all three of you have the gift of writing, would to God one of you, if led, endeavor to write a book, pamphlet, treatise on Biblical Ecclesiology for today. That is the correct terminology, ecclesiology, yes?

and to all, what would you say is the clearest, most Scriptural work/or book on ecclesiology would you recommend?... and i hesitate to add....simple,also.

this is a good thread, God bless you all.

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2010/4/11 20:18

I enjoyed "The Open Church" by Jim (James?) Rutz. It's been a while since I've read up on the subject. I hope to write & teach on these matters more fully one day. But right now, I've not had the time or leading to put something like that together. Somebody here had a New Testament Reformation website link. I've been to that site in the past, and gone to a conference. It's a good resource.

Re: - posted by twayneb (), on: 2010/4/11 21:22

Natan4Jesus: The best I have read is Watchman Nee, The Normal Christian Church Life. It is available to read online if you search for it.

Interestingly, I have been feeling the urge to do some writing on the subject. We will see where God takes it, but I have done quite a bit of study. My paradigm has been undergoing a big shift.

Travis

Re: My paradigm has been undergoing a big shift. - posted by hoohouu (), on: 2010/4/11 22:36

I do appreciate all the thoughtful posts on this thread. Although I'm not sure anyone has convinced me yet. My biggest issue was not in the fact that the structure was wrong but that the original article offered no answers, but only proof that it was wrong.

I have, in fact, been called to be a pastor. It was like I'd known it all along when God first called me. I could almost see the word written in my mind. I have known for a while now that the current mode of Sunday worship wasn't cutting it, and wasn't going to. Many posts have spoken to me especially concerning the serving and growing aspects of church body. Without really reading up on the subject God has been speaking to me about how a "service" should go. I'm to the point where I honestly don't know what it will look like, and therefore I'm not sure what being a pastor will mean. What's more, I don't have to know. I have to be willing to obey and learn to hear. Big ears and courage. And that is what our churches are lacking.

We are lacking pastors who are willing to be Spirit-led in all things. I spoke to our young adult group the other night and my point was that we can not ever relax in our knowledge of spiritual things. We will never have everything figured out. That includes how a church should be run. We must always have our hearts and ears open to the leading of the Lord. Just as important we must have the courage to obey even when other Christians disagree, or the whole world is set against us.

I guess my main point is that if a pastor truly loves the Lord and desires to do His will above all else, God will change the church. Again, I agree that the structure of a church body, and its services, are not in the Kingdom's best interest. I just feel that the root of the problem is in a lack of Spirit-led leaders. If anyone knows of a church, especially in the Houston area, that follows a New Testament pattern, please, let me know. Also, if you know of one that videos or tapes services I'd like to take a look. I wouldn't have had near the problem with the article if the writer would have just given a couple examples of how it IS done properly. I know the Word gives clues and sets some guidelines, but it does not give specific details on how a service will look.

Re: - posted by narrowpath, on: 2010/4/12 5:26

Dear HooHoo,

Thank you for sharing your thoughts. If the bible would give us as a clear cut model with diagrams and paragraphs and subheadings, wouldn't that be easier? Very likely, but it would bring death! We like to have it in tablets of stone. Tablets of stone are for people with hearts of stone.

The bible deliberately intertwines doctrine into the unfolding of events and letters to living people according to actual situations and issues. That affords the counsel of the Holy Spirit. We are too lazy to go into the prayer closet until we have the answer. How did Paul get all his doctrine? By revelation out of a living relationship, in the prayer closet, in tears and desperation.

The pattern that we have in the NT is not static as in the OT but fluid and dynamic. It is not hierarchical. Apostles are of chief importance for the kingdom of God, but in the world they are most despised and always buffeted by the enemies' forces.

The fivefold ministry of apostles, prophets, evangelists and teachers can go beyond the bounds of a local fellowship. In God's economy it is counterbalanced by the order of a local fellowship with elders and deacons. For the carnal man, this would mean fierce competition, but for the spiritual body of Christ it brings a wonderful balance. This can only happen if we totally submit to the headship of Christ and this is where the real problem is: Many pastors would never admit it, but they do in fact contest the headship of Christ and claim it partly for themselves. Most do it with the best intention to serve God, and for lack of better examples. The time is now come that we recover these age old truths and set them into practice so the Christ can finally have a church that is built on his foundations.

Re: Ascending to the sides of the North., on: 2010/4/12 7:23

"The time is now come that we recover these age old truths and set them into practise so the Christ can finally have a church that is built on his foundations."

Narrowpath.

I think that this is a true, authentic prophetic declaration. We will have a pure and spotless bride, where the least of the family of God is esteemed as much as the "greatest", whoever that may be.

We will see the abolishing of the "Priest Class", the Clergy/Laity Heresy. It is from the One Pastor Rule, and the conducting of the "MEETING", that this prideful and destructive spirit gains its power in the protestant circles.

Revelation 2:6

The "Lords over my people."

The Nicolaitan.

"I see it as revealed in Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent. 6 But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate."

Revelation 2:16

"Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

16. Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth."

JESUS

The church was never designed to be ruled over by one man, as a Master of Ceremonies. It has always been like a family; with a FATHER, and HIS children.

Without Godly elders though, the church will not be able to survive. These are called, unpaid, non-professionals, not hired, as "THE HIRELING", but Shepherds who will lay their lives down, even for the least of the brethren.

They are always plural and equal in scripture, and Preeminence is forbidden.

1John3:9

9. I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us.

10. 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.

11. Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.

John the Apostle writes of a brother who becomes obsessed with his own greatness, as a minister of God. As Satan did, ambition, the twin sister of Pride, drove him to preeminence. It is the most subtle of deceptions, for you are sure it is only you worthy of such a role.

Acts 20:27

"For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.

28."Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

29."I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;

30. and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

"
The great Apostle Paul..

Just like Babel; they want to make a name for themselves; to attain to preeminence....all to draw the church away to follow themselves.

The true ministry of a Pastor, is to watch out for the so called modern Pastor!

31."Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.

The true Pastor 1.FEEDS THE CHURCH OF GOD.

2.PROTECTS THE CHURCH OF GOD.

3. MANIFESTS THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS OF NAZARETH IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES SO THAT THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST IS NOT QUENCHED IN THE COMMUNITY, OR THE MEETING.

Masters are the modern PASTOR.

"But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.

9. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.

10.Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.

11.But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant."

Jesus

The whole body are the offspring; brothers and sisters united under a Father, and equal in His love.

Beware of any man who would usurp this.

Re: - posted by hoohou (), on: 2010/4/12 7:32

Quote:
-----The bible deliberately intertwines doctrine into the unfolding of events and letters to living people according to actual situations and issues. That affords the counsel of the Holy Spirit. We are too lazy to go into the prayer closet until we have the answer. How did Paul get all his doctrine? By revelation out of a living relationship, in the prayer closet, in tears and desperation.

That's my point. We don't have enough pastors doing this.

Quote:
-----The fivefold ministry of apostles, prophets, evangelists and teachers can go beyond the bounds of a local fellowship. In God's economy it is counterbalanced by the order of a local fellowship with elders and deacons. For the carnal man, this would mean fierce competition, but for the spiritual body of Christ it brings a wonderful balance. This can only happen if we totally submit to the headship of Christ and this is where the real problem is: Many pastors would never admit it, but they do in fact contest the headship of Christ and claim it partly for themselves.

I think our argument is a chicken or egg kind of thing. I'm saying egg and you're saying chicken. Either way we want our churches Spirit led.

Re: The Problem of the Modern Pastoral Role - posted by savannah, on: 2010/4/12 7:54

I thought this brief excerpt from Philip Schaff might shed some light on the subject.

From History of the Christian Church by Philip Schaff:

J.B. Lightfoot begins his valuable discussion on the Christian ministry with this broad and liberal statement: "The kingdom of Christ, not being a kingdom of this world, is not limited by the restrictions which fetter other societies, political or religious. It is in the fullest sense free, comprehensive, universal. It displays this character, not only in the acceptance of all comers who seek admission, irrespective of race or caste or sex, but also in the instruction and treatment of those who are already its members. It has no sacred days or seasons, no special sanctuaries, because every time and every place alike are holy. Above all it has no sacerdotal system. It interposes no sacrificial tribe or class between God and man, by whose intervention alone God is reconciled and man forgiven. Each individual member holds personal communion with the Divine Head. To Him immediately he is responsible, and from Him directly he obtains pardon and draws strength."

While we must deny a divine right and perpetual obligation to any peculiar form of government as far as it departs from the simple principles of the New Testament...the most that can be said is, that the apostolic age contains fruitful germs for various ecclesiastical organizations subsequently developed, but none of them can claim divine authority except for the gospel ministry, which is common to all. Dean Stanley asserts that no existing church can find any pattern or platform of its government in the first century, and thus strongly contrasts the apostolic and post-apostolic organizations (I.c.): "It is certain that the officers of the apostolic or of any subsequent church, were not part of the original institution of the Founder of our religion; that of Bishop, Presbyter, and Deacon; of Metropolitan, Patriarch, and Pope, there is not the shadow of a trace in the four Gospels. It is certain that they arose gradually out of the preexisting institutions either of the Jewish synagogue, or of the Roman empire, or of the Greek municipalities, or under the pressure of local emergencies. It is certain that throughout the first century, and for the first years of the second, that is, through the later chapters of the Acts, the Apostolic Epistles, and the writings of Clement and Hermas. Bishop and Presbyter were convertible terms, and that the body of men so-called were the rulers-so far as any permanent rulers existed-of the early church. It is certain that, as the necessities of the time demanded, first at Jerusalem, then in Asia Minor, the elevation of one Presbyter above the re

st by the almost universal law, which even in republics engenders a monarchial element, the word 'Bishop' gradually changed its meaning, and by the middle of the second century became restricted to the chief Presbyter of the locality. Bishop Lightfoot states, "The episcopate (Bishoprick or Pastorate) was formed, not out of the apostolic order by localization, but out of the presbyterial by elevation; and the title, which originally was common to all, came at length to be appropriated to the chief among them."

It is certain that in no instance were the apostles called 'Bishops' in any other sense than they were equally called 'Presbyters' and 'Deacons.' It is certain that in no instance before the beginning of the third century the title or function of the Pagan or Jewish priesthood is applied to the Christian pastors It is as sure that nothing like modern Episcopacy existed before the close of the first century as it is that nothing like modern Presbyterianism existed after the beginning of the second. That which was once the Gordian knot of theologians has at least in this instance been untied, not by the sword of persecution, but by the patient unravelment of scholarships."

The idea and institution of a special priesthood, distinct from the body of the people, with the accompanying notion of sacrifice and altar, passed imperceptibly from Jewish and heathen reminiscences and analogies into the Christian church. The majority of Jewish converts adhered tenaciously to the Mosaic institutions and rites, and a considerable part never fully attained to the height of spiritual freedom proclaimed by Paul, or soon fell away from it. He opposed legalistic and ceremonial tendencies in Galatia and Corinth; and although sacerdotalism does not appear among the errors of his Judaizing opponents, the Levitical priesthood, with its three ranks of high-priest, priest, and Levite, naturally furnished an analogy for the threefold ministry of bishop, priest, and deacon, and came to be regarded as typical of it. Still less could the Gentile Christians, as a body, at once emancipate themselves from their traditional notions of priesthood, altar, and sacrifice, on which their former religion was based. Whether we regard the change as an apostasy from a higher position attained, or as a reaction of old ideas never fully abandoned, the change is undeniable, and can be traced to the second century. The church could not long occupy the ideal height of the apostolic age, and as the Pentecostal illumination passed away with the death of the apostles, the old reminiscences began to reassert themselves.

In the apostolic church preaching and teaching were not confined to a particular class, but every convert could proclaim the gospel to unbelievers, and every Christian who had the gift could pray and teach and exhort in the congregation. Compare Acts 8:4; 9:27; 13:15; 18:26, 28; Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10, 28; 14:1-6, 31. Even in the Jewish Synagogue the liberty of teaching was enjoyed, and the elder could ask any member of repute, even a stranger, to deliver a discourse on the Scripture lesson (Luke 4:17; Acts 17:2). The New Testament knows no spiritual aristocracy or nobility, but calls all believers "saints" though many fell far short of their vocation. Nor does it recognize a special priesthood in distinction from the people, as mediating between God and the laity. It knows only one high-priest, Jesus Christ, and clearly teaches the universal priesthood, as well as universal kingship, of believers. 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; 5:3; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6. Neander, Lightfoot, Stanley, agree. I add a passage from Hatch's; Bampton Lectures on The Organization of the Early Christian Churches (1881), p. 139: "In earlier times there was a grander faith. For the kingdom of God was a kingdom of priests. Not only the 'four and twenty elders' before the throne, but the innumerable souls of the sanctified upon whom 'the second death had no power,' were 'kings and priests unto God.' Only in that high sense was priesthood predicable of Christian men. For the shadow had passed: the reality had come: the one High Priest of Christianity was Christ." It does this in a far deeper and larger sense than the Old; in a sense, too, which even to this day is not yet fully realized. The entire body of Christians are called "clergy" (klh'roi a peculiar people, the heritage of God).

On the other hand it is equally clear that there was in the apostolic church a ministerial office, instituted by Christ, for the very purpose of raising the mass of believers from infancy and pupilage to independent and immediate intercourse with God, to that prophetic, priestly, and kingly position, which in principle and destination belongs to them all. This work is the gradual process of church history itself, and will not be fully accomplished till the kingdom of glory shall come. But these ministers are nowhere represented as priests in any other sense than Christians generally are priests, with the privilege of a direct access to the throne of grace in the name of their one and eternal high-priest in heaven. Even in the Pastoral Epistles which present the most advanced stage of ecclesiastical organization in the apostolic period, while the teaching, ruling, and pastoral functions of the presbyter-bishops are fully discussed, nothing is said about a sacerdotal function. The Apocalypse, which was written still later, emphatically teaches the universal priesthood and kingship of believers. The apostles themselves never claim or exercise a special priesthood. The sacrifice which all Christians are exhorted to offer is the sacrifice of their person and property to the Lord, and the spiritual sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise. In one passage a Christian "altar" is spoken of, in distinction from the Jewish altar of literal and daily sacrifices, but this altar is the cross on which Christ offered himself once and forever for the sins of the world.

After the gradual abatement of the extraordinary spiritual elevation of the apostolic age, which anticipated in its way the ideal condition of the church, the distinction of a regular class of teachers from the laity became more fixed and prominent

t. This appears first in Ignatius, who, in his high episcopalian spirit, considers the clergy the necessary medium of access for the people to God. "Whoever is within the sanctuary (or altar), is pure; but he who is outside of the sanctuary is not pure; that is, he who does anything without bishop and presbytery and deacon, is not pure in conscience." Yet he nowhere represents the ministry as a sacerdotal office. The Didache calls "the prophets" high-priests, but probably in a spiritual sense. Clement of Rome, in writing to the congregation at Corinth, draws a significant and fruitful parallel between the Christian presiding office and the Levitical priesthood, and uses the expression "layman" as antithetic to high-priest, priest, and Levites. This parallel contains the germ of the whole system of sacerdotalism. But it is at best only an argument by analogy. Tertullian was the first who expressly and directly asserts sacerdotal claims on behalf of the Christian ministry, and calls it "sacerdotium," although he also strongly affirms the universal priesthood of all believers. Cyprian (d. 258) goes still further, and applies all the privileges, duties, and responsibilities of the Aaronic priesthood to the officers of the Christian church, and constantly calls them sacerdotes and sacerdotium. He may therefore be called the proper father of the sacerdotal conception of the Christian ministry as a mediating agency between God and the people. During the third century it became customary to apply the term "priest" directly and exclusively to the Christian ministers especially the bishops. Bishop Lightfoot states, "The episcopate (Bishoprick or Pastorate) was formed, not out of the apostolic order by localization, but out of the presbyterial by elevation; and the title, which originally was common to all, came at length to be appropriated to the chief among them."

In the same manner the whole ministry, and it alone, was called "clergy," with a double reference to its presidency and its peculiar relation to God. It was distinguished by this name from the Christian people or "laity." Thus the term "clergy," which first signified the lot by which office was assigned (Acts 1:17, 25), then the office itself, then the persons holding that office, was transferred from the Christians generally to the ministers exclusively.

Solemn "ordination" or consecration by the laying on of hands was the form of admission into the "ordo ecclesiasticus" or "sacerdotalis." In this order itself there were again three degrees, "ordines majores," as they were called: the diaconate, the presbyterate, and the episcopate-held to be of divine institution. Under these were the "ordines minores," of later date, from sub-deacon to ostiary, which formed the stepping-stone between the clergy proper and the people.

Thus we find, so early as the third century, the foundations of a complete hierarchy; though a hierarchy of only moral power, and holding no sort of outward control over the conscience. The body of the laity consisted of two classes: the faithful, or the baptized and communicating members, and the catechumens, who were preparing for baptism. Those church members who lived together in one place, formed a church in the narrower sense.

With the exaltation of the clergy appeared the tendency to separate them from secular business, and even from social relations-from marriage, for example-and to represent them, even outwardly, as a caste independent of the people, and devoted exclusively to the service of the sanctuary. They drew their support from the church treasury, which was supplied by voluntary contributions and weekly collections on the Lord's Day. After the third century they were forbidden to engage in any secular business, or even to accept any trusteeship. Celibacy was not yet in this period enforced, but left optional. Tertullian, Gregory of Nyssa, and other distinguished church teachers, lived in wedlock, though theoretically preferring the unmarried state. Of an official clerical costume no certain trace appears before the fourth century; and if it came earlier into use, as may have been the case, after the example of the Jewish church, it must have been confined, during the times of persecution, to the actual exercises of worship.

With the growth of this distinction of clergy and laity, however, the idea of the universal priesthood continued from time to time to assert itself: in Irenaeus, for example, and in an eccentric form in the Montanists, who even allowed women to teach publicly in the church. So Tertullian, with whom *clerus* and *laici* were at one time familiar expressions, inquires, as the champion of the Montanistic reaction against the Catholic hierarchy: "Are not we laymen priests also?" It is written, he continues: "He hath made us kings and priests (Rev. 1:6). It is the authority of the church alone which has made a distinction between clergy and laity. Where there is no college of ministers, you administer the sacrament, you baptize, you are a priest for yourself alone. And where there are three of you, there is a church, though you be only laymen. For each one lives by his own faith, and there is no respect of persons with God." All, therefore, which the clergy considered peculiar to them, he claimed for the laity as the common sacerdotal privilege of all Christians.

The clergy, according to the precedent of the Old Testament, came to be more and more rigidly distinguished, as a peculiar order, from the body of the laity. The ordination, which was solemnized by the laying on of hands and prayer, with the addition at a later period of an anointing with oil and balsam, marked the formal entrance into the special priesthood, as baptism initiated into the universal priesthood; and, like baptism, it bore an indefeasible character (*character indelebilis*). By degrees the priestly office assumed the additional distinction of celibacy and of external marks, such as tonsure, and sacerdotal vestments worn at first only during official service, then in every-day life. The idea of the universal priestho

d of believers retreated in proportion, though it never passed entirely out of sight, but was from time to time asserted even in this age. Augustine, for example, says, that as all are called Christians on account of their baptism, so all believers are priests, because they are members of the one High Priest. The progress of the hierarchical principle also encroached gradually upon the rights of the people in the election of their pastors. But in this period it did not as yet entirely suppress them. The lower clergy were chosen by the bishops, the bishops by their colleagues in the province and by the clergy.

Re: Fathers of Faith - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2010/4/12 8:11

I wrote the following essay a little bit ago, and believe it speaks, in part, to the subject of what pastoral ministry is supposed to look like. It's not exactly on this topic... but, I offer it for your consideration.

Fathers of Faith

One of the things I am passionate about as a minister, is seeing other Christians become whole-hearted disciples of Jesus Christ, and making sure they are established soundly in the fundamentals of the faith once and for all handed down to the saints. In spite of spending billions of dollars annually on books and other training materials dedicated to this end, it is my discernment that the Church of Jesus Christ has by-in-large failed to do this important task. But such isn't merely my discernment or opinion on the matter. I have also been blessed by the findings of evangelical Christian pollster and sociologist, George Barna, who has been pointing out the facts of these things for a long time in his research.

Not only has the Church failed in its task of making sure every Christian has become established in the fundamentals of the faith, it has also failed to produce many strong and mature Christians. Yet in spite of this heartbreaking thing, the show goes on. We continue to pour billions upon billions of dollars into Christian education, books, seminars, conferences, and training materials. And to what end? What have we gained from it all?

It is my conviction that the last thing we as a Church need is another book, program, or class on how to produce well rounded disciples of Jesus Christ. Rather, it is my conviction that what the Church has the greatest need for today is for men of God who will rise up and be men indeed. What the Church of Jesus Christ needs above all are men God who are truly fathers of the faith. And until such fathers arise and play their proper role in the body of Christ, we will continue to fail at this task.

Crowns of Glory

A gray head is a crown of glory; It is found in the way of righteousness. (Proverbs 16:31, NASB)

In today's culture, having gray hair is something that is almost considered a shameful thing. Nobody wants to look old. Store shelves are full of hair dye and coloring products to help those who are aging to cover up their gray. Why? Because we have made an idol out of youth. Billions of dollars are spent every year on cosmetics, hair dye, and plastic surgery so that the aging process might be slowed down or somehow reversed. We see nothing glorious about getting older, and thus, do everything in our power to make sure we look and stay young, vibrant, and fresh.

The spirit that is at work in our culture is setting forth a mindset that is ultimately contrary to the mind of Christ. And to observe the Church today, it looks like many within the Church have embraced the spirit of this age as well. Indeed, many of us are very aware of some preachers who are in their fifties and sixties, who by now should show some signs of graying, yet oddly enough, have jet black hair. It's sad to see that even the heralds of our faith have bought into what our culture has embraced. We simply do not want to get older, and forever want to drink from the fountain of youth.

Yet in the Scriptures, as greatly as the strength of youthfulness is celebrated and glorified, a higher esteem is given to having a "gray head." As the verse I quoted from Proverbs says, a gray head is viewed as a "crown of glory" for a man. Why is this? Because, "back in the Bible days," the average man did not always live long enough to see the hair on his head turn gray. Often people died at a younger age for a number of reasons.

Whatever the various reasons were, men who lived long enough to see their hair turn gray were highly esteemed and honored individuals. They were individuals who were seen as wise, and masters of life, because they managed to live such a long life span. Indeed, as the proverb says, the gray head that is the crown of glory that adorned an older man was "found in the way of righteousness." Such men had lived such a long time, generally speaking, because they were righte

ous men who did not get caught up in the many follies of youth, follies which often brought a quick end. Discovering and practicing a life of righteousness at a young age, these men lived a long time. Thus, honor was bestowed upon them in the Hebrew culture, out of recognition for this accomplishment. Such men were considered elders, whose lives were deemed worthy of imitation.

Such is not the case in today's society. Indeed, to live to see an old age is expected. No doubt, dying young may happen still due to folly, but generally speaking, living to be sixty and older isn't such a big accomplishment. Indeed, often there is no inherent wisdom accompanying the aged of our society. For in our society, we recognize there are many "old fools," whose gray hair is no more glorious of a crown than the paper crowns handed out with Burger King kids meals. With such a mindset then, is it no wonder we seek to hold on forever to our youth?

But this spirit which has permeated the Church has done so at a great cost. As a result of the Church embracing the spirit of this age, we have Christians who have been Christians for ten, twenty, and thirty years, but they have never advanced beyond the ABC's of the faith and pressed on to maturity. They are "retarded" in their development, and are no different than the "old fool" that our society has such disdain for. Instead of being a fountain of wisdom and a great source of blessing, many have become great burdens and liabilities, that often cause great trouble because of their old age yet great spiritual immaturity.

Living Examples

Things have not always been this way though. Indeed, there was a time in the history of the Church where newly saved men went from being infants in Christ to fathers of the faith within but a few years. This was before we had Bible colleges, Seminaries, Sunday Schools, PowerPoint presentations, or even a completed New Testament. In Acts we read about how the apostle Paul planted churches, and then within a few years was able to come back to those very same churches, and appoint men as elders in them. We seem to have so many great resources and blessings available to us, yet for all these things we seem to lack what one thing that they had: men of God whose faith and lives can be imitated.

I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would have not many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me. For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church. (1 Corinthians 4:14-17)

The apostle Paul with his life and ministry established a means by which the Church might not only grow numerically, but also qualitatively as well. He knew of only one way to produce well nourished disciples, who in turn could produce well nourished disciples. What he did wasn't rocket science, and probably wouldn't make the cover of Christianity Today. What did he do? All the apostle Paul set out to do was to live a life that was in keeping with the gospel message, that followed Jesus Christ fully, and then exhorted other believers to fully follow his example, so that they might do the same.

It was a bold thing for Paul to say: "Be imitators of me!" He didn't merely say, "Follow those areas of my life that are like Jesus, and ignore the rest." Rather, he exhorted believers: "Be imitators of me." Paul lived his life in such a radical way, that if he were a book, you could read it from cover to cover, and see Jesus Christ on every page. He walked like Jesus. He talked like Jesus. He handled his finances like Jesus. Everything Paul did was for the sake of the gospel, and as a result, his entire life became so transformed, that to tell Jesus and Paul apart would be an impossible task.

Paul was a man of God if there ever was a man of God. He was truly a father of the faith. He wasn't merely a professional minister, who guarded his life from the flock, so that they couldn't see those private areas where his life and message didn't line up. He realized far from protecting his "authority" by keeping people at a distance from his private life, that the only authority he had was the degree to which his life matched the gospel message and followed Christ, while allowing others to see how the two were alike.

Paul lived the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that imitation of the Christ life is what gave him authority as a minister. Indeed, this above all other things is what qualified Paul to be an apostle. There are a growing number of people going around today claiming to be modern day apostles. And they base their apostolic credentials on some grand revelation they've had, their charismatic ability in the pulpit, or because of a personal word of prophecy spoken over them by somebody else who is said to be a so-called apostle or prophet. Yet as great as those things are, none of them measure up to the authority of a man whose life has been so touched by the gospel, that his very life has become the life of Christ. If any man wishes to claim to be an apostle today, let him show me how his life is entirely like Christ's, and I will believe him.

Indeed, to be an apostle means to be "one who is sent." But that "sent one" isn't merely just some courier or messenger who has some detached relationship from the one who sends him. Rather, the one who is sent fully represents the one who has sent them. The sent one has a seamless identification with the sender. Thus Jesus could say of the apostles, "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me." (Matthew 10:40) This is more than just some abstract theological truth Jesus was preaching. It was a reality He wanted His apostles to embody of Him, just as He had embodied it of the Father. Just as Jesus also said, "As the Father has sent Me, so I also send you." (John 20:21) To see Jesus was to see the Father, therefore, anybody claiming to walk in the authority the apostle Paul had must be able to humbly and truthfully say the same thing of themselves. For to see Paul was to see Jesus.

As a side note: It is highly doubtful that so-called modern day apostles such as C. Peter Wagner, and those who are part of his New Apostolic Reformation movement are men who are even close to living up to this standard of what it means to be an apostle. For, to be an apostle is ultimately to be an individual who is truly a father of the faith. It is to be one who so lives their life of faith that they are worthy of complete imitation. So far as I have been exposed to the men involved in this "apostolic movement," I have seen nothing of the sort. Indeed, I have seen nothing but men who call themselves apostles, but when tested, are found to be not.

For fathers of the faith are ultimately individuals whose lives we can pattern our own after, and when we have done such, to encourage the next generation of Christians to imitate the same life we saw in these men of God. This is what Paul did in his relationship with Timothy. Paul lived a life of excellence, a life which the young Timothy saw and learned to follow. Thus, Paul could confidently send Timothy in his place to various churches such as at Corinth, Ephesus, and other locations. Because Paul knew Timothy was following the example in Christ that he had modeled for him, he trusted that Timothy could live such an example in front of younger Christians, who would in turn learn to imitate him, and pass his imitation along to others.

What the Church of Jesus Christ needs beyond anything else today, is for men of God to rise up and truly be men of God. We need men who will truly be fathers of the faith. We need men who can humbly stand up, and exhort us to follow them, for they follow Christ. We need men who are willing to be open books, and share their lives with all. We need men who are willing to be naked, exposed, and above all things, who will let us see into every aspect of their life all so that we might see Jesus Christ, and become followers of Him. If we were to do this, the Church of Jesus Christ would become the people God has called it to become.

A Closing Remark

Hopefully, you have found the words of this article challenging and truthful. I pray the Lord awakens you with these words. But I want to be honest and open. As much as I believe this message I have proclaimed to you is the word of the Lord, I must stand before you and confess that what I am preaching is an ideal that I have yet to achieve in my own life. And I say that to my shame. I am not yet a father of faith. I cannot say with Paul, "imitate me."

While there are many things in my life that you would do well to follow and imitate, if you ever have the chance to interact with me, I must confess there are some areas in my life that don't always line up with Christ. There are some areas in my life that have are not in full conformity with the image of Christ. Though I am running well in my life of faith, I'm still not where I want to be. But I am pressing on, and would like to encourage you to press on with me. Strive for this ideal. For I believe with all of my heart that this ideal is not something that is out of reach for any single one of us. I believe it is something we have all been called to attain to, and that we can attain to it. But we will not attain to it until we take the first step toward that calling, and to do so in faith. Let us be like the apostle Paul, for in doing so, we will become like Christ.

Re: - posted by myfirstLove (), on: 2010/4/12 11:55

KingJimmy, excellent post. Its very encouraging to see a young man like yourself with such a righteous passion. So many men want to quickly rise up and be pastors, leaders without going through true discipleship. God has an order that many must go through before He trust anyone with HIS sheep and entrust them fully with the gospel (1Thes.2:1-8).

It is also encouraging to see the few men here in this blog understand and truly desire to see God's sheep grow to maturity! Its not just by ONE main man(pastor) that we grow, but by many brethren (especially those who have the 5 main gifts that God uses to mature His Saints), serving the body with whatever gifts God gave us and encouraging each other above all to look to Jesus as our HEAD who we are truly complete in if we have a right relationship with the One who gave

His life for us. God Bless you, Saints!

Jimmy, your article reminds me of an article I wrote in 2009.

Here's my post:

Can You Say "Imitate Me?"

I have a deep concern that I feel compelled to voice out. I've been grieved tremendously in what I've seen among many Christian men. Much that can be seen in churches and Christian forums.

So many men want to rise up quickly and be teachers of the Word. They will spend much time studying the bible and reading other men's teachings so that they can learn to expound on scriptures and teach others. They have much zeal, an earnest desire to teach others. You may ask, "what is wrong with that?"

My brethren, should we not first have an earnest desire to imitate Christ? To be found blameless before God and men? That there would be no hypocrisy in our teachings to others. Where is the earnest desire of wanting to make my life an example for the flocks to follow?

Paul says, "imitate me" (1 Cor. 11:1), I urged you to imitate me (1 Cor. 4:16), You became imitators of us and of the Lord... (1 Thess. 1:6). He was not being boastful, but confident that he was obeying God, taking heed to His commands. He knew he was obeying the Lord in all His commands that he could say with confidence, "follow me". There was no hypocrisy in his teachings. What he commands of others to follow Christ in, he has done already. Paul says:

Rom 15:18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient—

That is a very sobering verse. Paul's life was not about sharing doctrine through mere words, but what God has worked in him. A holy life lived for God was Paul's doctrine. Christ living through him was what he believes will help the gentiles be obedient to God. It wasn't mainly about teaching His sheep through word, but more about being an example of the power of God's word living in him. "Christ in you, the hope of glory!" It is Christ living and moving through you that will bring hope to others! It seems that so many Christians are more focused about teaching doctrine to others instead of being an example for the flocks to follow. It's very easy to share your belief than it is to obey what you believe. It will take the death of you to be an example for the sheep to follow. Paul says he dies daily that others may have life. Wow! Now that's real love for His people.

If we say we love God's people, that we care about their growth then we would be like Paul and die daily so that others may have life. We would want to be an example to the sheep, showing forth our obedience to His word, that the sheep see Christ in us, giving them hope. It is what God has accomplished through me that will help others to be obedient to His teachings. Not just in word, but in deed. May I be found blameless in all that I teach to others!

Let us not be like the Pharisees who teach and command others to obey God, but we are not doing it ourselves. That's hypocrisy! We are not fit to be teachers if we are not obeying His word.

There is so much teaching and preaching going on, but hardly anyone is showing the life of what they believe and teach. Let us first, desire to be examples of obeying His word, before we want to be teachers. Let us desire to be found blameless and not with hypocrisy, in obedience in what we desire to teach.

Remember what James says about teachers.

Jas 3:1 Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.

Teachers receive stricter judgement. Teachers should not tell others to do something that they have not done themselves.

It is a fearful thing to be entrusted with the gospel. It should not be taken lightly as so many Christians have been careless in handling His Word.

Power and authority does not come by merely teaching His word. It comes by our obedience to His word. No one can easily rise up and be entrusted with the gospel to preach with power and authority. God will first test you, just like He tested Paul before he was approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel (1Thess.2:1-6).

Many men fear to go through trials, but they do not realize that God tests them with those trials. That the trials are there to help us learn to stand firm and not waver on the truth no matter what.

Do you really believe what you preach and teach to others? If you do, it will show in your life. Do you fear God above men? Paul says that if he still pleases man he could not be a bondservant to Christ. If we still please man we will easily add to God's word, fearing persecution from others. We will compromise His word so that the sword of His word will not come down and bring separation with our family, friends, etc...How can we be a bondservant of Christ, to be entrusted with the gospel, if we can allow family, friends, religious people bring doubts about God's commands, hearing the lie of the evil one say, "did God really say that?"

Think about how heavy that is to proclaim to be a teacher of His word. If Paul had to go through much testing before He was approved by God to be entrusted with His word, what about us? There is nothing wrong with sharing His word with others through bible study and encouraging and exhorting one another with His Word. However, let us not be quick to rise ourselves up to be teachers of His word while at the same time avoiding the trials that will help us to grow mature and stand firm no matter what. There is an order that God takes us through before He approves us to be teachers and preachers of His Word. Let us fear God in this.

I wish to see men desire more to be examples of what they believe before they teach and command others to obey His Word. There is a seriousness in teaching and preaching God's Word. It comes with a great cost that I believe many cannot handle because they have not allowed the Lord to have His way with them and go through many trials that are needed to refine and conform them to Jesus, instead many run away from trials, not understanding that trials are the very thing God uses to make us more genuine in the faith.

If you really care about God's sheep and desire to see them come to maturity and obey all His commands then first, be an example for them to follow. Not by words only, but by a life of obedience to His commands.

Re: - posted by mguldner (), on: 2010/4/12 11:56

Here is a part of what the Pilgrim Church by E.H.Broadbent says

"In his last words to the elders of the church at Ephesus, the apostle Paul is described as sending for them and addressing them as those whom the Holy Spirit had made overseers (Acts 20). The word "elders" is the same as presbyters and the word "overseers" the same as bishops, and the whole passage shows that the two titles referred to the same men, and that there were several such in one church. Ignatius, however, writing some years later after Clement, though he also had known several of the apostles, gives to the bishop a prominence and authority not only unknown in the New Testament but also beyond what was claimed by Clement. Commenting on Acts 20, he says that Paul sent from Miletus to Ephesus and called the bishops and presbyters, thus making two titles out of one description, and says that they were from Ephesus and neighboring cities, thus obscuring the fact that they were from one church, Ephesus, had several overseers or bishops."

I don't know if this is helpful to anyone but I believe this was kind of the start of One overseer (Pastor, Bishop, presbyter, etc etc) per one church. I like what Zac Poonen says about all this in the Light of Christ. Jesus himself had many disciples but focused a good amount of time preparing only the 12 showing that only One man can only effectively disciple 12 men. Jesus gave of this example for a reason. I hope this helps in some way

God Bless,
Matthew

Re: Ron Bailey - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2010/4/12 12:00

Quote:

-----If anyone knows of a church, especially in the Houston area, that follows a New Testament pattern, please, let me know.

I don't see brother Ron Bailey much, if at all on the forums anymore. But you may look to contact him. He attends a church that has an open format, along with a plurality of elders. He is one of the elders at that church on top of it. Granted, Ron lives in England, but, I'm sure you could chat to him sometime about it.

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2010/4/12 14:17

Question: What would happen if multitudes of God's people began to seek out the kind of "church," the kind of gathering, we read of in the New Testament... where they gathered in homes, and each one was given liberty under the lordship of the Spirit to participate?

Answer: The church system as we know it would collapse.

Question: Who stands to gain the most from such a thing happening?

Answer: The sheep of God's pasture, for they would discover what it means to become truly a vital member of the body of Christ instead of just a passive spectator of what's happening up on the stage.

Question: Who stands to lose the most from such a thing happening?

Answer: The pastors, for their bread and butter would be gone.

Question: Who else stands to lose?

Answer: The Bible schools that issue certificates and put these pastors out into the system, for they too would find their bread and butter gone, and would collapse.

Question: Is such a movement, then, likely to be taken kindly by such?

Answer: Sad to say, not likely... even though the sheep of God's pasture would finally enter into what "pastors" are supposed to lead them into in the first place.

Question: Is it a likelihood that such a scenario could actually happen?

Answer: It is already beginning to happen. And it's going to increase. It's of God. There have been mighty moves of the Spirit of God in times past as God restored truth to His people. We are in the beginnings of another such move.

Advice: To the many pastors out there, most of whom are honourable men who love the Lord and are loved by Him, and are serving Him as best they have been taught: recognize what's at the door, and cooperate with the Great Shepherd of the sheep. He's the One who is leading His own sheep out. You have been preaching sermons to the sheep for centuries. Is it a strange thing, then, to have come to an hour in which the sheep are restless, are now rising up and wanting to enter into their own? It's YOUR fault: they are just wanting to enter into all the things they've been taught about!
:)

...Any true-hearted pastor who loves the sheep of God's pasture should be rejoicing for the hour that is upon us.

If we really have the insight - where is the fire? - posted by makrothumia (), on: 2010/4/12 14:23

Just a friendly thought for us to consider.

If we have the true insight into the genuine, where is the accompanying fire? Elijah could see that the prophets of Baal were in control. A lot of the other prophets hiding in the caves probably had the same insight. The real question is not who can see the error in the false system, but who has the fire of God falling upon their own devotion to the Lord in such a way that those around them are brought to repentance.

Elijah did not just complain that "the prophets of Baal would not permit true worship of the Lord". He prayed in faith, shut up the heavens, brought the entire nation to its knees, and saw God answer his own prayers in a display that brought people to repentance.

Elijah saw more than the false prophets and their false system controlling the people. He saw the power of God by faith and the fire of God as a result. Oh that we would do less analyzing of the situation and more demonstration of the true fire of God in our own lives.

makrothumia

Re: If we really have the insight - where is the fire? - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2010/4/12 15:37

Quote:
-----The real question is not who can see the error in the false system, but who has the fire of God falling upon their own devotion to the Lord in such a way that those around them are brought to repentance.

I agree with you wholeheartedly. And we have the promise of the coming Fire.

"And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and upon all her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all, the glory shall be a defence (or covering)" (Isa. 4.5).

It's quite something that in the Hebrew (as I have read) it says, "all the Dwelling Place (singular) of Mount Zion, and upon all her assemblies (plural)..."

One Dwelling Place, many assemblies...

Home gatherings at this time perhaps lack this Fire and Presence to a large extent. But the hunger to see this is growing, and I believe there's a conviction that it's not going to be found in the established system.

At the same time, neither will it be found in home gatherings that are content with having in place the correct Biblical form of "church."

By the way, I don't consider all the pastors in the system to be the false prophets of Baal (and I doubt you do either). I know some of them personally. They love the Lord, and are seeking to serve Him as best they can. It's just that they've never been taught anything but the denominational system. And I believe many of them-- at least the ones with a true shepherd's heart-- are going to be part of this "exodus." It may be very costly for them, but I have no doubt they'll pay the price, many of them.

Re: - posted by makrothumia (), on: 2010/4/12 15:54

Thank you very much brother.

You are right, the analogy is only a general comparison. Leonard Ravenhill said that you never have to advertise a fire - it will draw people all of itself. There are brothers here in our fellowship that travel 14 hours to hear brother Zac Poonen share when he is in the US. If there was a home fellowship where the fire of God was falling and we could share in that grace being poured out upon it, we would also be traveling there. You can't hide a fire or a city set on a hill.

I would encourage those who have the form "right" to ask themselves why people aren't coming from all over the country to see and hear what is happening in these "properly formed", "NEW" testament gatherings. If Christ is really being

lifted up - won't He be drawing all men unto Himself?

Cain's form was just fine - but the Lord did not have regard unto him. The Lord had regard unto Abel - because he was a righteous man and his offering was received.

We read many of the books and listen to many of the sermons of men who were pastors all their life. Andrew Murray being one example. Too bad he never had the full insight into the correct "form" like some of us have received. ;-)

makrothumia

Re: - posted by elected (), on: 2010/4/12 16:15

ADisciple wrote:

"Home gatherings at this time perhaps lack this Fire and Presence to a large extent. But the hunger to see this is growing, and I believe there's a conviction that it's not going to be found in the established system."

I agree with you brother, there is much truth in what you saying. But I believe also that God can revive dead denominations, at least the faithful remnant and use them to a blessing and witness to others who are living in darkness in the established systems..

I have not seen yet an evangelical movement at least 100 years old, that started in the Holy Spirit and did not end up in the flesh. The church is a living organism (the body of Christ) and not an organization or institution. Men build up religious institutions and God the living temple.

Re: - posted by narrowpath, on: 2010/4/12 17:45

Quote:

-----I have not seen yet an evangelical movement at least 100 years old, that started in the Holy Spirit and did not end up in the flesh.

Sad, but so true. I wonder if anyone here on SI is actually fellowshiping in a fellowship of apostolic stature?

Yes, and even the most exemplary saints of the last couple of centuries have not been able to sustain the spiritual vigor of their movements. Still, I believe that since Christ's ascension there always have been apostolic fellowships. The crisis in evangelical Christianity that we are now witnessing should actually shake us up and seek to build churches with true foundations.

Re: , on: 2010/4/12 20:42

Perhaps because they allowed sects/denominations themselves to form out of what God was doing? Rather than letting God move as He will, men often times fall into the trap of trying to do it on their own, their own way.

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2010/4/12 21:55

Quote:
-----Perhaps because they allowed sects/denominations themselves to form out of what God was doing? Rather than letting God move as He will, men often times fall into the trap of try to do it on their own, their own way.

And this applies also to the trap of trying to set up "home" church. Without the leading of the Lord of the church this, too, can lead to colossal failure.

...I haven't always been aware of it, but with the advantage of the internet you discover there are even "home church" denominations out there.

Sigh. How long, Lord? What kind of creatures are we? How we need, all of us, a "meeting" with that One Jacob met with at Peniel... that One who crippled him in the place of his great strength. For the rest of his days he couldn't do ANYTHING-- not even worship-- without limping and leaning on a staff.

We are too whole. Watchman Nee said when he met a man he always looked for his limp.

Re: , on: 2010/4/12 22:25

Exactly! I found the same thing amongst the house church movement. Though many of them had great revelation and really hunger for what the Lord and His apostles set forth, they are falling into some of the same traps which they set out to avoid. These things will inevitably lead them back to the very Babylon which they tried to escape from.

Re: Having the one man show right in your own livingroom....., on: 2010/4/13 0:14

I quote the venerable insights of Jed Clampett...

"You can take the preacher out of Babylon, but it's a little tougher to take Babylon out of the preacher."

Re: - posted by rbanks, on: 2010/4/13 0:37

You can complain all you want to brethren, but there is no getting back to the original pattern of the new testament church until the original message of Pentecost is restored. That can only happen by a work of the Holy ghost.

The church age began on the day of Pentecost and the first ascension gifts given to the church were the original apostles. They laid the foundation of Jesus Christ. Everyone else is to take heed how they build upon. The first anointed preachers were the apostles sent by the Holy Ghost, for how shall they preach except they are sent by God.

Every city that Paul founded a work of God, he ordained elders to oversee and feed the flock of God. Every meeting place needed a spiritual leader or leaders to oversee and care for the people of God. The apostles were always on the move to another place and had to ordain elders to pastor or shepherd each place and for them to live among the people.

God does not recognize nor can he bless a church building or house church that has not received or been affected by one of the ascension gifts given by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ is the head of the true church and he can not bless those who are not under His Lordship. It does not matter if you are in a house or a 100,000 square foot building unless the anointing of God abides there it will be in vain. Except the Lord build the house, they that labor in it are working in vain.

It would really be nice if Mr. Frank Viola and others were more interested in restoring the message of Pentecost than in promoting their own agenda of house churches at the expense of hurting pastors and saints that also love the Lord who

happen to be in church buildings.

Thanks for reading brethren and may those who read understand.

Blessings to all!

Re: - posted by osandoval, on: 2010/4/13 0:38

ADisciple wrote:

Quote:
-----Question: What would happen if multitudes of God's people began to seek out the kind of "church," the kind of gathering, we read of in the New Testament... where they gathered in homes, and each one was given liberty under the lordship of the Spirit to participate?

Quote:
-----Answer: The church system as we know it would collapse.

Quote:
-----Question: Is it a likelihood that such a scenario could actually happen?

Quote:
-----Answer: It is already beginning to happen. And it's going to increase. It's of God. There have been mighty moves of the Spirit of God in times past as God restored truth to His people. We are in the beginnings of another such move.

Oh that it would come quickly by the masses!!! I encourage all of us to pray for such a move.

I agree that we also need the fire of God to fall on us so that the Lord can set the captives (lost souls) free through us. But I believe the system has been a huge hindrance which has kept multitudes of God's sheep from fulfilling their calling. We need a restoration of both, the true form and power of God in our lives and gatherings. Brethren, let us not continue to defend this unbiblical system any longer. For some of us it can be an idol, if we continue to defend it after we've been exposed to the truth from the Scriptures.

Re: - posted by twayneb (), on: 2010/4/14 13:23

To address some of the most recent posts on this topic:

It is interesting to me that initially the church was very organic. They held Christ as the head. There was no such thing as "headquarters" or "general offices". There was also no such thing as "The general headquarters of apostolic oversight". Denominationalism did not exist, but rather a very keen awareness of being part of the universal body and a submission one to another in the love of Christ.

I guess I say that to say this. Our paradigm is so locked into the current church system because that is all we know. It is tempting to think in terms of a "new" church starting in a city that is after the apostolic pattern and to see people as leaving the "old system" in favor of the "new revelation". And while there may very well be new fellowships that spring up in a location, I think this paradigm is faulty in that it fails to recognize the body and the kingdom purposes of God in a city.

I am seeing some very interesting things happening among church leadership where I live. Men who serve in leadership among various denominations are beginning to catch hold of the Biblical structure for the church, are beginning to catch hold of a real revelation and awareness of the body of Christ, and are beginning to have their hearts turned from denominationalism to kingdom purposes. As a result an organic network is beginning to develop in the city of eldership submitted the head and to one another in love.

I am not talking about the failed "unity" attempts of the past where leaders ignore differences and form ministerial alliances. I am talking about men whose eyes are being opened and who are beginning to come together in whatever level of revelation of this that they have. I am seeing apostolic leadership in the city whose identity has been somewhat buried coming forth and beginning to function in a very Biblical way. It is in its infancy, but I see it growing.

A shift in the leadership paradigm of the body is going to be, no doubt, tumultuous. But I think as the body begins to wake up to her function under the headship of Jesus Christ and as leaders begin to come alive to the Biblical pattern for church structure in a city, the body will once again begin to function with every joint supplying and the result will be great for

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Travis