

**General Topics :: Going in to darkness****Going in to darkness - posted by Sidewalk (), on: 2015/9/1 20:58**

Has anyone else noticed how modern (American, anyway) churches are being either built or renovated into these ultra dark venues?

All the light is focused on the performers while the people warm their pews in so much darkness you have a hard time criticizing other people's attire. You can't see them.

Seems like church used to be a place of fellowship, now it's just the Big Sunday Show.

"Up here! Pay attention up here!"

No need to bring a Bible, everything you need to see is up on the big screen.

Hmmmm. Isn't there something in Scripture about the kingdom of darkness? I guess men do love darkness. Easier to check their Ashley Madison accounts if no one is looking.

Re: Going in to darkness - posted by davidkeel (), on: 2015/9/2 4:25

Looks like we spoke about it here as well . It seems to be happening more and more :

http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id=54130&post_id=376314&order=0&viewmode=flat&pid=0&forum=48#376314

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2015/9/2 7:28

Tom- what is the difference if you read the bible during a church service in a paper book, a smartphone (that's what I do) an iPad or following the verses on the screen?

If the verse is on the screen, at least people have to read it unless they avert the eyes.

Churches that use screens to project song lyrics etc dim the lights because it is easier to see the screen.

I haven't been in a church in a good long while that doesn't dim the lights somewhat during worship.

I think you are reading way more into this. Let's face it, in the great great majority of churches the action IS up front. I bet this was even true in Tozers and Spurgeons churches.

Re: - posted by dolfan (), on: 2015/9/2 9:04

The black walled staging is a recent (within 20 years) trend. They were used in bars and nightclubs forever ago to accommodate stage lighting for music acts. The church simply co-opted a lot of that venue's ways.

Unmistakably, these outer forms and structures communicate something. Where the church in the west for the last 150 years has basically been "all up front", it increasingly communicated that God speaks from the pulpit, that the pulpit is where the spiritual action is happening. Instead of being merely a platform, the stage soon enough became the center of attention, and whoever occupied it was the one basking in it. The stage -- consciously, I submit -- became a reason for something from the audience and not a tool to deliver something to the audience.

With the advance of "praise and worship", so called, and hipster preachers from 22 to 82, an array of equipment and advanced staging has come with it. It brings its own inherent message: "look at us", "this is what matters", "follow us", "value this". The "us" and "this" is the performance package and the performers. We are now, as never before, expressly encouraged and invited to attend and participate in church based on the quality of that package. This is a basis for being together and being there at all that is wholly separate from the Gospel itself, wholly distinct from the life in Christ.

General Topics :: Going in to darkness

I can tell you first hand that being a participant in this from the pew, participating FOR the stage, is now a measurement of a new kind of discipleship that values almost exclusively the feedback from the audience. Not much else matters. That feedback is raised hands, emotional angst and expression as an end unto itself, and putting money in the offering plate or bag or card swiper. In short, the venue and its events (music, singing concert style, and rally/motivation/psychology as preaching) have become the reason for the church in America. And, where that is not so, churches are either repenting of it or dying from the inability to adapt to it.

If you will pardon the analogy, especially non-Americans and non southern U.S. folks who read this, we have arrived at the age of the church version of college football's spread, hurry up no huddle offense. It is fast paced, gadgety, gimmicky, and all the rage, and you either adapt to it or wind up in the Music City Bowl. But, what you dare not do is fold your arms and say "that is NOT football." Unless, of course, you are a football purist who is willing to walk away from this new game because it bears only the faintest resemblance to football. And, as a self proclaimed purist, it ain't football. And, I want no part of it.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2015/9/2 10:05

I think we have to be careful about ascribing evil intent or motives to churches like you describe.

Coaches that use the no huddle offense are just taking advantage of the enemy's weakness.

I think a huge motive behind the packaging you describe is to get people in church who would otherwise be sitting on their rumps at home. Some (many) of those folks really get saved.

We can argue about whether the packaging is the right way to go about it but it seems to work, and I don't think there is evil intent behind it.

I would much rather have unsaved friends and loved ones attend a church they like than not attend a church they don't like.

Re: Going in to darkness - posted by yuehan, on: 2015/9/2 11:12

Come on, let's not judge according to appearances.

This should not be an issue anyway because the church is not a building or a venue, but the body of Christ. This distinction is made very clear by Paul in Romans 16:5 - "...greet the church that is in their house."

If it happens to be a dark venue, let's hope that makes the light of Christ shine even brighter ;)

Re: - posted by Sidewalk (), on: 2015/9/2 11:17

I think it is less evil intent, more love of power and attention. Thank you Tim for that eloquent response, I too see the dark thing as a departure from the appeal to mutual fellowship and learning to walk together in Christ to that physically exciting interaction between an audience and a performer.

I preach fairly often, my "audience" is a group of about 60 handicapped adults and a scattering of volunteers and caregivers. I need light in there, to watch the reactions of individuals, to let them see each other, to facilitate the interactivity that preaching to mentally handicapped people requires- it takes the whole group to get through a message!

In all of it, the light is important as they learn to speak and love each other, often rising to their feet to go and give someone on the other side of the room an encouraging hug. And some have trouble walking!

Yes it is different from regular church, but it wouldn't work in a dark venue.

I like light.

Re: - posted by yuehan, on: 2015/9/2 11:48

Quote:
-----I think it is less evil intent, more love of power and attention.

On what basis do you level this accusation against all preachers at such venues? Have you read their minds?

Leave it to God search the heart and test the mind, who will reward each man according to his deeds (Jer 17:10).

As an aside, some of the loveless / unsettling experiences I've had were at gothic buildings or bright venues. God honours those who honour Him, not the building where people gather.

Re: - posted by dolfan (), on: 2015/9/2 11:55

Quote:
-----I think we have to be careful about ascribing evil intent or motives to churches like you describe.

Coaches that use the no huddle offense are just taking advantage of the enemy's weakness.

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We can argue about whether the packaging is the right way to go about it but it seems to work, and I don't think there is evil intent behind it.

I would much rather have unsaved friends and loved ones attend a church they like than not attend a church they don't like.

I want to be careful, too. I'm sick of armchair QB'ing the church (to keep with our football analogy for now), and I'm guilty. You can simply rage at the darkness or be a light to those who are in it. I'm praying for the prophetic gift to come alive in the church to lovingly and sternly warn the church.

I have a degree in communications. The writings of Neil Postman and the thoughts of Marshall McLuhan (who coined the famous phrase, "the medium is the message") and of men like Malcolm Muggeridge have been aimed in the last 50 years toward describing this thing we now see. (I recommend Postman's "Amusing Ourselves To Death" and "Technopoly".) I want to admit my bias here, and explain that I am not condemning anyone with "evil intent or motives". I do not contend that anyone is intentionally setting out to do what they see as evil. I do contend that what they are doing is a kind of evil.

When I say that there has been a conscious effort to move the church to this "look to the stage, this is where God is happening" way of being, I am speaking of it as a communicative technology. The church's way of expressing itself IS its own message, and it simply is not the gospel of Jesus. It competes with the gospel. It serves, practically, to oppose the gospel. It creates a different kind of "hearer", and by extension, a different kind of "doer" than that which Jesus is calling and empowering and sending forth. That is the "evil" I contend occurs, and while evil is not the overt motive for these actions, it is deliberate action and evil the covert effect.

You say, "a huge motive behind the packaging you describe is to get people in church." But, the "in church" part of that outweighs the motive. The packaging has become the church; and, the packaging has become the content of another gospel and the substance of what it means to be part of a church. The packaging is more than a mailer to pique interest; it is a full on way of being that is the model of Christian living, and it is centered on what happens in these buildings during an hour or two of singing, performing and public speaking.

That "some (many) of those folks really get saved" is the end justifying the means. Let's assume that this statement (many are saved) is true. Are the lives of those saved then modeled into Christ in these fellowships? If American churches are successfully modeling and leading people to Christ-like living, the fruit of it is sorely lacking. To the extent that many of those folks really get saved, this way of being the church is manifestly working against their further maturity in Christ, against their further glorifying God day to day. It is a hard case to make to them, though, since they tend to enjoy the way it is to their own detriment.

I simply do not see that "attend a church they like" is a lesser evil to "not attending a church they don't like" if the process of both is not bearing fruit to the glory of God in actual human lives that are being transformed into the image and likeness of Jesus. I respectfully think we may have very different understandings of what it means to say "it seems to work".

This is precisely why the problem is pernicious. It is not well understood when people with facially right motives take real action to move people from "rumps at home" to church are held to a scrutiny of the ways in which they communicate a message. People tend to think that the means of communication are value-neutral and that is simply not true. The means of communication -- the medium of communication, that is -- comes loaded with its own values that can taint or change the pure gospel and the full out-living of the pure gospel.

The early church was conscious of this. Judaism itself was word based, not image based. Words as media have vastly different values than images. From early on, "I AM" has not shown Himself in images, and has made the knowledge of Himself through images anathema. God presented Himself as a God of words to the prophets, and in the fullness of time came in the fullness of human flesh as the Living Word. John's writings go overboard in making this clear about Jesus as the Word.

The church today presents the gospel as image. The church package is the image of the gospel. The church package is therefore the substance of the gospel. This is subtle and largely unnoticed to "the church", but not to those who know God as Word and are shaped by Him as the Word Alive. The life of those who know God, who know the gospel, as "Word Alive" is vastly different from those who know the gospel as the packaged content of the contemporary American church (in Australia at least, too). The fruit of those who know God as Word Alive is different from those who know Him as the content packaged in an image at church services. The church that knows God as the Word who is alive empowers itself among its members with a deeper, abiding internalization of the Word and presents a Word based proposition to the lost. The church that knows God as an image, even an image that has "saved" them, empowers itself by coming to the scene of an event (a church service) and needing an external affirmation of the continuing truth (that the image of God as seen and experienced through the church service package still 'works' this week) and presents the quality of the image and the interaction with this image to the lost. These are not differing qualities; these are differing kinds of being. And, I submit to you that the latter is evil even if it doesn't "intend to be", per se.

Going back once more and more deeply to the football analogy, it is a different game. It uses footballs and helmets (or, crosses and bibles), it uses bleachers (or, pews or chairs), it blows whistles and calls plays (or, uses the lingo and jargon of the faith). It calls itself college football, and a lot of money is staked on people buying it as college football. But, it isn't football. It is a different game (a different gospel), and you can see the impact it has on what still is real football in the NFL (or, the church that knows God as the Word Alive) because almost nobody knows how to play real football when they arrive in the NFL (or, nobody knows how to model biblical Christ-likeness to each other or demonstrate it to the lost) and they either are slow to develop (or, they will hopefully come around to the truth one day) or the overall game (faith) is suffering through a change from what it was to what it will be --- which is something very different in kind (not biblical).

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2015/9/2 12:54

I guess I am not sure what you mean when you say it's a different gospel.

I attend a large multi site church and I admit that it is not my preferred "venue."

But the reason we keep attending is because the gospel IS preached and people ARE getting saved and baptized. Our pastor is not afraid to say convicting hard truths. Last week he repeated three times: "any sexual activity that is outside marriage between a man and a woman is sin." This was in the context of his preaching on the letter to Thyatira.

Now I realize there are Joel Osteen-y preachers out there who are sickening in their sweetness.

Granted it is hard for a lot of deep fellowship in a typical church service setting but that is what life groups are for. About 75% of the attendees at our church belong to a life group, which generally meet weekly.

My church is not perfect and I do complain about many of the things you mention. But we are serving in ministries and see the God-honoring things that go on.

Re: - posted by crusader (), on: 2015/9/2 13:37

Hi dolfan

I liked your response, i can see where others are coming from as well. over the last 3 years, i have been looking at NLP and hypnosis as i wanted to see how this all works physically, Biblically and spiritually. when exposing the inner works of this, i am absolutely shocked by how these techniques are very commonly used in many churches. I do not believe that the pastors are fully aware of this and that in their efforts to see growth in the church have adopted these things from other preachers without fully seeking it out from God and the word. These techniques are in use with music, stage settings, speech and actions. I am not going to expose what they are in this post for the sake of fellow brothers and sisters in Christ

Re: - posted by dolfan (), on: 2015/9/2 13:43

TMK, I mean that by virtue of its packaging it is made different in kind. Think "Jesus Christ" vs. "Jesus Christ Superstar". Think "Your life is to die daily, to mortify your flesh on the very tree upon which Jesus was nailed, to be filled with the Spirit, to live the truth out in close quarters with others, seeing to them and not to yourself, all for the sake of the glory of God in Jesus Christ and not for your own self" vs. "He is jealous for me, loves like a hurricane, I am a tree. ... Heaven meet s earth like an unforeseen kiss, and my heart beats violently inside of my chest....".

Different.

It is hard to get at this thing directly. When you speak of communication technologies and the biases they bring, you are forced into analogy and comparison and hard put to concretely state the proposition that the package is the substance, the medium is the message. But, I think the word pictures above are helpful to my effort.

The church as a package presents its own gospel that is not the NT gospel. It uses the language of the gospel, it references the Bible, but it is not producing men and women who are transformed into the likeness of Jesus. It is producing a generation of self-centered consumers who must return to the well every week or some other interval to get another prescription of the package to convince them that they are "okay" as long as they continue to come to the event and be part of the package where they can hear how God loves like a hurricane, etc., and how important they are to Him.

The gospel of Christ is not that. It is how important He is on His own, and how He has no need of us, and that His love for us is rooted in the fact that it is His image we now wretchedly bear and His motivation is not to love us in pity but to change us into the image of Jesus who is His express image bodily, how that He does not love us for us but He loves us for Himself and only to the extent He will make us like Himself do we have any value or worth at all.

The difference here has a profound impact on how life is lived out in the moments and days of our being. The church package, different gospel counsels me to keep trying, keep coming, keep believing, keep lifting my hopes to Him because He loves me so much that He will secure my way to Him for eternity and He will help me now to feel that love. So, if that's my input, my output is always motivated by my feelings, my need to be loved (as opposed to my need to be changed from the wretch that I am), my need to remember His love for me and how that I'm worth something to Him. I will walk around with an idea of my intrinsic worth, and on some levels I will thus begrudge Him whenever He presents me with the demand to change.

The gospel of Christ, though, counsels me to die, to repent, to seek Him in order to know Him, to rest on His promise of new life and a new spirit and a new mind that is not motivated by my feelings, but is motivated by the fact that regardless of how I feel about it I am a worm and this God who made me for Himself is going to have me for Himself in the manner in which He alone determines, and that is through the process of dying and being made new and alive in Christ as God transforms me from image to image and from glory to glory. I'm worth nothing, and so I give all my nothingness to Him freely because I know for a fact that He takes my nothing and changes me into someone like Himself. He makes me a new creation, and only because of this will I see Him ever. And, the means of that change is entirely different from the means provided in the context of the contemporary package church.

General Topics :: Going in to darkness

Re: - posted by MrBillPro (), on: 2015/9/2 13:52

Quote:
-----TMK...what is the difference if you read the bible during a church service in s paper book, a smartphone (that's what I do) an iPad or following the verses on the screen?

My Grandmother used to tell me, it doesn't matter where the living word of God is written, even if it's on a bar restroom wall, it still the same as if you were reading it out of your Bible. And she would end with saying, it probably would have more effect written on the bar restroom wall, than in most Churches. Grandma was an on fire Christian woman for over 80 years, she lived to be 95.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2015/9/2 14:49

Thanks Tim- I know where you are coming from.

Thank goodness you didn't quote the original phrase of that song which says "sloppy wet kiss" instead of "unforeseen kisses".

Either way, I about gag whenever I hear that song. I suspect Jesus may be as well.

Re: , on: 2015/9/2 15:28

Quote:
-----by dolfan on 2015/9/2 13:43:16

It uses the language of the gospel, it references the Bible, but it is not producing men and women who are transformed into the likeness of Jesus.

Their deception is that they think it is in their power to transform not only themselves but their church members. Try as they might, with all their programs, it ain't working. The source is wrong and they think they "can be like God". We can fall into the same trap thinking it is in our power "to be like Jesus".

Quote:
----- It is producing a generation of self-centered consumers who must return to the well every week or some other interval to get another prescription of the package to convince them that they are "okay" as long as they continue to come to the event and be part of the package where they can hear how God loves like a hurricane, etc., and how important they are to Him.

This I can agree with. They keep coming back to them because they have been taught to be dependent on them. Oh!!! How we need to know that Jesus is more than sufficient in all things. His life will bring to a halt our spiritual ADHD.

Their J-O-B would be in peril if they really taught the truth.

Re: - posted by Elibeth, on: 2015/9/2 15:34

Well spoken Tim,
And what depth !

I appreciate your post.

God bless,
elizabeth

Re: - posted by JFW (), on: 2015/9/2 22:47

Brother Tim,

While I can definitely relate to your perspectives put forth (including the college football;) and have myself been outspoken regarding this very thing, we would do well not to lump them all together and start throwing rocks. Just as has been stated here on SI before, the Lord has people in most all denominations who truly walk with Him, and no singular denomination nor doctrine exclusively possesses Him. Having said that, I too have been grieved in many of the same ways you have and have prayed diligently that the truth of His Spirit would be revealed to them and they would seek Him and not just play a numbers game while responding to felt needs. Tho I have found that I too needed to see that He is not limited by traditions no matter how holy they appear. Growing up in the CoC they, as you know, denounce any musical instruments, tho many other churches embrace them. I bring this up because they (CoC) say much the same as you are regarding the use of such "modern" inventions and conclude that the message gets distorted if not changed completely. They of course believe they are right and have the necessary justifications to back up their claims...

I admit I've struggled with this over the years and at times still do tho I found after much prayer that even in scripture there has always been this type of variety in people's personal relationship and subsequently their styles of worship. The example that comes to mind in this moment is two of the best known and beloved characters in the OT.

One is soooo conservative that he refuses even a toast to his own promotion in the Kings court, which was disrespectful to say the least, tho because of his reputation for his godly character (and friendship w/King Darius) he was allowed this exclusion.

The next is sooo wild that he not only eats the show bread off the altar but once did what amounts to naked cartwheels in front of the ark as they were bringing it back to Jerusalem, to the dismay of his wife Michal who when she spoke against this behavior was, if I remember correctly, cursed by God and made barren...

Now tho these two men were as different as night and day in their characters they were united by their love and faith in God and by all accounts He loved them equally and used them both mightily.

But I've wondered if they had lived in close proximity if they would've had anything in common so as to be friends other than their faith.

Perhaps one or both might be skeptical of the other considering the contrast in their expressions of their faith.

So while I do share your concerns and believe you articulate them better than I could, perhaps we should respond in faith towards the Father and not in frustration towards the problem... as our God is an awesome God, and the universe itself cannot contain Him much less one way of doing church.

Edit for spelling

Re: Thank you for the responses! - posted by Sidewalk (), on: 2015/9/3 0:27

I so appreciate where Tim has taken this, I must admit that my original post was spawned by a visit to a really dark church where I used to go some time ago- I was a bit overwhelmed by the intensity of the dark venue and how it affected me. Tim fleshed it out brilliantly- a better illumination than my guarded sarcasm. (Yuehan saw my post as "leveling accusations," no where near my intentions.) And as Tim skillfully progressed through his explanations, no names were mentioned - that wasn't the purpose at all.

Jesus framed much of His teaching in a context of light and darkness, I believe this is worth noting, and have personally come to prefer well lighted venues for assembling, worship, and responding to preaching. It is just a preference, not suggesting that those who like dark venues are going to Hell.

Re: - posted by Sree (), on: 2015/9/3 1:18

Quote:

I attend a large multi site church and I admit that it is not my preferred "venue."

But the reason we keep attending is because the gospel IS preached and people ARE getting saved and baptized.

I like what TMK has said above. Many so called Christians in USA are justifying the mega Church they attend using similar reasons as TMK as used here.

I am not against mega Churches. I myself was born again or came to know Christ in a mega Church. But I do not believe they are a Church that Jesus is building. I am not saying they do not have a role in Christendom but I am only saying they are not God's plan for a Church. But God still uses them. The fact that a place or a person is used by God does not mean the person is 100% pleasing to God. I can quote so many scriptures to prove this point.

In my view Mega Churches are evangelical conventions. They are mainly there to evangelize large attendees. There is no real fellowship among the believers. All the mini groups that they encourage on weekdays to meet, are the Churches having guts to raise these mini groups as a Church by themselves? They do not because they are scared of losing their revenue. Don't get fooled by the mini weekday groups that these Churches encourage. They are not real fellowship unless they are groomed to become a local Church. Most of these mini groups have no real commitment. Different kinds of people meet based on their availability at different times. They are just prayer groups created to fill the vacuum of lack of fellowship in their mega Church.

God still uses them to save people who come there just to sit there for few hours and escape without being noticed by others. They might have many people being baptized and added to that group. Still they are not God's plan for a Church.

Re: , on: 2015/9/3 10:17

Lights or no lights the church in Canada with few exceptions has been kicked to the corner and told to shut up. The direct result of a mushy milky message that tried to be all for all people and failed miserably even at that.

marcmc

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2015/9/3 12:19

Sree-

I appreciate your sentiment- I really do.

But was Spurgeons church God's church? 6000 attended his services. How about Tozers church? I think it was large as well.

If men like these did not fuss about their style of church, perhaps that style is not an issue with God. No church is perfect.

If their churches were okay but modern day large churches are not, why? Where do we draw the line?

Re: - posted by dolfan (), on: 2015/9/3 13:25

I do want to reiterate that my thoughts are mine only. I'm not angry at the church and I'm not throwing rocks. But, there is a subversion within the Body. We need to recognize it and be aware of it as the priests of our homes and families. Seek God about it wherever you fellowship. Pray for the subversion to cease. Please do not understand me as offering a rebuke or suggesting one. I'm not your church's appointed critic. And, I'm not shying away from what is happening, either. God sets the members in the Body as it pleases Him, and we are responsible to Him and to our local fellowships.

A solid dose of yielding to one another with the purpose of convincing the world that God sent Jesus will break through the influence of a lot of these "invisible technologies", and open a lot of our eyes, too. I'm praying for that.

Re: - posted by Sree (), on: 2015/9/3 13:28

I cannot comment on Spurgeon's Church, I was not there to witness how he ran it. A mega Church is not just the number that characterizes it, it is the lack of fellowship.

In general the mega churches in USA where people are allowed to be visitors for ever, allowed to just come sit without knowing people on either side of you, hear a speaker and then go home, is not a Church that God intended to build. If Spurgeon was running such a Church then it also falls under the same condition.

God may still use such Church like how you mentioned in your post, but it is not God's plan for a Church.

Most Americans actually want such a Church where there is no fellowship. They only need some Sunday sermon, no intention to bear the burden of one another. They get what they want.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2015/9/3 13:42

I agree with you-

Unfortunately a very small number of persons know anything different.

Re: - posted by Sree (), on: 2015/9/3 13:53

I agree no Church is perfect. The Church that Jesus himself built on this earth with 12 disciples chosen by God himself had one traitor. So it was not a perfect Church. But there was a body of believers in it. There were 11 disciples in it who were united in one spirit, they turned the world upside down.

A Church is compared to a Body in Ephesians. In a body not all parts may work perfectly. There are Physically Challenged people who have a body too but not all organs work perfectly. But they still have a body in which the organs work together for a growth. It is this oneness, the fellowship that signifies a body.

In a mega Church this is lacking. If people are visitors for ever without being connected to one another then they are only individual organs not a body yet. This is not God's plan at all. You cannot call any individual eye as a body. It cannot be compared to an imperfect body at all.

Brother it is really carrying a cross to be part of a Body. It will hurt you when one organ is in pain. Many do not like to be in such body. That is why there is a mega church for such easy goers.

Re: , on: 2015/9/3 16:59

Sree wrote,

"Most Americans actually want such a Church where there is no fellowship. They only need some Sunday sermon, no intention to bear the burden of one another. They get what they want."

Sree most Christians view the actual act of getting up Sunday morning, getting ready, going to the church, singing some song, listening to a pep talk, talking in the lobby about the kids and going home as massively pleasing to God.

A surprising number actually feel that the act of Church attendance is Christianity.

marcmc

Re: - posted by JFW (), on: 2015/9/3 17:04

Saints,

I can honestly agree with most all views represented on this thread as I don't see them as conflicting. There appears to be a consensus that there is def something wrong with the "church" at large in that it is weak and ineffective to the cause of Christ. And brother Tim I sincerely appreciate your observations as well as the burden you feel on this. It seems we all are taking part in that to the degree we are aware of it. Having said this, what are we to do? What is the "right" way to do church? It seems ever since the fading of the apostolic church there has been a series of cultural adjustments as well as doctrinal positioning as the gospel has spread, so has there been to anyone's knowledge a church that preserved and operated in the apostolic traditions left to us? Also what are the thoughts here on the 5 fold ministerial offices as they relate to today? Personally I have more questions than answers and earnestly look forward to learning about this.

Re: - posted by Theophila (), on: 2015/9/3 19:02

I was fortunate to fellowship with such a group up North for a few years . There was an elder and his wife and two or three other families. I can honestly say we were a body. Everyone's concern was EVERYONE'S concern. The teenagers , the children and their childlike issues, all of us with our very human selves it was truly heavenly.

Everyone was encouraged to contribute to the edifying of the body. Once in a while, another sister house-church would come fellowship with us. Space was tight but it was awesome!!

As for the 5-fold gifts: the elder had a HUGE pastoral heart. There was a godly older lady gifted with prophecy. The other house-church elder has an obvious teaching gift. You can see how it was such a treat when the two churches fellowshiped together.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2015/9/3 19:20

Funny I have not been in a church like you describe but I have been in two separate prayer groups with those characteristics.

Guess we were a church. :)

Re: - posted by proudpapa, on: 2015/9/3 19:57

RE:/// so has there been to anyone's knowledge a church that preserved and operated in the apostolic traditions left to us?///

I have been wrestling with this type of issue for a while now,
And I am becoming convinced that there is not a recorded history of a perfect apostolic succession.

What was never written or what has been destroyed, We will never know in this life time.

The Scripture speaks of the Church as a Body, the Body has one Head the head controls each member, your right hand does not control your left hand nor does your right eye rule over your left eye nor is one above another.
All members are in subjection to the Head not to each other.

But much of church history seems (based from my study thus far)
to present a different paradigm one that more aligns with a pyramid as we see with corporations : an Ecclesiastical hierarchy system.

I do not know what is everyone's thoughts ?

Re: - posted by Elibeth, on: 2015/9/3 21:02

Re ///, "so has there been to anyone's knowledge a church that preserve and operated in the apostolic traditions left to us ? ///

My thoughts:

To read / know how the tradition / operation of God' intention from the very beginning for the church to be. These people truly abided in Christ.

FULL of the Holy Ghost / Spirit.to live for God was their life / their all in all.
And there was God' presence and power there.

Then, we remember,shortly thereafter, Paul was going about from church to church,trying to straighten them out, back onto the narrow way,....He told them / preached they / we could not enter the kingdom of God,if they / we do extortion,...adultery immorality..steal,..etc.,...preaching how they / we are to live in the Kingdom of God,or we could not inherit ' the kingdom'.

The gospel was "the gospel of the kingdom of God"

Is it another gospel,..another Jesus ,that is preached now ?
Yes bro. Papa,I too, would love to know where this church is.

Many of the old writers,give us a taste,of this,...that we love.

Will you forgive me for being strong / straight forward in my writings ?

His Word / Truth and a love for it that will not let me go,

elizabeth

Re: , on: 2015/9/3 22:08

Paul's prophetic words still speak.

See what kind of brother, Paul was and how the saints loved him.

Acts 20:29-38

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that at by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

Re: - posted by Theophila (), on: 2015/9/3 23:50

Oh yes, bro, y'all were!

Any gathering where the Head is exalted and His life flows through all present is His church.

A particularly precious experience in the previously described house church comes to mind.

Each person was encouraged to bring forth songs with which we worshipped the Lord. Well, a little 5 year old girl started singing a song we all knew and I tell you, even the elder found he couldn't share the message he had prepared as we prayed and sang that one song for the next one and half hours or so!

The Spirit of supplication came to our aid in prayer that day.

It was just plain glorious.

The Lord literally lifted us into His Presence through that little member of the body.

Re: - posted by JFW (), on: 2015/9/4 3:13

Could it be as Paul's prophetic words allude, that we have received a church that is founded on heresies so deeply embedded in its foundation so as to be the counterfeit church spoken of in Revelation as the whore of Babylon who is drunk on the blood of the saints?

Could it be that the religious-political marriage shortly after the waning of the Apostolic church was the birthing of another Ishmael?

Could what we are bearing witness to today be the very nation of its inhabitants who make war with "Issac" the true church and manufacturing for itself the power that otherwise only comes from God?

A modern day Tower of Babel complete with beauties, entertainments, idolatry and heaps upon heaps of self effort but devoid of real divine substance, power or purity?

Edit for spelling

Re: , on: 2015/9/4 9:05

Well said, JFW. The counterfeit church was birthed in the Garden, when Satan came on the scene and told Adam and Eve they "would be like God", if they ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Adam and Eve proceeded to "cover their sin" (themselves) with leaves (a type of their own righteousness). Then Cain, offered up the work of his hands to God (a type of the self-justification of fleshly work). And this counterfeit "church" runs from Genesis to Revelation. Esau, Aaron's sons, (offering up strange fire), Saul, Absalom, Jezebel, Ahab, and so on, to this present day. The tares have been sown amongst the wheat but the true sheep know the Master's voice. Satan is the "shepherd" of the false church and though he hides himself, Believers can spot him.

Re: - posted by proudpapa, on: 2015/9/4 9:46

RE: ///Could it be that the religious-political marriage shortly after the waning of the Apostolic church was the birthing of another Ishmael?///

That was around 300.

and most agree that the such is the case and they point to the Catholic establishment.

Many try to then align with either a 16th century reformation paradigm or a pre 300 paradigm.

Luther discovered the reality of the Body and each man directly receiving from the Head :

He called it the priest hood of all believers,

he fought against the Ecclesiastical hierarchy system of his day.

But unfortunately he seemed to recreate a similar system himself so did Calvin so did the Anabaptist and so on.

Men in our day Gene Edwards, Frank Viola etc have said lets look and recreate a pre 300 paradigm, an organic house church movement instead of the corporate paradigm .

Neoanabaptist like Bercot/Dean Taylor seem to indicate that the Edwards/Viola history is inaccurate about what this pre 300 paradigm looked like, which I think that Bercot/Dean Taylor is correct.

It is beginning to appear to me (according to my limited research thus far) that the departure from the Body Paradigm into a Ecclesiastical hierarchy system did not originate around 300 but as soon as we leave the inspired Scriptures.

edit: clarity

Re: , on: 2015/9/4 12:23

For those interested in the easiest book on what went wrong from a church structure perspective here you go.

It is also called the 2/3 reformation.

<http://www.amazon.com/The-Open-Church-James-Rutz/dp/0940232502>

It goes without saying that the structure programs and fixes that have been tried have solved very few of the Churches ills. But that is a far larger conversation. With this at least you will know in a couple hours how it went sideways.

marc mc

Re: , on: 2015/9/4 13:01

I did not know that Jim Rutz had died. I remember, about 20 years ago being handed the book, "The Open Church", while shopping one day. Lot of truth in his book, but a lot of things were strange...mixture.

<http://www.wnd.com/2014/12/house-church-proponent-jim-rutz-dies-at-76/>

<http://worthyhouse.info/rutz.html>

<http://www.letusreason.org/BookR16.htm>

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2015/9/4 13:12

I remember reading Megashift by Rutz years ago. I don't remember tons about it other than it raised numerous red flags. At least for me.

Re: - posted by dolfan (), on: 2015/9/4 14:48

Brothers and Sisters, please let's be cautious. My mind and emotions are also frustrated, as some of yours are, about "traditional church" or as I think of it "corporation church". But, we are dealing with far, far more than mere formats of meeting.

Can I say this? We need a move of God that will awaken all of us. "Awake, o sleeper", the Scripture says. I shudder to think of all the ways that I am asleep even as I actively seek God and put my mind on the things above and not the things of earth. My heart -- our hearts -- need a quickening and an awakening of unthinkable measures.

I'm convinced that God will do in us what He intends to do in order to secure to Himself His own creation for His own glory. He will have it in glorious ways and degrees. "The half has never yet been told."

I don't know how much this matters to the topic, but in my mind I'm connecting it, so please bear with me. Last week, after we finished the trial of my client for reckless murder and armed robbery, my client and I sat at the counsel table in the courtroom awaiting the jury's verdict. They were out a number of hours. While my young client and I sat there, he started asking me questions about the bible. Do you know where Jesus said for us not to worry about how to respond in an hour of crisis, and that the answers would come to us from the Holy Spirit Himself? (Luke 12:11) There is more to the backstory that I cannot share, but suffice to say that my client was not the only person in crisis; I had been placed into one myself by him. Well, I want to tell you that in response to his inquiries about the Bible, I started quoting passages -- entire passages -- of Scripture that I DID NOT KNOW BY HEART. They flowed out of my mouth with ease. With explanation. Other things happened in that conversation that I will not go into.

My point in sharing is this: God is able to lead us and guide us in this hour not only to say what He wants, but to shape the Body of Christ as it pleases Him. I'm more convinced now than, maybe, I was that God is actively and closely guiding His people to do and be that which pleases Him and will accomplish His purposes. Just as His word does not return void but accomplishes His purposes, His people will accomplish His purposes as we obey Him moment by moment. We do not have to arrive at abstract, academic conclusions about the right make up of the church assembly. We do not have to be frustrated at the way things are; let's be committed to transformation in our lives and obedience and love and submission to one another.

Re: , on: 2015/9/4 16:42

TMK wrote,

"I remember reading Megashift by Rutz years ago. I don't remember tons about it other than it raised numerous red flags . At least for me."

Flags? no, he is flat out wrong in Megashift. Most of the technics in The Open Church also never worked apart from theory. The value of the book and why I posted it is the condensed historical information that made events that happened over hundreds of years easily accesable.

Marc mc

Re: - posted by Theophila (), on: 2015/9/5 1:21

Brother Tim,

That post blessed me immeasurably and the last paragraph all but blew me away.

The Lord is indeed cleansing, purifying and energizing His own in this dark hour.

That process will mean the difference between walking in the light and groping around in the dark in these interesting times that we live in.

May we have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Bride.

Re: , on: 2015/9/5 4:48

It is understandable for some believers to have this idea of the Church in regions to be " just fine" and " Jesus is ok and working with whatever's going on". I have never held this position. It is obvious by the writings of NT Apostles and the Seven Letters to the Seven Churches that Jesus was anything but "ok" with believers just doing Church anyway they saw a s best. This thinking does not work in your personal life and it has failed miserably in the corporate church.

The NA church has painted itself into a corner with that line of reasoning. Buildings sitting vacant 97% of the time, a sterilized message crafted to be swallowed easily, a not for profit statis that keeps the church and attendees broke and preventing them from assisting those in real need, holding up any inevitable success stories as proof endorsements and waiting for a God who is seen more like a store manager to turn on the power has cut the Churches off from all roles except invisibility in regions and communities.

"The heaviest obligation lying upon the Christian Church today is to purify and elevate her concept of God until it is once more worthy of Him"(Tozer, The Knowledge of the Holy, 6).

One of our great allies at present is the Church itself. Do not misunderstand me. I do not mean the Church as we see her spread out through all time and space and rooted in eternity, terrible as an army with banners. That, I confess, is a spectacle which makes our boldest tempters uneasy. But fortunately it is quite invisible to these humans. (C S Lewis, The sc rewtape letters.)

Marc mc

General Topics :: Going in to darkness

Re: Going in to darkness - posted by InTheLight (), on: 2015/9/5 18:05

As I read through this thread I am reminded of how the Church seems to be in ruin outwardly and yet, at the same time, the Church is at the highest point of progression it has ever known; especially in view of all the incredible revelation she has had since the Reformation.

Watchman Nee wrote, "Todayâ€™s Christians ought to strive to enter into the progressive work of God which He is doing in this age. Only seeing the outward ruinous condition of the Church is inadequate. We must go a step further to see the Lordâ€™s present-day work. We have no idea at what point the Lord will stop working. We only know God is currently preparing the temple stones to be fitly framed together. One day all things shall be ready. And that will be the time when the Holy Temple of God is finally built."

In Christ,

Re: , on: 2015/9/5 18:34

InTheLight,

Would you share a few of those incredible revelations since the Reformation?

And how do you view the workings of God from say 500 AD up to the Reformers? Which equals about half of Church history.

marcmc

Re: - posted by InTheLight (), on: 2015/9/5 19:03

Quote:

-----Would you share a few of those incredible revelations since the Reformation?

Perhaps recovery of truths would have been a better term to use. To name just a few, the truth concerning justification by faith was rediscovered in Luther's time. I think of the incredible depths of scripture that were plumbed by the Puritans, I'm still amazed by the riches that William Gurnall discovered in expositing a short passage in Ephesians 6.

Others were used in the revival of the inner life. Others were instrumental in recovering sanctification by faith. Some, such as George Muller saw faith and put it into practice as few others have. Evan Roberts and Rees Howell understood spiritual warfare and prayer ministry in a remarkable way. Men like T. Austin-Sparks and DeVern Fromke have been used to recover both the eternal purpose of God and resurrection life. The list goes on, what the Church possesses today is quite rich, if we continue in this way God will surely work in and through us.

Quote:

-----And how do you view the workings of God from say 500 AD up to the Reformers? Which equals about half of Church history.

For a comprehensive history of His marvelous works in that time I would refer you to E.H Broadbent's The Pilgrim Church.

In Christ,

Re: , on: 2015/9/5 19:21

Beautiful post Ron.

It warmed my heart to the core.

I imagine our libraries share many things in common.

marcmc

Re: Going in to darkness - posted by dspks, on: 2015/9/5 20:20

Pharisee 1 to Pharisee 2 (as they observe Christ):

"Can you believe he is preaching from that stinking fishing boat... what kind of venue is that???"

Pharisee 2: "YES, simply evil! Doesn't he know what kind of language those lowly fishermen use on that boat?"

Pharisee 1: "Before you know it... he will be asking his followers to carry around a cross."

Pharisee 2: "Now THAT is dark!"