

The Church

What is the Church?

A lot of what I thought about the church has been
undergoing a lot of change over the last few years

Because much of what I saw happening in
churches today I didn't see in scripture

And what I saw in scripture I didn't see in churches
today

One of the main things I didn't see was lives being
changed

I knew what a difference God had made in my life

But even that had begun to be a memory
not an ongoing story

I saw a lot of issues and problems

Those we find in scripture as well just read
Corinthians

But like many in the world around us I didn't see the main
things that Jesus stated would be apart of our lives
together

Things like love for each other

👉 ***John 13:34-35 The Passion Translation (TPT)***

34 “So I give you now a new[a] commandment: Love each other just as much as I have loved you. 35 For when you demonstrate the same love I have for you by loving one another, everyone will know that you’re my true followers.”

Unity

☛ **John 17:20-21 English Standard Version (ESV)**

20 “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me

So a journey began to discover what God meant for us a His body

“There is perhaps nothing worse than reaching the top of the ladder and discovering that you’re on the wrong wall.” — Joseph Campbell

Nothing would be worse than to stand before God offering a beautiful plate of spaghetti and meat balls and have God state But I ordered steak. Francis Chan

“Church as we know it is preventing church as God wants it.” Wolfgang Simson.

If you spend time searching God’s Word for most of the common practices in conventional churches, you will rarely find them. If you go further and

spend time tracing the history of those practices, you will soon discover that most of our religious habits are man-made choices.

☞ The image of much of contemporary Christianity could be described as holy people coming regularly to a holy place on a holy day at a holy hour to participate in a holy ritual led by a holy man dressed in holy clothes for a holy fee.

Wolfgang Simson

When you look at the church in scripture you find a community of people gathering together for a greater purpose than gathering

That is to know God and to Glorify Him

We saw this when we listened to David Platt a couple of weeks back

God didn't save us and call us His own for our benefit but for His glory among the nations

☞ Ezekiel 36:22 ***“This is what the Sovereign Lord says: It is not for your sake, people of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name”***

☞ ***“God’s purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God. 13 And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he***

identified you as his own[d] by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. 14 The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him."

Ephesians 1:12-14

The mandate that Israel had on the earth as God's chosen people was to make God known in the earth

And that is the mandate the church has now. As God's people God wants to be known by the earth

The church doesn't exist for us or for itself

When we become followers of Christ we by into a larger entity and become part of the body of Christ

Jesus called us to a universal movement, and what resulted instead was a series of religious corporations with global chains marketing their special brands of Christianity and competing with each other. Wolfgang Simson.

This whole idea of being a part of a larger body and working together for one common purpose is something I had never really truly grasped before

I knew it, just like I knew it was all about Jesus but knowing the theory and actually understanding it are two different things

I am still working through the application of God saved me for Himself and not for me.

It was for His purpose and not for my benefit

And while He does deeply love me and desire a relationship it wasn't for me that I was saved

The whole idea of an individual approach to the message of Christ was started during the American frontier revivalists

Preachers like Finney and Moody and others

What worked for them during their ministry was simply adopted into church life not because it was biblical but because it simply worked

the goal of the Frontier-Revivalists was to bring individual sinners to an individual decision for an individualistic faith. As a result, the goal of the early church— mutual edification and every-member functioning to corporately manifest Jesus Christ before principalities and powers— was altogether lost.

Salvation became all about you instead of all about Him

And church was a place you went instead of something you were

In biblical times becoming a Follower of Christ was more akin to joining a gang today than our understanding of church

When you join a gang there is a sense of value and belonging that comes and you are welcomed and included – individual standing

But that gets lost in what you joined, you become part of something much larger with a corporate agenda

And you never hear the members say “I'm going to gang this week.”

A gang members whole identity is wrapped up in the group he has become a part of and is now a gear in a much larger machine

It becomes not about the individual but the whole

When we become a part of the body of Christ this was meant to be what happened to us as well

We become a cell in a global entity called the church and it is something we are not something we go to and do

☞ ***“Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are all parts of his one body, and each of us has different work to do. And since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others.***

“

Rom 12:4-5 NLT

1 Corinthians 12:7 ***“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”***

The church, the secret and powerful society of the redeemed, must again become the place where people can literally see the body of Christ and where His glory is revealed in the most practical terms: hands-on, down to earth, right next door, unable to be overlooked or ignored, living among us every day. Wolfgang Simson.

We need to and are moving from a traditional one- or two-hour worship service which is very resource-hungry but produces very little fruit in terms of discipling people and changing lives. Economically, it is a high-input, low-output structure.

And we want to become a body where everyone plays a part and everyone is involved in the growth and health of the whole

As we saw in the news clip the message of Jesus is life changing and powerfully transformational

But loses a lot when all your saved for is to go to church

But when you become a part of something greater and church is something you are apart of and the life and power of Jesus Christ lives and flows through you and your live for His glory and fame it begins to take on a whole new depth and power

We can be that kind of people who come to know and reflect the life of the one we follow

To do so we need to do a few things that the early church

did

☪ 1. They Devoted themselves to The Word

Acts 2:42-43 The Passion Translation (TPT)

Every believer was faithfully devoted to following the teachings of the apostles. Their hearts were mutually linked to one another, sharing communion and coming together regularly for prayer. A deep sense of holy awe[e] swept over everyone, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders.

The early church didn't have a written book to understand and quote

They had people who personally followed and deeply knew the Christ

People who deeply grasped His vision and knew His heart

People who could relate that to everyday life and that is what they devoted themselves to

Not for knowledge but to know Christ

And that is our goal as well. We want to be devoted to the Word to know Christ

It isn't about being able to understand and quote verses

It's about coming to deeply know and understand on a heart level the one who called us to Himself

and the one we follow

And He gave us the written scripture to
reveal who He is so we could do that

The mandate of the Church is to know God first
because you cannot make known someone you
don't know

☞2. Devoted themselves to Prayer

Acts 2:42-43 The Passion Translation (TPT)

Every believer was faithfully devoted to following the teachings of the apostles. Their hearts were mutually linked to one another, sharing communion and coming together regularly for prayer. A deep sense of holy awe[e] swept over everyone, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders.

The early church knew what it meant to pray

And not “I lay me down to sleep” or the standard
grocery list type of prayer we see today

But a deep connection to the one we follow with a
deep abiding sense of we are lost without you.

The early church knew their mission on the earth
to make Jesus known and understood their level of
competency to do that on their own and were
deeply dependent on the Holy Spirit

Prayer for the early church was the life blood of
who they were called to be

Can we say we have that level of
dependence

Prayer was about connecting to God and allowing
Him to use them to accomplish His mission and
had nothing at all to do with them

☺3. Devoted themselves to The Body

Acts 2:42-43 The Passion Translation (TPT)

“Every believer was faithfully devoted to following the teachings of the apostles. Their hearts were mutually linked to one another, sharing communion and coming together regularly for prayer. A deep sense of holy awe swept over everyone, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders.”

The early church deeply understood and felt their
dependence on God but also their need for each other

They knew how easy it was to lose sight of the
original purpose and get lost into your own thing

They knew how easy it was to get discouraged and
want to quit

They knew and had a passion for the Body of
Christ as a whole and new their individual lives
revolved around and was completed by and in the
Body

They couldn't walk away from the Body any easier
than they could cut off their own arm.

Love for one another was their mission and they

were devoted to each other

☞4. Devoted themselves to Sharing with others

“But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God’s instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted.” 1Peter 2:9-10

It wasn't the job of a few but for everyone

The reason God called each one of us is to make Himself known

☞5. Expected God to move

Acts 2:42-43 The Passion Translation (TPT)

“Every believer was faithfully devoted to following the teachings of the apostles. Their hearts were mutually linked to one another, sharing communion and coming together regularly for prayer. 43 A deep sense of holy awe swept over everyone, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders.”

☞6. Embraced suffering

Revelation 12:11 The Passion Translation (TPT)

***They conquered him completely
through the blood of the Lamb
and the powerful word of his testimony.[a]
They triumphed because they did not love and cling
to their own lives, even when faced with death.***

Whatever happened happened because it wasn't about them but about God and His glory and their eternity was secure so there was no need to fear anything or anyone.

