

How God Wants Church To Be

April 9, 2017

What is Church?

Rules for Self-Evaluation

1. *Don't compare yourself to others.*
2. *Know who God has made you to be and who you are not.*

2 Corinthians 10:12-13 NASB

12 For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.

13 But we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you.

1 Samuel 18:8 NASB

8 Then Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?"

Jesus' definition of Church:

Matthew 18:15-20 NASB

15 "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.

16 "But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that *by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.*

17 "If he refuses to listen to them, **tell it to the church**; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, **let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.**

18 "Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth **shall have been bound in heaven**; and whatever you loose on earth **shall have been loosed in heaven.**"

19 "Again I say to you, that **if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done** for them by My Father who is in heaven."

20 "For where **two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.**"

1. **The people "gathered together" are united in purpose and commitment (not size specific - can be just two or three).**

Acts 2:1 NASB

1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.

Hebrews 10:25 NASB

25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

2. **The gathering is done in the name (*and authority*) of Jesus. Does this gathering bear the name and approval of Jesus?**

John 14:14 NASB

14 "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.

Matthew 24:5 NASB

5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many.

Matthew 7:22 NASB

22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'

3. **Purity (doctrinal and lifestyle) of the gathering is required and protected.**

Ephesians 5:3-5 NASB

3 But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; 4 and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

4. **Seeking God in prayer is corporate and unified, of one heart and mind.**

Romans 15:5-6 NASB

5 Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus,

6 so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

5. **Jesus is present and moving in the midst of the Church.**

Revelation 2:1 NASB

1 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands...

Paul provides additional detail defining Church:

1. **The teaching of God's Word.**

1 Timothy 4:13-16 NASB

13 Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.

14 Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.

15 Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all.

16 Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

“It is now common practice in most evangelical churches to offer the people, especially the young people, a maximum of entertainment and a minimum of serious instruction. It is scarcely possible in most places to get anyone to attend a meeting where the only attraction is God. One can only conclude that God's professed children are bored with Him, for they must be wooed to meeting with a stick of striped candy in the form of religious movies, games and refreshments.”

— A.W. Tozer, *Man: The Dwelling Place of God*

2. Corporate praise and worship.

Ephesians 5:18-20 NASB

18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,

19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

Colossians 3:16 NASB

16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

3. The demonstration of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:8-11 NASB

8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit;

9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,

10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

“It was never in God’s revealed plan that the Christian churches would degenerate to the point that they would begin functioning as social clubs...The Christian church was never intended to function as a current events forum...the church of Jesus Christ was never intended to become a religious theater.”

-- A.W. Tozer, *Whatever Happened to Worship?*

Church is NOT a hierarchy, organization chart, membership list, building, activities center, concert hall, dating service, self-help clinic or media outlet; nor is it psychological therapy, community service, social reform or political activism.

“Save me from the curse that lies dark across the modern clergy: the curse of compromise, of imitation, of professionalism. Save me from the error of judging a church by its size, its popularity or the amount of its yearly offering. Help me to remember that I am a prophet—not a promoter, not a religious manager, but a prophet. Let me never become a slave to crowds. Heal my soul of carnal ambitions and deliver me from the itch for publicity.”

— A.W. Tozer, *Voice of a Prophet: Who Speaks for God?*

What defines success as a Church?

1. God abides in the midst of every gathering.

Ephesians 2:21-22 NASB

*21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,
22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.*

1 Peter 2:5 NASB

5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

2. The Church is the Pillar and Ground of Truth.

1 Timothy 3:15 KJV

15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

2 Timothy 4:1-4 NASB

1 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom:

2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,

4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

Amos 8:11–12

11 "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord GOD, "When I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, But rather for hearing the words of the LORD.

12 People will stagger from sea to sea And from the north even to the east; They will go to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, But they will not find it."

"Without meaning to be overdramatic, that prediction has now come to pass. We currently live in the midst of such a famine. The sound, faithful, balanced, consistent, and healthy teaching and preaching of the Word of God is seldom heard here in these United States or, for that matter, around the world.

Don't misunderstand. There are churches and chapels, temples and tabernacles where religious activities abound. And there are people of every persuasion who speak and teach, who appear in the media, who write books, who talk about God and discuss subjects the Bible addresses related to our times. But the lack of solid biblical food based on sound doctrine, served regularly and in healthy portions, is conspicuous by its absence."

-- Chuck Swindoll, Breaking the Famine Pt. 1, 12/14/2015)

3. Jesus is the Head of the Church.

1 Peter 5:2-4 NASB

2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

The Undershepherd (under the Chief Shepherd)

- Is to serve, not be served
- Oversees the gathering without crossing the line into personal lives and decisions
- Leads by the inspiration of example, not legislation nor coercion
- Is not a demigod nor savior - always points to Jesus
- Must balance being in charge while staying out of the way

John 13:13-16 NASB

13 "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am.

14 "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

15 "For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.

16 "Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.

4. The Holy Spirit is in charge.

Acts 13:2-4 NASB

2 While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7 NASB

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.

5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.

6 There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.

7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

5. There is unity of purpose and heart which brings mutual care, edification and the growth which is from God.

Ephesians 4:1-3 NASB

1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,

2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,

3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Colossians 2:19 NASB

19 ...holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

What success in the Church is NOT:

- Success is NOT measured by metrics, either in attendance or income.
- Success is NOT measured by business and marketing strategies.
- Success is NOT becoming a brand to be advertised and sold
- Success is NOT measured by the popularity and momentum of programs, events or activities.
- Success is NOT the approval of the world.

“To great sections of the Church the art of worship has been lost entirely, and in its place has come that strange and foreign thing called the "program." This word has been borrowed from the stage and applied with sad wisdom to the type of public service which now passes for worship among us.” — A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*

“We now demand glamour and fast-flowing dramatic action. A generation of Christians reared among push buttons and automatic machines is impatient of slower and less direct methods of reaching their goals. We have been trying to apply machine-age methods to our relations with God. We ready our chapter, have our short devotions and rush away, hoping to make up for our deep inward bankruptcy...The tragic results of this spirit all about us: shallow lives, hollow religious philosophies...the glorification of men, trust is religious externalities....salesmanship methods, the mistaking of dynamic personality for the power of the Spirit. These and such of these are the symptoms of an evil disease, a deep and serious malady of the soul.” — A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*

“...the cross of popular evangelicalism is not the cross of the New Testament. It is, rather, a new bright ornament upon the bosom of a self-assured and carnal Christianity whose hands are indeed the hands of Abel, but whose voice is the voice of Cain. The old cross slew men; the new cross entertains them. The old cross condemned; the new cross amuses. The old cross destroyed confidence in the flesh; the new cross encourages it. The old cross brought tears and blood; the new cross brings laughter. The flesh, smiling and confident, preaches and sings about the cross; before the cross it bows and toward the cross it points with carefully staged histrionics--but upon that cross it will not die, and the reproach of that cross it stubbornly refuses to bear.” — A.W. Tozer, *The Divine Conquest*

“Religion today is not transforming people; rather it is being transformed by the people. It is not raising the moral level of society; it is descending to society's own level, and congratulating itself that it has scored a victory because society is smilingly accepting its surrender.” — A.W. Tozer

“Save me from the curse that lies dark across the modern clergy: the curse of compromise, of imitation, of professionalism. Save me from the error of judging a church by its size, its popularity or the amount of its yearly offering. Help me to remember that I am a prophet—not a promoter, not a religious manager, but a prophet. Let me never become a slave to crowds. Heal my soul of carnal ambitions and deliver me from the itch for publicity.”

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