

What is Church? Pt.2

June 24, 2018

What is “Church” and what should we be doing when we assemble in Jesus’ name? What should we not be doing? What should the priority and focus be? What does “Church” look like in the Bible?

Ephesians 2:19-22 ESV

19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,

21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Is it possible that what is “good” can distract and keep us from what is “excellent?” Can the best of man prevent us from experiencing the best of God? Has man’s design of church replaced God’s design?

Philippians 1:9-10 ESV

9 And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,

10 so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,

Has the American Church tried to “reinvent” Christianity to make it more appealing, respectable and comfortable to the world, perverting the Church’s mission into a consumer-based business model?

2 Timothy 4:3-4 ESV

3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,

4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

Have we moved the ancient landmarks, shifting off the only foundation that can be laid, becoming misaligned with the Cornerstone?

"Some church leaders look down their noses at churches that go out of their way to create environments that unchurched people love to attend. They're concerned about growing Christ-followers and don't want to worry about marketing, customer service, communications, or similar issues. They don't concern themselves with pedestrian matters such as how people feel when they come to church."

"The problem is that the Scriptures are clear that to worry about the outsider is core to being a follower of Christ. In fact, the entire weight of Scripture is about creating space for

people who are outside of the faith to join us. In the Old Testament, we see God instructing people to defer to strangers and make room for them at the table. In an age when faiths were divided along racial and ethnic lines, Jesus presented the crazy notion that anyone from any background can gain access to God through faith in Christ alone. We see New Testament leaders attempting to live out a faith that created space for a broader community of people. They made space for outsiders."

—7 Ways to Help Unchurched Guests Feel Welcome without Selling Out, Lewis Center for Church Leadership

"Seeker-sensitive services originally promised to woo post-moderns back into the fold. Out the stained glass window went the somewhat formal 45-minute exegetical sermon, replaced by a shorter, story-based talk to address the 'felt needs' of the congregants while reinforcing the premise that following Jesus would dramatically improve their quality of life."

"Contemporary worship had already found its way into the mainstream, but their new model nudged the church further toward a rock-concert feel. Finally, programs proliferated, with programs for nearly every demographic, from Mothers of Preschoolers to Red Glove Motorcycle Riders."

"What does co-dependence look like within a church? Avoiding sections of Scripture out of fear that certain power pockets will be offended. Believing that repeat attendance depends primarily upon the staff's seamless execution of Sunday morning—rather than the manifest presence of God. Eliminating doleful songs from the worship repertoire because they might contradict the through line that 'following Jesus is all gain.'"

"Additionally, Jesus understood that the irreducible gospel message — that we are all sinners in need of being saved — was, and always will be, offensive. No brilliant marketing campaign could ever repackage it."

"I have been following after Jesus for more than three decades and the gospel still makes me bristle. Love those who publicly maligned me? Confess my sins to a friend? You're kidding Jesus, aren't you? Only he's not kidding. Both his words and his life clearly demonstrate that to align ourselves with him means that we must be willing to forsake everything so that we might become more like him."

—How the Seeker-Sensitive, Consumer Church Is Failing a Generation, Christianity Today

"Many in the church today believe that the only way to reach the world is to give the unchurched multitudes what they want. Hundreds of churches have followed precisely that theory, actually surveying unbelievers to learn what it would take to get them to attend.

Subtly the overriding goal is church attendance and worldly acceptability rather than a transformed life. Preaching the Word and boldly confronting sin are seen as archaic, ineffectual means of winning the world. After all, those things actually drive most people away. Why not entice people into the fold by offering what they want, creating a friendly, comfortable environment, and catering to the very desires that constitute their strongest urges? As if we might get them to accept Jesus by somehow making Him more likable or making His message less offensive.

That kind of thinking badly skews the mission of the church. The Great Commission is not a marketing manifesto. Evangelism does not require salesmen, but prophets. It is the Word of God, not any earthly enticement, that plants the seed for the new birth (1 Peter 1:23). We gain nothing but God's displeasure if we seek to remove the offense of the cross.

My complaint is with a philosophy that relegates God and His Word to a subordinate role in the church. I believe it is unbiblical to elevate entertainment over biblical preaching and worship in the church service. And I stand in opposition to those who believe salesmanship can bring people into the kingdom more effectively than a sovereign God. That philosophy has opened the door to worldliness in the church."

—John MacArthur, *Seeker-Friendly Churches*, Grace to You

"It is now common practice in most evangelical churches to offer the 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*

"That very church which the world likes best is sure to be that which God abhors."

—Charles H. Spurgeon

According to the Bible, what will the reaction of the world be to Church?

John 16:7-11 ESV

7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

8 And when he comes, he will convict (*elegchō* - reprove, rebuke, convince, to call to account, chasten, expose, bring to the light) the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:

9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me;

10 concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer;

11 concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

John 3:19-20 ESV

19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.

1 Corinthians 1:18 ESV

18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

John 6:41-44 ESV

41 So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven."

42 They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?"

43 Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves."

44 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day."

What We Come To Church To Do:

1. **Pray Together - to seek, commune with and experience God without distraction**

Ephesians 2:21-22 ESV

21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

The Church, the assembly of the believers, is focused exclusively upon God. We gather to seek Him. We gather to hear His voice. Too many churches have lost their purpose and meaning by becoming more focused on professional stage production, programs, activities, people's preferences, opinions, perceptions and attendance have become more important than the presence of God.

“Shepherds, when you ‘feed’ your sheep Jesus, are you nurturing them in their personal relationship with Him? Are the good works at your fellowship, the programs, the services, the outreach, and the like, causing your sheep’s focus to slip away from the person of Jesus Christ?”

—T.A. McMahon, The Berean Call, June 2018

Matthew 21:12-13 ESV

12 And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons.

13 He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers."

- *Commerce and business had caused the Temple to cease to be what God intended.*
- *God, and His purpose for the assembly of believers, can so quickly be lost in the busyness of production, technology, programs, activities and ministries.*
- *Simplicity with the least amount of organization needed to be orderly is the right balance.*

Acts 1:14 ESV

14 All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

Acts 2:1-2 ESV

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

2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

Acts 2:42 NASB

42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Acts 2:42 ESV

42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

1 Timothy 2:1 ESV [written A.D. 62-66]

1 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people,

2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior,

4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:8-10 ESV

8 I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling;

9 likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire,
10 but with what is proper for women who profess godliness--with good works.

Acts 12:5 ESV

5 So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.

Acts 12:12 ESV

12 When he [Peter] realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.

Acts 4:23-31 ESV

23 When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them.

24 **And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them,**

25 who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, "'Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain?

26 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed'--

27 for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,

28 to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

29 **And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness,**

30 **while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus."**

31 **And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.**