

The Bride – Chapter Two, Our Objectives.

In Chapter One, we looked at the primary purpose of Church's existence is to glorify God. We learned that we need to elevate and manifest His glory. He must increase, and we must decrease. It means that we should not be sharing God's glory, which is His alone. And we glorify Him by His ways, and not our ways. We also explored that we can as a church or even as individuals, should glorify Him in all our whens, ins and ifs. The book also recommended 3 practical suggestions, together with actions plan, for us to put this into practice. 1) To cultivate the habit of including the Lord God in every segment of our life. (AP – To meet often and alone with Him). 2) Refuse to expect or accept any of the glory (AP – Openly admit our struggle with pride) 3) To maintain top priority relationship with Him (AP – to filter everything through the same question: Will this bring glory to God or to me). The Chapter closed with a warning and an encouragement. The warning is that we could easily fake glorifying God, DON'T do it! The encouragement is that we can and should glorify God, but do it with His strength and His ways.

Now in Chapter two, we look at the Objectives of the Church. What are the main activities, objectives or ministries we should focus as a Church to Glorify God? The Chapter warned us that Ministry in church can be difficult to handle, like mercury, is fragile, and potentially dangerous. If we mishandled it, people can get hurt. The intent of Chapter two and three is that we will be able to address areas to increase our awareness of how God has planned for His church to function originally – and what we must do to keep it on course. The question we should ask ourselves is whether today's running of the churches is an accurate representation of what glorifies His name?

Ten Statements about the Ministry

The author bring to our attention 10 statements about the ministry, extracted from the book "Make Sense of the Ministry", which he deems are essential for the ministry, yet easily forgotten, and when they are, things get out of whack. Which means ministry will be mishandled, people get hurt, and God is not glorified. Below is the list:

1. The foundation of ministry is character.
2. The nature of ministry is service.
3. The motive of ministry is love.
4. The measure of ministry is sacrifice.
5. The authority of ministry is submission.
6. The purpose of ministry is the glory of God.
7. The tools of ministry are the Word of God and prayer.
8. The privilege of ministry is growth.
9. The power of ministry is the Holy Spirit.
10. The model for ministry is Jesus Christ.

All of us in church are involved in ministry in one way or the other, in pulpit, worship, scripture reading, ushering, flower arrangement, children, small group, mission, hospitalization, etc. – look at this list, and if we

committed to review it regularly, understand the implication memorize it, apply it to our various ministries; the author suggests that we will find little trouble in handling our ministries to glorifying God.

Four Major Objectives as a Church

As we look at the things that are basis and essential in ministry from the above list, and turned to look at Acts 2:41-47, we will be amazed how few major objectives there are when it comes to the ministry of the church. As a church, whatever we do, we ought to fall within the parameters of these 4 objectives, found within the original account of the activities from the gatherings of the early saints. The 4 major objectives are – Worship, Instruction, Fellowship and Expression, which can be easily remembered with the acronym – WIFE.

Worship and instruction are primarily the vertical activities, between us and God. We will be examining both of these in this chapter. Fellowship and expression deal primarily with our horizontal relations with other both within and outside the body of Christ, which we will look at in Chapter 3.

W is for Worship

See how worship spontaneously came out from the intense devotion of the gathering of the early believers. Acts 2:42 – 43a - ‘And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. **And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe ...**’. The Greek term for ‘continually devoting’ suggests an unwavering, single minded passion. When these early saints gathered, their meetings filled with intense devotion, as they sat and listen to the apostles’ teaching, assembled for fellowship and prayer, took the breaking of bread, when their main focus was on the Lord. The immediate result of their devotion was a ‘sense of awe’. That’s what worship is about, a human response to divine revelation. And when it happens, God is pleased, for He seeks for genuine worshippers (John 4:23).

Unfortunately, many churches today have replaced true worship with dry religious meetings, even led by well-meaning people, supported by folks who are faithful and dedicated . . . but the experiencing of true worship is missing. While preparing for EAT on this chapter, I shared with Amy that I struggled with how to present the meaning of true worship to us, not just from the head knowledge, but from the heart. I struggled and prayed, Then God showed me this statement from the book ‘Cultivating Your Inner Life’ about heaven. The problem perhaps is that we are trying to get people into heaven/worship, we should do instead is to get heaven/worship into people. Heaven/Worship only comes when the presence of God is there. With the presence of God, we see things from His perspective. Our main focus should be on God – with unwavering, single minded devotion. God’s glory should be at the heart of our worship, the glory of His Being, of His love and of His redemption. Worship can only be experienced from the inside out.

May we pray and seek the Lord to lead us into true worship, the kind of worship that captures our hearts and riveted our full attention on the living Lord. Once we experience that, nothing less will satisfy our souls.

I is for Instruction

The Acts account assures us that the early Christians “were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching (v.42)”. According to Acts 4:4, the church grew as “many of those who had heard the message believed”. Later as the details of caring for the flock in Jerusalem multiplied, the apostles continued to devote

themselves to “prayer and to the ministry of the Word”. As the church with all the new Christians grew, there was an increasing need for sound instructions, solid meat and deeper truth, from God’s Word.

The same is true today, churches cannot lose sight on the importance of solid biblical instruction. Well-fed sheep will have a greater tendency to remain healthy sheep. As a church we need to focus on exposition of the Scripture, and to be faithful and frequent declaration of the truth of God. We need to “preach the word . . . in season and out of season”. We need to be faithful in teaching of the Bible, and to feed the flock a solid and balanced diet of biblical truth. In doing so, our flock will become more equipped to assist and serve effectively in the work of the ministry.

Why solid, consistent instruction from God’s Word from church leaders and hunger for solid meat from believers is very important to us? Because it:

- Gives substance to our faith
- Stabilizes us in time of testing
- Enable us to handle the Bible correctly
- Equips us to detect and confront error
- Make us confident in our spiritual walk
- Overcome our fears and remove our superstitions

A word of caution here, we must not forget that Instruction is one of the church’s 4 major objectives, not the only one. To leave out 3 of the other objectives, and all the while highlighting only on increasing knowledge of the Word, is to buy into an extreme that God never designed for His people. Let us not only wake up to our objectives, but also be aware of the danger of becoming out of balance. Remember 1 Cor. 8:1 – “But knowledge puffs up while love builds up”. We need to watch out:

- If knowledge is theoretical only, we will become arrogant.
- If knowledge disregards love and grace, it will lead to intolerance.
- If knowledge becomes an end in itself, it will become our idol.

Two More Objectives Complete the Picture

Just to briefly mention that the last two objectives pull us close and personal with each other. Fellowship reveals that the church is a caring flock. True fellowship means that we care about and therefore care for one another.

In our expression, the church reveals that it is a reaching body. Expression would include evangelism, a mission vision, showing compassion to those outside and inside our circle who are in need.

Reasons we embrace these Objectives

Acts 2:47 read that the early Christians were ‘praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved’. Here in ancient Jerusalem was a group of believers whose worship was spontaneous, whose instruction was substantial, whose fellowship was genuine and whose expression was compassionate. No wonder so many new folks were attracted and that the Lord added to them their number day after day. When we embrace these objectives, our eyes get off

ourselves and unto the Lord; our own petty differences are minimized which deepen our unity together; when we kept in balance, we will create an attraction of people to the Lord; becoming what the church originally designed to be.