

The Bride, Chap 3 – A Genuine Concern for Others

A Brief Review

The primary purpose of the church is to glorify God. The most primary purpose of our lives is not that we make a name for ourselves or even leave behind a legacy, it is simply to bring glory to His name. Remember Jeremiah 45:5 – “But you, are you seeking great things for yourself? Do not seek them”. Don’t seek great things for yourself, regardless of how gifted or blessed you are in your life or ministry.

A Close Look At Our Objectives

First, the church is a *worshipping* community. If our church is not engaged in worship, if our focus is only on instruction, on fellowship or even on evangelism, we could call ourselves a school, a social club or an outreach organization, but not a church.

Second, let’s remember that the church is a place where we receive *instruction*. We learn from God’s Word when we’re together, but our learning is not limited to verbal instruction. We learn from the model of one another’s lives. We learn from experience. We learn from failure, loss and trials. We learn from the great hymns, from the songs of faith. In the process of learning at the feet of our God, He gets the glory.

Remember that these two objectives are emphasized in Acts 2 passage – “*They were continually devoting themselves to teaching (instruction)*”; “*They kept feeling a sense of awe*”.

Close Fellowship

We also find in the same Acts 2 segment that the church is to be a place of *fellowship*, a community of believers who demonstrate *genuine concern* for each other. The early Christians “continually devoted themselves . . . not just to teaching, to breaking of breads, and to prayers, but also to fellowship”. The Greek word for fellowship is Koinonia, which always has togetherness in mind . . . sharing something together or sharing in something together. The early Christians were together. Their lives become entwined with one another, feeling each others’ strains and struggles, deeply caring for one another. When we truly fellowship with each other, we enfold ourselves in another’s lives, we participate in another’s struggle and success, we give our time and devote ourselves to one another.

From the New Testament, true Koinonia results in two specific expressions: 1) To share something with someone something tangible, helping him or her meeting a need. 2) To share in something with someone else. That is sharing one another’s struggle and success. People are hunger for acceptance, love and friends, people are not persuaded --- they are attracted. We will communicate far better by what we are than by what we say.

What will be the takeaway to be a truly caring church? We can do so by being presence (regular in church services and joining a small group, by knowing each other, building up each other, caring for each other, even to the extent of correcting and admonishing one another to holy and righteous living, serving one another by our spiritual gifts, bearing with one another in meekness and humility. As in our Vision and Mission, we are to be a holy, loving, united people glorifying God, loving Him and each other, transforming hearts and lives together.

True Expression

The fourth and final objective of the church is its expression. It is a reaching body. Again in Acts 2, we find a growing momentum, needs were met, and we are therefore not surprised that “The Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved (v.47)”. We find the early church did not keep the good news to themselves. They were so compassionate and excited in sharing the gospel. In Acts 3 and 4, we are familiar with the story of Peter and John, how they healed the man, who was lame from birth at the gate of the temple, how they boldly witnessed for Christ, were jailed, released and still continued to preach the good news, in spite of threats and persecution. “Many of those who heard the message believed, and the number of men came to above five thousand (Acts 4:3-4). Pls read Acts 3 and 4 on the details. Here I would like to draw 3 parallels for our take away from this passage:

- 1) In Acts 3:6, - Peter said, ‘Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give to you. . . “. Have we ever come across people, who are in needs, and wonder what we have that we can give to them? It will not be our silver or gold, though we may have them. It would be our knowledge and experience of God’s greatness and His grace, His good news for our salvation, that we can give to them, to help the ‘lame’ to walk in His beauty and greatness.
- 2) In Acts 3:13 – Peter said, “Why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?” Have we been blessed by God in our lives and/or our ministries where people were surprised in the differences we made? Do we rightly point them to God's power and godliness in our lives? Directing them to God’s grace and salvation, and not to our own glory.
- 3) When demanded by the authority strictly not to speak and teach at all in the name of Jesus, the apostles replied, “Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to listen to Him?”. May the Lord give us the conviction and courage to listen to God, and not to be threatened by the World, in teaching and spreading the good news to all.

Four Observations about Evangelism and Missions

- 1) It was never limited to the church gathering – believers come to church to worship, to be instructed, and to find close fellowship, they spread out to evangelize. The main place for evangelism is at the market place!
- 2) Evangelism was always initiated by the Christian - We have to initiate the contact. Christians did so all the way through the New Testament.
- 3) Evangelism was usually connected with another unrelated event or experience - such as an intense opposition, a healing, a conversation, a supernatural event, an argument, a devastating occurrences. (I would suggest we re-examine this carefully, I trust the Lord opens the hearts of people in different circumstances, not always in supernatural events, at least not in my experience). But we need to watch out for occasions when people are more readily opened to the truth and help.
- 4) Evangelism was never something anyone was forced into manipulated to do – The early believers certainly gave the message with bold conviction, but never forced or manipulated the message, they waited for the Spirit of God to move. Remember the power of the ministry is the Holy Spirit, we do not

evangelize with our own resources. Caring for people, becoming really interested in their world, their situation, their personal concerns is still the most effective method of winning the lost.

Two Dimensions of a Church's Ministry

1. The depth of a church is determined by its quality of worship and instruction. We cannot give up one and focus on the other, having both gives us the depth.
2. The breath of a church is determined by its commitment to fellowship and evangelism. We will not be broad if we stop evangelizing. If we forget the world in need, we will not be a caring flock (a caring flock should not only be inward looking), otherwise we will be lack of balance. We must keep reaching out to people who are in need.

The ministry of the church is truly a genuine concern for others. We need to stop talking about it and start doing it.

Christ's first order of business is changing the world He died for, and He chose to do so not by His own, but with His church (His Bride), turning the world around.