

Discerning 2 Extremes in the Church Today

We've got a whole new generation coming up that knows so little of the Word of God. Pastors have got to do more teaching now than ever before. And yet, with it, they must also have the move of the Holy Spirit that is lacking in the overall church today.

There is far too much lightness and looseness in the church—a spirit of irreverence if I may say. Laziness is prominent and has led to biblical illiteracy as most Christians depend on the latest contemporary church fads and the popular teachings of those who have been elevated in the marketplace of Christianity, instead of searching the Scriptures for themselves.

But there are certain segments of the body of Christ and groups of individual men on the earth that possess great light. They have a track record of faithfulness, integrity and longevity. They are sound in the Word and have a thorough understanding of the gifts and operations of the Holy Spirit. They are more than leaders, teachers or figure-heads. They are fathers.

Seek them out. Sit at their feet. Learn from the example of their lives and ministry. Too many young people are not respecting and listening to these elders in the body of Christ. The amount of false ministers that stalk our land does not do away with the true. There wouldn't be a counterfeit unless there was a real.

I'm a missionary evangelist/revivalist. I travel. I see two extremes in churches today. I see the error that many young pastors make in opening up their churches to fanaticism and sensationalism without the thorough preaching and teaching of

the Word and the order of the Spirit. Some are so hungry for revival that they try and run their churches like that.

You can't run a church like a crusade or by having constant revival meetings. If you teach the sure Word of God and have true Pentecost without fanaticism, fluff and sensationalism, you will reach people in your city and community. And if you teach and train your people to reach the lost you will have salvations, baptisms of the Holy Spirit, and people healed and delivered every week inside and outside the church walls.

The other extreme I see is older pastors who can sermonize well but do not open up their sheepfolds to the flow and manifestations of the Holy Spirit. So their members suffer from the impartation and edification that comes with the move and fullness of the Spirit. This is the reason many churches are dry, dull and listless. And so to make up for that lack, churches will often use entertainment, fun activities and social events as a substitute. There is nothing wrong with any of those things. I enjoy them myself. But they don't satisfy, fulfill and equip the spirit of man.

I recall a story that an old Pentecostal minister recounted to me when he was a young youth director in his home church. He had all these great ideas and programs that he wanted to implement into the youth ministry with the pastor's permission. His pastor sat and listened patiently to him expound on these ideas for a long while. Finally, he spoke up and politely responded: "Over the years we have found that prayer, teaching the Word and moving in the Spirit will always get the job done."

Prayer, teaching the Word and moving in the Spirit build strong local churches with substance where it cannot be blown down. Spiritual houses that are built with heavenly materials will not be shaken when the storms of life and winds of doctrine blow or when persecution comes.

One day my wife and I were praying for a pastor. The Holy Spirit told us that this pastor had only been given one talent, but because he had taken a stand against man's wisdom to grow the church numerically and had not compromised, he had qualified for a strong spiritual house. That doesn't mean he would have a megachurch with multitudes of people, but he qualified for his reward based on his faithfulness to obey the Lord's wisdom instead of the wisdom of men.

I've been in the ministry long enough to know that a pastor's responsibilities are numerous and challenging. As a good shepherd, not only does he have to feed the flock and be available for them in life's crises, but he must learn to conduct different kinds of meetings, counsel people, visit the sick, and perform weddings and funerals. He must also care for the young, train workers, keep unity among the flock and administer church discipline when necessary. And yet he must carry out all these functions with great wisdom so he won't make a worse mess of things. It takes a special grace to shepherd a local body. Perhaps the greatest of these graces is possessing a true shepherd's heart that finds great joy in laying down his life for the people.

But we must also understand that one could perform many of these duties without much prayer, solid teaching of the Word, and the move of the Holy Spirit. God wants us to pastor and minister supernaturally. Those are the heavenly materials that hold it all together.

Strong local churches are necessary in this hour for the perpetual growth of vibrant Christianity. There is an attack on the local church that must be guarded by the faithful. Without the local church my own ministry would have no sending power for most body-wide traveling ministries depend on the local church for care and support, and the local church needs these ministry gifts.

There has always been great opposition to strong local

churches from the outside—the devil, religion and the world. We expect that, but what a tragedy it is when the local church is attacked from within—when Christians criticize, burden and bring trouble and division to these churches and their shepherds.

Let us all realize that every local church has its imperfections, but if hearts are right, God can use them for His purposes. Let's be an asset and not a liability to our local shepherds and sheepfolds. When we bind together and stay in love and unity, we are strengthened, the grace of God is multiplied and we can change the world.

The days we are living in require our steadfastness in these things more than ever before. Strong local churches are the hope of the world.