

Have These False Goddesses Infiltrated Your Church?

A number of decades ago, many people exited traditional and mainline denominational churches because their needs were not being met, and they were hungry for the deeper things of God. As a result, para-church organizations were raised up and played a key role in the training and discipleship of new converts. Bible schools were established to equip pastors and leaders. Many of those pastors and churches that were raised up during that time, however, have now become as structured, rigid and set in their own agendas as the churches they came out of.

I see a trend today that is attempting to reverse this process and avoid another mass exodus from our churches by using methods and developing programs that will either keep current members from exiting our churches or draw new people into them, which is what spawned the seeker-friendly church philosophy. Usually this is done by planning various events or offering new and exciting programs that attempt to produce a quality in the church from the outside in. And this is not the pattern of the New Testament.

Let the fruit grow the ministry

The Lord gave me a word a few years ago that further magnifies this truth: "Let the fruit grow the ministry and not the ministry grow the fruit." He went on to use the example of the woman at the well who had an encounter with Jesus that led to an entire Samaritan city being impacted with the gospel (John 4:28-30, 39-42). The fruit of that woman's testimony produced greater ministry among many other people. This is the pattern we see throughout the gospels and the New Testament. The key to this fruit lay in the revelation, power and compassion Jesus walked in as a result of His fellowship with the Father.

All fruit grows and flows from within that fellowship.

We cannot produce a quality in the church from the outside in as is common in the church world today when we start a ministry or a program, embalm it with some sort of structure and then try and breathe spiritual life into it that will produce fruit. The New Testament pattern is to find out where the Holy Spirit is already moving and spiritual life is already flowing, and follow that. Then build just enough structure to facilitate that life. That way, if the operation of the Spirit of God changes or fruit is no longer forthcoming, there is so little structure established that things can easily be shut down or changed to facilitate a new way or a new flow of life. Conversely, changing outward forms, structures, worship styles, adding a new mission statement, new programs and new outreaches or changing the name of your church or ministry are all false, unproductive ways to produce spiritual life. Spiritual life, health and vitality flow from the fellowship we have with the Lord within our spirits.

The goddesses of modern church growth

Elaborate buildings, large numbers of people and an increasing flow of cash are not signs of spiritual life and vitality nor do they guarantee the same. The church did not begin with that focus, and yet somehow, modern church principles have put the emphasis on attendance, buildings and cash. Some have called it the ABC's of modern church growth. But many false religions of the world have a large following, magnificent buildings and lots of cash, too. Although we are not opposed to any of these things in and of themselves, they are not the true indicators of spirituality. As a matter of fact, often these things serve as a sort of façade or smokescreen that hides the real problems and issues that are facing the church in this hour. We've been guilty of painting and decorating the cart while neglecting the sick horse.

My younger biological brother, who is a bit of a wordsmith,

came up with the following quote that illustrates the “cart before the horse” mentality that is so prevalent in the body of Christ today:

Another meeting, another offering, another song, another convention, another banquet, another special speaker, another concert, another project, another program ... and so “church life” continues, but the changed life remains scarce. If the horse is healthy, the cart will be pulled. If the horse is unhealthy, making the cart more attractive is useless. –Roy Farias

There is a subtle, almost subconscious mentality in the church today that places great emphasis on the outward and external appearances of Christianity. We are trained by example to esteem appearance, presentation, professionalism and showmanship above hidden service and meeting the everyday, pressing, oft-unspoken heart needs of individual people. We are easily impressed by the trappings of the production of the church and fooled by its big names and big conferences. I’m afraid there is a large gap separating the culture of the modern Western Church from the heart of God as revealed through Jesus in the gospels and through the early church.

The culture of the kingdom of God

The sad truth is that in much of the church world, the culture of the kingdom of God has been lost to the culture of hype, greed, religious politics, a Hollywood Jesus and the professional business of the church to such an extent that many churches resemble a political machine or a corporation more than God’s culture. God’s culture begins with the family, the home, making disciples through life relationships, reaching and caring for others with the gospel and the love of God.

The true disciples of Jesus are losing the taste for the shallow and superficial, and are separating themselves from

those entangled in the appearance of spirituality. Many people have become disenchanted with the Church because of hurt, misuse and abuse, religious politics and leadership caught up in the things of the flesh. People are looking for depth in the Word and in their relationships, a free-flowing move of the Spirit, personal empowerment and leadership that does not play political games.

Here is a word from the Lord that a prophet friend of mine received in a visitation:

Do not look at the TV and larger media ministries to try to understand what I am doing in my body today. They have a part to play, but they are the visible-to-the-eye veneer of the body that people see. Those who are carnal and immature see the outward appearance and are impressed, thinking that these are the height of ministry and where the Spirit is concentrating today. But they are mistaken.

See what I see, many small churches and ministries investing in relationships, walking in love, pouring their lives into each other; this is where the Spirit is moving today. There is a revolution taking place in my body, a revolution of relationships, discipleship and love. This will affect whole communities and economies.

See what I see, many churches all over the world in which people are accountable to one another, working through conflicts, walking in love and growing as my disciples. That is where my Spirit is moving today.

Many are running to and fro, asking, "Where is the next move; what is the next season of the Spirit?" And I say to you that it is under their very noses. They stumble at the supernatural work in their midst and refuse to humble themselves and be taught because they seek the sensational and that which appeals to the outward man. They fail to recognize the true move of God because it must be spiritually

discerned.” –John Fenn

The simplicity in Christ

Have our minds been corrupted from this sort of simplicity that is found in Christ?

Notice the simplicity of the early church culture in Acts 2:42-47. Look especially at verses 46-47: “And continuing daily with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”

Their kingdom values, lifestyle, mannerisms, behavioral patterns, common love, caring and sharing with one another produced great fruit. The fear of God and the power of God were in manifestation, too. It seemed as if evangelism was effortless, as the Lord was adding people to the church daily. Today with all of our technology, promotional techniques, sophisticated programs and much labor, we are seeing minimal fruit. What is the solution to this fruitless toil?

It all starts with reversing our mentality to think from the inside out and not from the outside in. The effectual working of the power of God must be at work in the hearts of the saints—a power that activates them into service. We have much preaching and teaching of the Word of God today, but there is an absence of the power and move of the Holy Spirit—much sermonizing but so little saturation of the Spirit.

When the Spirit of God is moving, people’s hearts are full of satisfaction, joy and fulfillment. If He is not moving, people become stagnant and begin to murmur and complain. The Word and the Spirit causes great preparation in every heart for the Word brings the instruction, correction and reproof, but the Spirit brings an activation and a fire in people’s hearts.

Let's forget about the cart and tend to the sick horse. {eoa}

Themes like these constitute a large portion of Bert Farias' book, Passing On The Move Of God To The Next Generation.