

How 'Word Without Spirit' Ministry Is Killing Today's Churches

I love the Bible. I read it. I live it. I preach from it. I know it to be the inspired Word of God. But it is the voice of God and the Spirit's witness in my life that makes it so. The Bible is not just a written Word but a living word.

Many more Christians need to read the written Word, but many also need to learn to commune with the living Word. There is a difference.

"who has made us able ministers of the new covenant, not of the *letter* but of the Spirit. For *the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life*" (2 Cor. 3:6, author's emphasis).

It is the Spirit who gives life. The flesh profits nothing. *The words that I speak to you are spirit and are life*" (John 6:63, author's emphasis).

"*All Scripture is inspired by God* and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16, author's emphasis).

The Bible is dead to those who do not have the life of God. Sermons are dead without the Holy Spirit infusing life into them.

One day a pastor decided to ask for input from his parishioners concerning his sermons. Since he spent a good portion of his week preparing sermons for his congregation, he was interested to know if his sermons were helping them. One woman raised her hand and asked him a provoking question.

"Pastor, if on your way to the pulpit God asked you to adjust your sermon and preach something else, would you be open to

doing that?" Here is the pastor's response:

"Well, how would I know that was God?"

In other words, this pastor knew the Bible to be God, but was doubtful about God speaking to him outside of the Bible. He knew the written Word but not the living word. He knew the Scriptures but did not really know the author of the Scriptures. He had the Word without the Spirit.

Isn't that how it is with so many preachers, theologians and believers today? Many say that they're sticklers for the Bible, but yet those same people don't believe in the gifts and manifestations of the Holy Spirit and don't have a real fellowship with Him. They don't know the Spirit's ways and are unfamiliar with His leadings.

Here's a compelling question:

Did the apostle Paul know that when he was writing his letters to the churches that it was Scripture? Did he think that what he was penning by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost would one day be canonized as Scripture and read by billions of people over centuries of time? I think not. And I don't think the other apostles and writers of the New Testament knew it either. They were given revelation and inspired to write it and express it according to how it took shape within them. In fact, many of them wrote the same thing but from different perspectives and angles.

Writers of the New Testament and Their Different Perspectives

For example, we have the four writers of the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—who wrote many of the same accounts of what Jesus did and said, but they were all written a little differently with details that the others didn't include. Take for example, the Great Commission. Notice how each writer emphasizes different points concerning what Jesus told them when commissioning them to go into all the world and preach

the gospel. Read these verses carefully.

Matthew

“Go therefore and *make disciples* of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen” (Matt. 28:19-20, author’s emphasis).

Mark

“He said to them, ‘Go into all the world, and *preach the gospel* to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved. But he who does not believe will be condemned. These signs will accompany those who believe’” (Mark 16:15-17a, author’s emphasis).

Luke

“He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and accordingly it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that *repentance and remission of sins should be preached* in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And look, I am sending the promise of My Father upon you. But wait in the city of Jerusalem until you are clothed with power from on high’” (Luke 24:46-49, author’s emphasis).

John

So Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. *As My Father has sent Me, even so I send you.*” When He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven them. If you retain the sins of anyone, they are retained’” (John 20:21-23, author’s emphasis).

Can you see the similarities of the commission of Jesus to His

disciples, and yet can you also see how different aspects of it were emphasized by the different writers? The same thing could be said about the writers of the epistles. There were many similar things written differently. That's because it was written by the same Spirit.

My point is that even though the Bible is complete and we cannot add to it, men today are still speaking and doing things by the inspiration of the Spirit of God. Men who do not know the Spirit and are not familiar with Him are at a great disadvantage. Some who are strictly of the "letter" of the Bible are often quick to exclaim, "If it's not in the Bible, it's not God!" But what does that mean? What they usually mean is that if the example of it is not in the Bible then it's not of God. Others say that if it disagrees with the Word, you should throw it out.

Examples

Can you find an example of Jesus or the apostles punching someone and seeing them be healed? Yet, men like Smith Wigglesworth have done it. I've done it. One time I slapped a young woman on the ear, and she was healed of deafness. Where do we find that example in the Bible?

Several years ago I was preaching in West Africa, and a young man was struck by the power of God on the streets right outside the facility I was preaching in. He froze in his tracks and couldn't move. Where is the example of that in the Bible?

There are fewer than 200 miracles in the Bible. Does that mean God is limited to less than 200 miracles among us today?

I've been in meetings when the Spirit of God was in manifestation and believers broke out into great joy and dancing. Where is that in the Bible? There are many professing Christians who don't believe in dancing because they don't see it in the Bible. They don't believe in holy laughter because

they don't see it in the Bible. But the Bible commands us to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18), and these are examples of what happens when people are filled with the Spirit.

In other words, dancing and holy laughter are outflows of being filled with the Holy Spirit. We can be so filled with the Spirit that we are drunk. Well, you can imagine a number of things a drunk person would do when he's under the influence. We are supposed to live that way, people—under the influence of the Holy Ghost! That's God's best for us. Glory to God!

It's amazing the number of things so-called believers refuse to believe because they can't find them in the Bible. Some don't even believe in playing musical instruments in church because they don't see that practice in the Bible. Entire denominations have been formed from such extreme beliefs.

The Bottom Line

Multitudes were saved in the book of Acts, but there are only a few examples of how they got saved. There is the dramatic conversion of Saul (Acts 9), the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8) and the Philippian jailer (Acts 16). Was your experience like theirs? If not, does that mean you aren't really saved? Do you see the foolishness of that sort of reasoning? The important thing is to get saved regardless of the example of how you got saved.

Here is the wisdom to all these questions: The Bible is not just a book of examples but principles. If there is no exact example of it in the Bible, yet it is still in line with God's nature and principles, don't throw it out. Only from the Bible can we know the true character and nature of God and His principles, so the Bible is still our final authority.

A majority of God's principles are to save, fill people with His Spirit, and heal and deliver. He wants to see His people blessed and edified. He will never violate those principles,

but there are not always exact examples of what He does in the Bible. After all, Jesus did many, many things that were never recorded:

“There are also many other things which Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that not even the world itself could contain the books that would be written. Amen” (John 21:25).

Here’s the bottom line. The Bible is not enough. The Word is not enough. We need the Word and the Spirit. We need the life and the manifestations of the Spirit of God. We need to judge all things, not just by whether they agree with the Word, but by the anointing of the Holy Spirit. I’ve observed many strange and flaky things people have supposedly done “in the Spirit,” but there was no anointing on it. We must also learn to evaluate things by the anointing. A casual observer will not be able to discern the difference between what is and what is not the anointing, and what is soul and what is Spirit. For example, I see so much in the so called “prophetic” movement today that does not carry any anointing, yet people are running after it.

“But the anointing which you have received from Him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. For as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and just as it has taught you, remain in Him” (1 John 2:27).

Familiarize yourself with the true anointing of the Holy Spirit, and with Jesus, the living Word. Go to meetings and places where He is in manifestation, for many of these things are caught more than taught. Learn to commune with the Lord in the Spirit. Pray much in other tongues. Learn to flow with the Spirit in your own private prayer time and communion with God. Get full and get free! Remember, the letter kills; it is the Spirit that gives life. {eoa}

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