

The Pentecostal Church Is Not Exempt From This Biblical Mandate

Before any business of the 77th International General Assembly got underway on Tuesday morning, Presiding Bishop Timothy Hill called for the privilege of addressing the General Council. The following represents the heart and vision of the address, which was followed by a powerful period of prayer, laying on of hands, anointing with oil and a parade of ministers and laypersons who represent the core of the future of the Church of God.

Two years ago, as I stood to accept your nomination as general overseer, I remember saying to you that the Church of God must be a church of continual prayer, committed purpose and critical presence. I used those words intentionally to simply convey the message that “it has to matter that we are here.”

To say that we are a church of critical presence is not in any way meant to indicate that, in and of ourselves, we are the remedy to the many ills and issues of the world. But it is to say that we, the Church of God, as part of the body of Christ, are a channel through which the Holy Spirit may flow in order to bring healing and restoration to a world desperate for redemption.

Our movement must never be content to withdraw into the dust-covered museums of irrelevance. Nor should we succumb to being a subculture of meaningless existence, heavy on paper-thin rhetoric but short on gospel execution and implementation. We must make a gospel difference and a kingdom impact.

The church does not exist in a bubble or a vacuum. We live and do ministry in a socio-economic context, influenced by a world-view, political ideologies and spiritual forces. It is

within this context that we are called upon to share the gospel, live out the gospel and contend for the faith. Those with discerning eyes will recognize that the space around us is not neutral. There is a battle for dominance and secular forces have a clear agenda to frustrate and derail our mission. The world is seeking to promote morality without religion and render the church inconsequential.

This is not a new agenda; it is just camouflaged in the garments of post-modernity. When we strip away all the euphemistic language, it boils down to good versus evil, righteousness versus unrighteousness, morality versus immorality and love versus hate.

The church can only be effective in this age if we recommit to the mission of Jesus Christ. This mission is about truth and love. We must perceive truth through the eyes of Jesus Christ and live and speak this truth through the wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit. The desperation gripping our world today places a renewed gospel demand on the Church of God. To sneak in and out of Orlando without speaking something of kingdom significance, and without doing something of human impact, will not justify our being here. A thousand and one issues are screaming for resolve, and most every institution is crying out for reformation. Yet the truth is, we are not in the world today to reform the world.

Our mandate in the world today is not political. It's not social and it's not economic. And while every issue is important and most likely affects someone we love somewhere, we must not be seduced by the idea that if we can "fix" this and then "fix" that and then "fix" the other, everything will be fine. We were never invited to "fix" this or "fix" that.

The calling of the church is to proclaim the uncompromised gospel of Jesus. Whenever that which is central, becomes peripheral, then that which is peripheral becomes central. Every issue in America and the world today is of significant

importance yet there seems to be few acceptable answers. Since we were together last in Nashville, our world has been in a constant state of convulsion over issues that no one knows what to do with.

Name the issue—any issue:

- â€¢ Poverty
- â€¢ Terrorism
- â€¢ Racism
- â€¢ School Violence
- â€¢ Immigration
- â€¢ Substance Abuse
- â€¢ Sexual exploitation and human trafficking
- â€¢ The denigration and abuse of women and children
- â€¢ Abortion
- â€¢ Unemployment
- â€¢ Healthcare
- â€¢ Leadership Transparency and accountability

On and on I can go, and every individual would place each issue in a different order of importance. However, I want to name you the most concerning issue in America today. It's not poverty, immigration or any other that I may have listed.

The greatest issue in the world today is—a lukewarm church, listless and unable to effectively make a difference in this world.

The very definition of lukewarm-ness describes too many churches on the global landscape. They are too cold to be hot—and too hot to be cold. In such a Laodicean state, these churches face the grave danger of the Master's expulsion.

He cannot endure any church in such condition.

Some are like the Church of Ephesus, "they have abandoned their first love" (see Rev. 2:4). It wasn't an accident. Ephesus didn't "lose" anything, but they drifted away and

pushed the main thing aside while pursuing other passions. It wasn't that they didn't love Jesus at all, they just simply did not love him like they used to.

I ask the church of God today, "Do we still love Jesus like we used to?" Do we love him enough to forsake personal agendas, political agendas, prideful agendas and adopt His harvest agenda:

- His "people" agenda?
- Hurt people
- Lonely people
- Hungry people
- Sick people
- Lost people

We've come to Orlando this week united under the banner of "FINISH in the Spirit and Power of Pentecost." For two years now, you have embraced, as never before, the mandate to:

Find unreached people

Intercede in prayer

Network together

Invest in church planting

Send laborers around the world and

Harvest ripened fields and bring lost souls to Jesus

This is the Great Commission on course for a great completion. But hear my heart: We are a Pentecostal Church, and Pentecost must not be viewed apart from the Great Commission.

Likewise, the Great Commission should not be viewed apart from Pentecost. They are intertwined and interwoven.

You've heard me say for a while now, "We were not filled with the Spirit for our enjoyment, but we have been filled for our employment."

We are not Spirit-filled so we may sing louder, run faster or

engage in more vigorous worship. We have been filled with the Holy Ghost in order to effectively fulfill the mandate of Christ in Acts 1:8, "You shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you: and and you shall be my witnesses."

That's it.

This is part 1 in a two-part series. For part 2, [click here](#).

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