

The Secret Ingredient for the Church to Bring Forth the Next Great Awakening

The church began as a pure and powerful free-flowing river in Acts 2. But through the centuries of time, that river has picked up much dirt and debris (sin, man's traditions, doctrines of demons, carnality, compromise and so forth) until it became so muddied and diluted of its former character, power and authority that it devolved into a shell of its former glory and only a phantom of the original.

However, in the last few centuries, a glorious restoration has begun in its character, power and authority until now we stand on the precipice of the greatest awakening and move of God this world has ever seen.

The early church was birthed in Jerusalem where Jesus commanded them to wait for His *power* (Acts 1:8), and through the early apostles this *power* was carried forth to Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth at the time. Then years later the "work" that Saul and Barnabas were separated unto added to the expansion of this gospel of *power* very quickly (Acts 13).

"As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus" (Acts 13:2-4, NKJV).

Most church members and saints, however, are not called to the "work" but specifically called locally. They have jobs, families and relationships in their Jerusalem. Others' sphere of influence will extend out to Judea, Samaria and the

uttermost parts of the world. This is the Lord's divine design to add to the local churches and multiply the number of disciples and the obedience to the faith of many (Acts 6:7). It is to be the church's primary focus and commission.

Unity in the Body When Each Finds His or Her Place

This is a simple word but profound and will create greater unity in the body when everyone finds their place. We cannot think of ourselves higher than we ought to, but at the same time, we cannot lightly esteem the lesser or weaker members.

"But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased" (1 Cor. 12:18).

We often forget that this verse was written to the church at Corinth. It is in a local church setting and context. Here is another verse from another chapter:

"Do you not discern and understand that you [the whole church at Corinth] are God's temple (His sanctuary), and that God's Spirit has His permanent dwelling in you [to be at home in you, [collectively as a church and also individually]]?" (2 Cor. 3:16, AMPC). We need more collective movement in the body and less independent movement. I'll say more about that at another time.

The Work Versus the Local Church

Saul and Barnabas, along with three other prophets and teachers, were ministering to the Lord and fasting at Antioch (Acts 13:1-2), when the Lord separated them to a *work* whose sphere of influence would be far beyond the local church in Antioch. Not everyone is called, separated and sent that way. You can't make yourself a prophet, a teacher or an apostle, or choose it as you would choose a secular profession, as many self-appointed Facebook and social media individuals do. I'd rather hear a donkey bray in a barn at midnight than listen to some of these pseudo "apostles" and "prophets" tout their

latest revelations on social media. A true apostolic anointing has *power* attached to it. It is God who appoints, anoints, sets and sends.

We see the immediate impact and results of this separation and sending. Saul (Paul) immediately begins to operate in a greater *power* and authority (Acts 13:8-12).

A Transfer of Power: Stephen and Phillip

In the early church at Jerusalem, we see the same principle in operation as Stephen and Philip move from serving as deacons and tending to widows into a ministry of power and greater supernatural influence (Acts 6-8). What often happens, though, is Christians get excited about Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth, and they lightly esteem Jerusalem. Spirit-filled leadership will recognize callings and anointings, but it's the Holy Spirit who does the "setting apart."

You can't just lay hands on people to receive gifts and mantles, as is so common today, without the authorization of heaven and the direction of the Spirit. That's just treating the things of the Spirit as common and playing with them as if they're toys. It's childish and irreverent to make so base that which is holy. Immaturity should not be a leader of God's people.

Laying on Hands With Prayer and Fasting

Honestly, so much of the laying on of hands today is done in the flesh. Often there is no leading of the Spirit to do it. No faith. No reverence. No *power*.

I remember being a part of a full gospel but still traditional church that would lay hands on the sick nearly every Sunday. The pastor would call up the elders, most of whom had no anointing, give each of them a bottle of oil, and just lay hands on people with no faith, no unction and no *power*. Never

did I see anyone healed. Never was there a testimony of such. You might as well just have laid hands on a piece of wood.

Friends, these things are holy. The laying on of hands is holy, whether it be for healing or setting someone apart for ministry. There is supposed to be active faith and/or a transfer of *power* with it. There should be believing effectual prayer and at times fasting attached to it.

Notice that it wasn't until the apostles laid hands on the seven that Philip and Stephen began to move out and preach the gospel in great miracle *power* (Acts 6:8). They received a great impartation and transfer of *power* from the apostles when they lay hands on them.

Stephen

"whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them. ... And Stephen, full of faith and *power*, did great wonders and signs among the people" (Acts 6:6, 8, author's emphasis).

Phillip

"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed" (Acts 8:5-7).

This is not for everyone. We have no record of the other five deacons receiving the same impartation or transfer of *power* Philip and Stephen did. Yes, we are all commissioned to preach and to lay hands on the sick and cast out devils (Mark 16:15-18), but some are called, especially anointed, and appointed to a ministry office or function.

"Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And

God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that, miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues" (1 Cor. 12:27-28).

God sets in the body whomever He wills and appoints various ministry gifts. Some are called to work locally all their lives. Others will mature into greater callings of greater influence. Stay content in that and don't push for ministry beyond the scope of what the Lord has ordained. Even John the beloved, an apostle, appears to have limited himself to mainly Jerusalem for some time to care for Jesus' mother Mary and help oversee the local church before ending up at Ephesus, and was then confined to the island of Patmos in his later years. But he lived longer than the rest of the original apostles and became known as the apostle of love, from what we glean from the Gospel and epistle that bears his name.

Not every minister has an international ministry. I believe some ministries are confined to their present locale and region. The same could hold true with apostolic and prophetic ministries. Be faithful to your local church family and community as Philip and Stephen were, and if God sees fit to increase your sphere of influence, let Him do it. Don't initiate it on your own. Your overseers, if they are Spirit-filled men, will know it.

Find your place in your grace. Function in your unction. Remain in your lane.

In conclusion, read the following portion of Scripture very slowly and carefully, and think about Pentecostal/charismatic ministry today:

They compare themselves to one another and make up their own standards to measure themselves by, and then they judge themselves by their own standards. What self-delusion! But we are those who choose to limit our boasting to only the

measure of the work to which God has appointed us—a measure that, by the way, has reached as far as you. And since you are within our assigned limits, we didn't overstep our boundaries of authority by being the first to announce to you the wonderful news of the Anointed One. We're not trying to take credit for the ministry done by others, going beyond the limits God set for us. Instead, our hope soars as your faith continues to grow, causing a great expansion of our ministry among you (2 Cor. 10:12b-15, TPT).

I could say so much about these verses, but that will have to be for another time. {eo}

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