

Why We Need to Abandon the Machinery of Ministry

Church needs to be a place where people seek God in faith, prayer, and expectation. There ought to be an awe and a reverence of coming together corporately into God's presence. The Scripture tells us that even sinners should be convicted by the presence of God in our midst.

"But if all prophesy and there comes in one who does not believe or one unlearned, he is convinced by all and judged by all. Thus the secrets of his heart are revealed. And so falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you" (1 Cor. 14:24-25).

The apostle Paul lays out instructions for maximizing the power and presence of God in our gatherings. If things are arranged according to the Father's order and will, He will be present and manifested, and people will be drawn to Jesus. Conversely, nowadays church leaders study demographics and people's preferences in order to make church more appealing to them.

When we try and make church appealing to man, it actually detracts from the presence of God and what He wants. When we organize our church agenda and services toward pleasing God, it is then that men will be drawn to Jesus.

Here is a simple equation for this: Please God—Draw people. Please people—Detract God.

Building church to cater to people's preferences does not draw the presence of God. God knows what people need far more than we do. Following His plan is what brings His presence and power into manifestation. The greatest meetings are those where we follow the leading and direction of the Spirit of God.

Years ago, there was a far greater emphasis on making church appealing to God. There was a greater reverence for God and a caution not to grieve the Holy Spirit, or quench what He wanted to do and how He wanted to move.

Today, it appears we are so busy curtailing the church experience to accommodate what we feel people want or what they will respond to. So much care and thought goes into not offending the people, but so little consideration goes into not offending God.

We tone down the Scriptures on sin and God's demands for true discipleship.

We arrange the music around what makes people feel good and happy, loved and accepted.

We program our services so as to not go past a certain time.

The standard that determined early Church policy was pretty clear.

"If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone serves, let him serve with the strength that God supplies, so that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen" (1 Pet. 4:11).

We do demographic studies and research people's preferences to make people feel comfortable and loved in church, to make them return, and to know we are relevant. But God's wisdom is much higher and so much more effective.

What if God doesn't want them to feel comfortable? What if feeling comfortable is the root of their problem. Perhaps if people were allowed to feel uncomfortable they would seek God for His comfort.

Instead of trying to show them that we care, what if knowing God cares is the only thing that can set them free?

And shouldn't they return to church because they've had an encounter with God? And is relevance really that important when sin and spiritual blindness are the sinner's main problem?

The more we try and build God's house with our own efforts and in our own wisdom, the more we will labor in vain because we will only attract people to ourselves and our programs. But if we let the Holy Spirit build the house, He will attract people to Jesus.

As I read in a recent post that I paraphrased from Shane Philpott:

"There must be an abandoning by our preachers and churches—from what someone called the 'machinery of ministry.' The status quo, hold-down-the-fort type of thinking is killing the church. We are sorely in need of a return to a supernatural church comprised of spiritual initiatives and radical faith. We need to slay this manmade ministry that has been born out of cultural and social compromise.

"I believe we are headed for a time of 'pastoral clarity,' where leaders are going to experience epiphanies of just who they are and who they are not. Pastors will quit trying to be all things to all people and instead will embrace being that 'one' thing to those called under their leadership. A radical move of God will be preceded by radical change, and I believe we are closer to that shift than ever before."

I say a hearty Amen to that.

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