

Why We Need True Unity in the Church Today

The most important word the Lord has sown into my heart the past year is one of love and unity in the body of Christ. It was one of the last prayers of Jesus, which covers an entire chapter and must be answered (John 17). A unified growth/maturity and collective movement of the body must be manifested now instead of individualistic growth and so much independent movement.

God is building strong local churches and communities and preparing them for what He wants accomplished in these last days before Jesus comes. We need to understand the local church and the “work” (Acts 13:2), which is what many larger churches are moving in. In other words, their work is far reaching and not just local.

As a modern-day example, Daniel Kolenda’s Christ For All Nations ministry, which he inherited from Rinehart Bonnke, is a work, but now they have also added a local church in Orlando, Florida, and soon to be Bible school. The emphasis on the local church without the neglect of the work of reaching the nations must be understood. Most church members are not called to the “work” per se but specifically called locally. Others spheres of influence will extend out to Judea, Samaria and the world.

This is a simple but profound word that will create greater unity in the body when everyone finds their place. We cannot think of ourselves more highly than we ought, and 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, NKJV).

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. Not everyone is called, separated and sent that way. We see the immediate impact and results of this separation and sending as Saul (Paul) begins to operate in a greater authority and power (Acts 13:8-9).

In the early church at Jerusalem we see the same principle in operation as Stephen and Philip move from serving as deacons locally and tending to widows into a ministry of power and greater supernatural and widespread influence (Acts 6-8). This is how the gospel began to spread through the early church. It was through persecution (martyrdom) and power, not through the methods, marketing and machinery of men we are seeing today, especially in the West.

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." 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). This is not for everyone. We have no record of the other five men receiving the same impartation Philip and Stephen did. 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.

Not every evangelist has an international ministry. I believe some evangelistic ministries are confined to their present locale and region. I know of one evangelist who was a street preacher in his home town all his life. The same holds true with apostolic and prophetic ministries, as there seem to be

local prophets at Corinth (1 Cor. 14:29). 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 oversight, if they are Spirit-filled men, will know it. Find your place in your grace. Function in your unction. Stay in your lane.

Too many times Christians want their own vision instead of working with that of the greater. Not everyone has the same sphere of influence.

"Of course, we wouldn't dare to put ourselves in the same class or compare ourselves with those who rate themselves so highly. 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. 10:12-15, TPT, author's emphasis).

For example, I've often read and reread many of the late Kenneth E. Hagin's books because his visions and revelations were given to him for the body. Not every man or minister has this large of a sphere of influence. In his book, *I Believe in Visions*, he recounts his eight major visions and visitations of Jesus. Who do you think those visions were for? Do you think they were only for him? Do you believe those visions were only for one local church or community? No! They are for the body-wide universal church. Those visions were given to Dad Hagin, but they belong to you and me and the entire body

of Christ. They are far reaching.

The devil brings deception and misunderstanding to the body of Christ so that many will not receive such prophets. They find fault and criticize such honorable vessels (not all are honorable) and fail to receive from them. I've heard Christians call such holy men of God "heretics" and "charlatans." They are foolish and greatly deceived.

It's time for the Ephesians 4:11 ministry gifts to merge together and for the body of Christ to receive these proven, seasoned vessels of honor and be fully equipped and come into the maturity and the unity of the faith.

Don't Compete or Compare

Too many Christians and ministers compete instead of conform. They try to extend their own sphere of influence far beyond what God has ordained for them. They get envious and jealous of the greater influence of others and they strive to expand their own influence beyond the scope of what God has ordained. They do this through much striving and promoting and marketing efforts instead of receiving from the greater and staying content in their place. This is the reason we have 100 churches in nearly every major city and town in America and even in other parts of the world.

This happened to us on the mission field. Our young apostolic team had a calling and commission to establish interdenominational Bible training centers to the entire body of Christ in the nations we served in, but soon after, when pastors became jealous, they started their own schools so their people wouldn't go to ours. Such immaturity cannot be a leader of God's people. As a leader, you are called to help people find God's will for their lives, not your will for them. Big difference.

These impure motivations are what cause strife and competition in the church and divide the body of Christ and hinder the

work of God from advancing in a more accelerated manner. {eoa}

Bert Farias' books are forerunners to personal holiness, the move of God and the return of the Lord. They also combat the departure from the faith and turning away from the truth we are seeing in this hour. Bert's current passion is to promote a culture of the supernatural manifestations and ministries of the Holy Spirit in the church today and to pass it on to the next generation (Passing On The Move of God To The Next Generation). Other materials/resources are available on his website, Holy Fire Ministries. You can also follow him personally on YouTube (Holy Fire Ministries), Facebook or Twitter.