

Polarization Within The Church

IF---We used the new covenant for our operational principals within the Christian church, we would..

Meet together on a daily basis, in small groups, as equals. Everyone could minister, the gift of ministry in “every one of us” would be encouraged. We would pray and let God lead-- Christ should be the Head! The highest purpose would be to share the Gospel with the world--the Gospel of salvation, healing, deliverance and release in the name of Jesus. WE would spend a lot of our time feeding the poor and helping the homeless and visiting people in prison and those who are lonely and in need. WE would open our homes and hearts to the lost at every occasion. Money would not be a factor, we would simply use what God has given us.

Do we do this?

Are these the rules when we meet together?

No.

Rather we have a system of operation, which is based more on Old covenant principals, specifically the old covenant sacrificial laws. Rules and laws and ministry definitions which the new covenant clearly redefines or eliminates. Within the framework of the ritualistic meeting, ministry is a rarity, done only by one or two chosen few, and ministry is a type of authority over others. “Ministry” controls the money, “ministry” is given an “amen authority” which is beyond any authority the Bible gives. These traditions ultimately come from Roman emperors, Dark Ages popes and Protestant kings.

God’s people of today suffer under the burden of this system.

People in today’s churches are wonderful, kind loving people and they often “feel” like they are equals, and in fact often try to do all they can to empower others. Yet since these traditional rules are followed, and not the new covenant rules, there is a resulting polarization of believers.

Let me give you a few real examples:

A church which is near us, in a small town has a rummage sale every week. Now some churches have rummage sales and the purpose is to raise money, but this rummage sale is a bit different. They take donations from people and more or less give away the items they receive, perhaps charging only 10 cents or 25 cents for some of the clothes and books and toys which have been donated. This supplies a great need for the less fortunate people in this small town. This is a very great service, and by the definitions in the new covenant, is truly and important and Godly service--a ministry.

We go to this sale often and some times find things we need, and also have donated lots of stuff to the sale too. On occasion we have filtered in and helped the ladies who put the sale together each week (even though we are not “official members” of this particular church--love to break the rules of church--at least the wrong ones!)

We have made friends with the women who operate the sale, and often have said to them "What a great ministry it is to do this." They always get a funny look on their face, and say things like "Well, we're not sure if it's real ministry".

Why do they not believe in their ministry? We think it is because of the ritualistic function of the church service. This function serves to define us. It shows an example that only one person is the "Minister" and everyone else is not. And even though the person who is "ministering" may do all he or she can to encourage and empower the rest of the church to serve God, this repeated function gives a powerful example to the contrary. It gives the example that a "minister" is someone who has power, authority over other believers-- therefore if you start to think you have a ministry to do for God, you are in part saying that you ought to be the leader. So people are very very careful about the "m" word. And the church service teaches most to be sheep. To be "under authority", which partly means to act as if you do not have ministry gifts.

So of course these kind ladies at the rummage sale, who are doing a great service to God and their community, are very hesitant to believe that what they do is "real ministry".

So what is wrong with that? After all they're doing the right stuff anyway--right?

Well, here's the problem. At a certain point, after becoming friends with these women, we made the suggestion to them that they could put out some Gospel tracts at the sale. In fact we were glad to give them a box of tracts to set out on their tables. When we mentioned this idea, the woman we were talking to said something very interesting. She said "That's a good idea--I never thought about it like that"

Why is it that she "never thought about it like that"? We think it is because she does not know that what she is doing is a valid and important ministry. She has sat in "church" for many years and seen another example. Not an example of people working together as equals, everyone ministering, focusing on the Gospel. Instead she has been given a strong example that certain areas of function are "only for the pastor". She certainly understood the idea that she could share the Gospel with others, but thought it was not her area, not her "place" within the church.

Now are we saying that this church has some kind of wicked, evil pastor running it? Of course not! In fact we give a lot of credit to the pastor who "allowed" these women to do their ministry for God. He in fact may have been important in encouraging them to this work.

But here is the thing we see lacking.

The idea that ministry gifts ought to work together.

If we just simply read and studied Ephesians chapter 4 we would see that God has given everyone a ministry gift, and the highest call toward these gifts is to work them together. To have "unity of the Spirit" within the function of ministry. The description the Bible gives of the church function (Ephesians 4, 1Corinthians 12-14, among others) tells us the church ought to be like a body, different parts with different functions, working together.

But the ritual of the church service tells us that only one person can do the "real stuff" of ministry, and most of us should not "over-step" our boundaries. This can apply to pastors too. They can look around them at the church example, and see they have a certain job to do, and they can do it very well (at least as far the parameters of the system define), and see no reason to work with the idea that we ought to work together.

We have a system invented by kings which demands a king.

And people have a great fear of people who seem to have authority within this system--especially since there is a very strong belief that this authority comes "from God".

Here is another example.

A few years ago we stumbled upon a really great home meeting of Christians. It was a meeting, of a small group of young folks we were all in our twenties (okay, it was more than just a few years ago!), some married couples some single friends. We met together, prayed, studied our Bible, talked with one another, asked God what to do, and often did it, bringing unsaved people into the group and witnessing to them and praying for their needs as well as our own. God poured out His grace on all of us, Heaven itself opened up and God moved through everyone in unique and important ways, and He lead us to serve one another and whoever He lead us to. We did "real ministry", but no one knew it (not even us at the time).

Everyone (except us--even back then we were bad sheep!) belonged to a different church. We didn't care since we knew God wanted us all to be together and simply accept one another in love.

But then one week a pastor sat in.

Now he seemed like a nice enough guy to us, and we guess he just wanted to see what was going on. But when he was there, everyone just shut up. Everyone "sheeped out". All these on-fire, Bible preaching, Word prophesying witnesses of God. who brought down the power of God to the earth, became sheep. Quiet. Submissive. Frightened to speak out of turn, since "pastor was there". We kind of felt sorry for the guy, he missed the real church! He missed the real ministry! He had to do all the work when he walked in.

Why did this happen?

The only explanation is the polarization of the Church which we accept as "proper function".

When the pastor walks in, so does the pulpit and the altar and 1500 years of tradition, Tradition that says "he is the guy who is the Minister, and you are not!" Shut up. be quiet, don't talk out of turn, don't let anyone hear you preach the Bible, and the worse thing you can do is show that you are a minister. It would be like taking his job--stealing his authority!

Think about it.

How foolish all this is!

How it hinders God!

And it goes against common sense (and the Bible!)

Wouldn't it make a whole lot more sense to work together?

But you see, I believe that Satan has this very very powerful stronghold within Christian function. He looked through he Word of God and found the one statement that tells how to edify the Body--how to add to God's kingdom--how to get people saved. In Ephesians 4 the Bible says that "ministry" is what does this. "Ministry is what brings people into the

Church--into Christ's Body. It's imply common sense that the more ministry which is done, the more people will get saved.

But here we are, in the 21st century, following rules and traditions made up in the Dark Ages. Acting like Medieval peasants and kings. Playing ancient Roman games. Misdefining ministry as authority within the church, and so loosing it's function, limiting it's function, and therefore limiting God.

What would be wrong with working together?