WHOSE CHURCH IS IT?

by

Malcolm S. Evans

Do we have the capacity to let go and let God? So much of what we read about in Christian magazines today seems to me to be the outworking of Man’s attempt to organize God’s Church for Him.

There is nothing new in that. The very fact that the Church is divided into denominations points to Man’s interference in what should be the Church of Jesus Christ.

Our Lord’s final outcry in prayer in John chapter 17 was for unity:
For His disciples, He prayed: ‘so they may be one, as we are one.’ (John 17 vs. 12).

For all believers He prayed: ‘that they may be one as we are one. I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me….’ John 17 vs. 22 and 23).

Are we content to say to God – no, let us do it our way, and divide the church up, so that there are deep divisions and differences? We can try blaming Satan, but really most of our divisions have arisen because of issues of the flesh.
Our control of God’s Church continues apace, as we race to keep up with techniques for evangelisation and growth adopted by many rationalistic, worldly organizations.

Even the jargon has been borrowed, as we are seen to be ‘networking’, or adopting a ‘mission statement’, or choosing leaders who are able to ‘facilitate’ at conferences!

Whether we look at large Christian organizations attempting to tackle national or international issues, or local church groups and Fellowships seeking to evangelise a neighbourhood, attempts to wait on God for clear direction, and an unmistakable move of the Holy Spirit, are often feeble and impatient. The desire is to be seen to be doing, and, often with misguided sincerity, use the latest methods to deliver the gospel message.

How successful are our techniques for evangelism, church growth, and bringing new Christians to maturity in Christ?

Unlike education, there may not be an inspectorate to try to determine success or failure, but I am quite sure that God will call to account those to whom He has bestowed the responsibility of His great gifts.

Jesus commissioned us to go and make disciples of all nations. He was never anxious about His commission, so, neither should we be about ours. He did not use formulas and gimmicks to achieve results, He simply lived amongst people and saw them transformed by His words and actions. He laughed and He wept, He was angry and He angered others. He was tempted and He felt pain, but He was never deflected from His own commission. He called disciples to follow Him, but He formed no
organizations. He was outspoken, but He was also silent. He was revered, but there was never one so humble. For all these qualities He was crucified. As Christians (followers of Christ) we must look at ourselves, with self-examination particularly by those with the responsibility for leadership of churches and organizations. Are we prepared to admit that we possess few of the qualities that Christ displayed? Unless we have these qualities there will be no fulfilment of our commission. The question we must face is – are we prepared to be crucified?

Isn’t it time we set aside the gimmicks and formulas with which we try to run our churches and organizations, and instead seek the qualities which will communicate the life of Christ to others? Nothing else will work.

The latest jargon, the latest methodology, may sound and look admirable, but they are usually excuses which protect us from the real issues of life, and particularly our lives. A formula or a technique can easily replace insecurity, or a deep sense of failure or guilt. We end up taking our agenda from the world, rather than to it. We use techniques of the flesh to try to achieve instant success, instead of depending on the spirit and the heart to build qualities which require time to mature, but which endure for eternity.

Are we prepared to stop playing at Christianity, but instead become unmistakably followers of Christ?

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