

**I hope you are still encouraged...**

**As a fellowship we have many, many positives to talk and share about. There is uniqueness about our church that can only be of God.**

People feel and meet Jesus at our meetings, - a regular occurrence. We share the word of God faithfully, and we offer Bible based teaching and ministry. We sing songs of praise and worship to our Lord. We ask and invite the Holy Spirit to attend every meeting. We need more of this...

The Bible uses some useful analogies to explain the church: Gifts and bodies. We all need to use the gifts God has given to us. We also need to recognise if we are a hand or a foot etc. Knowing what we are and what we can do is important.

I assume that we all know that the church is the only organisation that was created for the benefit of non- members. Once we lose sight of what we are here for - the great commission- then we have lost the plot.

We have the greatest resource ever known to man in the person of the Holy Spirit, to enable us to do what we have been asked to do. But still it is not easy. However, in reality the church is not an *organisation*, but an *organism*, that should grow and multiply. It is very much 'one poor man telling another, where to get bread'. The 'yeast' effect.

Growth in any church is more than numbers (although that certainly helps) but also the spiritual and maturing growth of its congregation. When we see a need in our lives, we do not walk away from it; we seek God's guidance for healing and correction. That is the real mark of maturity.

*'Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.'* (James 1:22-25)

*Our Motivation:* T.S. Eliot once said, "The greatest treason is to do the right thing for the wrong reason." Why would we even try to live by a standard that is so totally different from the worlds? It would be so easy to do it their way.

The answer is simply stated but by no means simply lived out: **our love for God and His creation.**

The Bible states in 1 Samuel 16:7, "*The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.*"

What we believe is important, but it doesn't stop there. How we act is also a test, the true demonstration of our priorities and convictions.

**If one watches how a person acts you can, in many ways, determine the level of his commitment to the Lord.** Although we can *all fail* in this regard, and we all have our 'off days/moments (including pastors, especially when we feel challenged -positively or negatively-about something close to our hearts) we all need to be truthful to our commitment to God and each other. Jesus even talked about some who responded positively to God's voice but then acted out their own wills.

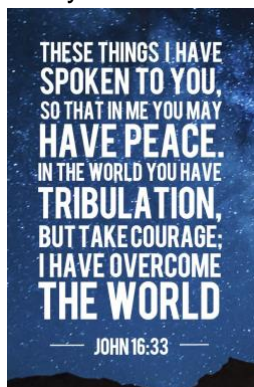
In the parable of the two sons, He told of one who, when commanded to work in the vineyard, responded, "*I will, sir,' but he did not go*" (Matt. 21:30).

THEREFORE  
ENCOURAGE ONE  
ANOTHER AND BUILD  
ONE ANOTHER UP.  
JUST AS YOU  
ARE DOING.  
1 THESSALONIANS 5:11

This means being duplicitous or being two faced.

As I see it, the real test is not necessarily creed or conduct, but one's motivation—not only what one does, but why one does it. *God is interested in motivation.* To the teacher of the law He said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your (entire) mind"; and, "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Luke 10:27).

And beyond the motivation is the cost. Why would anyone want to pay so high a price for such a lifestyle? That is a decision every person must make.



Will we—do we—really want to serve Christ enough to pay the price He asks? Everyone should consider that cost. Jesus said to His followers, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it" (Luke 9:23-24).

As you can see, it's not a simple challenge, and it doesn't get any easier when He demands our unquestioned loyalty. (Luke 14:26-27). *It's not an easy decision, but it is a right decision.* The people I know who love, serve and seek Christ best, want to do His will above all else.

The badge of Christian discipleship is not a lapel pin, a cross around one's neck, a bumper sticker, or even membership in a church. It's a life-style—an identification with Jesus' words, life, and mission. It is a commitment not just to a cause and a creed, but also to a cross-bearing lifestyle that demands our very souls.

There is an urgent call in this day for a once-and-for-all loyalty to the mission of Christ, a never-say-die commitment to His person and message. Because we live in a time of fickle followers, fair-weather worshipers, and slumbering saints, it is vital that we take every opportunity to proclaim that it's not easy to be a Christian—*it never has been and never will be.* Because of that, we need a renewed commitment on the part of those who call Jesus Lord to stand up and be counted regardless of the cost. We have the biblical and spiritual platform, the vision and mandate to achieve something by seeking God's power and mercy.

Despite the recent events in our nation I still believe that many things are now in place to enable us to be the church that God wants us to be.

As the encouragement on the Prayer sheet indicates (**I Hear His Whisper...**"Speak my words of truth.") are, we ready for the next stage of our church life...

WHY DOES GOD BLESS US WITH ABUNDANCE? SO WE CAN HAVE ENOUGH TO LIVE ON, AND THEN USE THE REST FOR GOOD WORKS THAT ALLEVIATE SPIRITUAL AND PHYSICAL MISERY.

John Piper

THE GRACE OF GOD ALWAYS ARRIVES FROM THE "THRONE OF GRACE" ON TIME. NOTHING CAN HINDER GOD'S PLAN TO SEND GRACE WHEN IT WILL BE BEST FOR US.