

# The Faceless Church



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# Introduction

*"...I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it"  
Mathew 16v18*

As I walked through the centre of a little town in Poland, I came to a shop selling televisions. As always programs were running, and as I passed, the Rock band "Genesis" came on. I thought at first they had got saved, as they started to sing "Jesus He knows me", but it was not salvation they were singing about, it was a song poking fun at Evangelists and the church. It was not anti-God, or even anti-Christ, but a group of sinners laughing at what they saw of the church; the face of the church, the part that the world sees. For the world laughs at the money grabbing and the glossy publicity, while under the surface the sin goes on. They laugh at our attitude to God, "Jesus my mate, no matter what I do". It seemed as if they mocked our lack of holiness; that they expected more from us. They expected our lives to match our words, but they saw no difference between us and their own sinful lives. I was angry, so angry I bought the cassette, not because my anger was against this group of sinners, but with myself as part of the body of Christ, the church. Is this how people see my life? I listen to the cassette regularly on the way to missions as a reminder that how I live speaks louder than what I say. I wish I had the video to show every Christian, especially to those in ministry. Maybe it would help us to look again at our lives, to look at our testimony and ask ourselves, "Do I glorify the Lord in my life?" I know that none of us are perfect, but are we trying or are we just continuing as we are?

*Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.  
2 Corinthians 13v11*

The church is the body of Christ, a continuing physical reminder in this world that God sent His son Jesus Christ to die for our sin, and that through Him we can know the Father and receive a new eternal life. My hope in writing this book is that we as individuals would be challenged, and that our lives would be changed to conform more to the likeness of Jesus, that glory may be given to God for what He can bring about in a persons life.

# Chapter 1

## Who should we blame?

*".....continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling."  
Philippians 2v12*

As with any problem it is always good to find something or someone to blame, someone to make as a scapegoat for the problems we see around us. Maybe we should blame the Minister, the youth leader or the Deacons, or even better, the church, the faceless church. That organisation we attend but are not responsible for. Yes, let us blame the church, for that is where the real responsibility lies for what the world sees of Christianity today. The church, let us blame the church.

*"...so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."  
Romans 12v5*

The church is not an organisation or a club that we become a member of, but a body made up of all those who have taken Jesus Christ to be their Lord and Saviour. As a Christian it is not an optional extra that we choose to become a member of a church, but is something that on entering the Kingdom of God, we become part of; we are the church! We are the ones who make up its strengths and weaknesses. We are what makes a church united or divided. Perhaps the biggest problem that a church faces today is us, its members, the very thing that makes it exist, for we are the face of the church. When the world looks at the church they see us, the Christian. The church, and even God Himself, is judged by the world by what they see in our individual lives. This puts each one of us in a position of awesome responsibility before the Father for the way that we live our lives, both as an individual and as a body, the church.

We cannot separate ourselves from the failings of the church any more than we can separate ourselves from the actions of our own hands or feet. We are responsible if only by the fact that we allow sin, and dishonouring conduct, to continue and say nothing. When we see a failing in the church we should not

just sit back and criticise from a distance, but we should seek God and ask if this failing that we see is our responsibility? Should we be doing something or saying something to correct this weakness?

I started off this chapter by quoting Philippians 2v12b, a verse that speaks of "*fear and trembling*", fear and trembling before a Holy God who will hold us accountable for our lives. Salvation belongs to those who have taken Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. I do not believe it is possible to have one without the other, for to take Jesus Christ as Saviour means repenting of our sin, admitting to Him our individual failings without any excuse, and then turning from that sin to follow Him. That act of following is not a temporary change in direction, but a lifelong commitment to the one who has saved us from sin and death. A lifelong walk of trying to live our lives as He directs. If this is not happening then is Jesus Lord of our life? And if He is not Lord, is He Saviour?

*"Not everyone, who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?'*

*Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"*  
*Matthew 7v21-23*

This scripture along with many others is a constant warning to us to examine our lives, to make our Christian life more than just words, a life that is trying to serve the Lord with all that we are. Revelation 3v15-16 is another piece of scripture addressed to the church in which we are warned, this time of being "lukewarm", and again warns of severe consequences.

This may seem a bit hard for the opening chapter of this book, but a fear of God is a healthy thing. A holy fear of the Creator can stir us up to go forward for Him, and the recognition that we are going to meet Him face to face will spur us on to do something with our lives that will bring glory to God. Also, before we look at specific problems in the body, we must be clear in our mind that this is not so that we can point the finger at others, but so that we can recognise our own responsibilities and failings as an individual in the body. If we need to point the finger anywhere, let us point it at ourselves first.

*"...First take the plank out of your own eye, then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.*

*Matthew 7v5*

# Chapter 2

## Do we want change?

*"What do you want me to do for you?" "Lord I want to see", he replied.  
Luke 18v41*

"What do you want?" said Jesus to the blind man. *"What do you want?"* It seems such an unnecessary question. The man was blind, he was in need and yet Jesus said, *"What do you want?"* We would have all said "He wants to see, he wants to be healed," but did he? Jesus asked, He checked to make sure that the man really wanted to see again, for to see would mean change. He was a beggar, he didn't work. He just sat by the road all day asking for money, for help, for pity. If he could see, all this would change, he would have to work and earn his keep, to take up responsibility for himself and his family. He could no longer look to others to support him, but he would have to make it on his own.

The same question is addressed to us, the church. What do we want? Do we want to continue as we are or do we want to see the truth, to be healed? Do we want to see the truth about our own individual life, even if we may not like what we see? Do we want the truth, if it makes us unpopular with the world, or maybe costs us in time or finance? Do we want to see? We do not have to see. The man did not have to ask for his sight, he could have just asked Jesus for some money so that he could continue his lifestyle. We too could ignore the main problems in our lives and just ask the Lord to let us continue as we are. That He would just grant us peace and quiet, allowing us to get on with our lives as they are.

However, I believe this man wanted much more than just his sight. To the people around him he was a sinner, the Jews constantly related blindness or some other disability to sin, and so this man was more than just blind, he was looked on as someone in sin. Even as he called out to the Lord the people rebuked him. (Luke 18v39). Why would Jesus want to associate with a man like this? Why waste the Masters time on a sinful man? The man however persisted. He wanted to be whole; he wanted to be free from any accusation of sin either in his or his parents' life. He wanted to be able to stand before the Lord like anyone else, and so he cried out even louder, *"Son of David, have mercy on me!"*

He knew who he was and he knew what he was, but he saw Jesus as the one who could free him, who could lift him out of this terrible life. He wanted to see. Again the question must be asked; do we want to see? Do we really want to know the truth about our lives, our habits, our worldliness or would we rather not know, for sight brings about responsibility. Jesus most criticized the Pharisees who said they knew the way. If they knew the way, if they could see, why did they not follow it? The same is true with ourselves; if we know the truth, if we can see, then we become responsible for our failings and sin.

Before you waste your time reading the rest of this book, ask yourself: do you want to change? Are you willing to change? Because the rest of this book is about change. It's about looking at ourselves as individuals and as a body, looking at how we can be better servants of God.

There is such a simple formula to start this process, it is so clear from this passage of scripture. One man fighting against the crowd to come closer to the Lord. The crowd felt that this man would just be a nuisance to the Lord, that he was not worthy of Jesus' time, but this man cried out. He first cried out for mercy; for the Lord to look upon his sad plight. He was not afraid of the embarrassment before others, but was determined to get to the Lord. He knew the answer to all his problems lay in Jesus. Nothing he himself could do would deliver him; only by coming to the Lord could he have change in his life. It is here that we must start; we must start with a cry for mercy, for forgiveness. We must start with repentance.

In the Old Testament we read of the history of Israel. We read of a nation that was called to serve the Lord and, while they did this, the Lord blessed them. He lifted them up above the nations of the world; they overcame their enemies, even those who were so much stronger than themselves. However, when they drifted from God, they were trodden down, defeated and despised by the surrounding nations. During this time they had no influence on those around them, but instead became a laughing stock, an object of ridicule in the world until finally, in desperation, they cried out to the Lord for mercy.

Today the church is in a similar position; we lack influence and authority in the world around us. Instead of leading the way we are dragged along by the world, mocked and despised. Yet this church is the bride of Christ, the one Jesus is coming back for. Is it not time for us to cry out for mercy, to ask for cleansing, for healing and restoration, so that once more the church of Jesus Christ can stand in the world as a true representation of Jesus Christ in this world today? The time has come for change, but do we want it? Like the blind man, the question we each must ask of ourselves is "What do we want?" Jesus is coming back for a holy bride that befits the Son of God. Will we come to Him to be

cleansed, or will we be dragged to the bathroom screaming? So often Israel suffered captivity, persecution and suffering because they had left the ways of the Lord. We serve that same Lord, He is unchanging. Are we going to come to Him of our own free will or will He have to force us. What do you want?

*It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.  
Psalm 119v71*

When Israel called out for mercy, when they came back to live in accordance with His will He lifted them up, He glorified them before the nations and showed them off as His children. What do we want?

*"...Jesus of Nazareth is passing by."  
Luke 18v37*

But one man stopped Him by crying "Mercy". Will He pass us by?

# Chapter 3

## Let us return to the Lord.

*"....If you are unfaithful , I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name."*

*Nehemiah 1v8-9*

In the last chapter we looked at the blind man and the question was asked, "What do you want?" If the answer to that question was that you want to serve the Lord, then we must return together to the Lord. Like the blind man we need to cry out for two things, the first is "mercy", the second is "sight".

For if we as a church are to return to God from our worldly state, we will not be walking back with our heads held high, but in repentance for what we have done, for the sin we have committed, or just allowed to continue without comment. We are the church and we must take responsibility, not only for our own sin, but for what has been allowed to go on within the body. The sin in the church, the worldliness and disobedience to the word of God is not something that we can separate ourselves from, indeed it is something that we must associate with. As we look through scripture at the great men of God who brought restoration to Israel, we see that they associated themselves with the sin they saw around them.

*"...I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my fathers house, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly towards you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave to your servant Moses."*

*Nehemiah 1v6b-7*

*"We have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and rebelled: we have turned away from your commands and laws".*

*Daniel 9v5*

*"O my God, I am too ashamed and disgraced to lift up my face to you, my God, because our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the*

heavens."

Ezra 9v6

All these men brought about great things in Israel, but all of them started with repentance. The trouble is that our sin has become so normal, our worldliness part of our life, so that we cannot see it. Like the blind man we need to cry out for sight, to cry out that the Holy Spirit would show us and convict us of our sin, that the Lord would show us just how filthy and downtrodden we are in this world today. We have lived this way for so long that it seems normal to us, like a person living next to a busy road, the noise of the traffic is always there but it is not noticed. The church today has become numb to its sin. We no longer see how far we have fallen, our worldliness or the distance we have drifted from the heart of God. Yet He calls us, He calls us to repent, to draw unto Him again, to experience the life that He has for us.

*"Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place."*

Revelation 2v4-5

The world mocks us because they can see the mess we are in. They see that we are just like them, and so they laugh. We say that we have the answer, but they see us as part of the problem. We need to come to the Lord in repentance for what we have done, for this sin is not just against us, but in our sin, as the body of Christ, we have dragged down the name of the Lord into the filth. We have lowered His holy name and if nothing else, that alone should bring us to our knees in repentance. Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel all repented. They fell to their knees and cried out for mercy and God heard and restored them, He not only forgave them, but He lifted up Israel once more.

The only hope for a pure church, for a cleansed bride of Christ, lies in repentance, of forgiveness and restoration by God Himself, and it is this He desires. It is not Gods will that the church should be downtrodden in its sin, but that it should be a light in the darkness. In the church today Holy hands need to be raised, but not only in praise and worship. First they need to be raised in repentance, in a cry for mercy to a Holy God from an unholy people. It is embarrassing, it goes against our egos and the spirit of this world which is to lift self up, but this is where we need to start.

Revivals over the years have started with individuals seeking the Lord. This is

what is needed today. Publicity campaigns to lift up the church will do nothing compared to what God can do with a holy church, for the revival we need, is a hunger for holiness, a revival of light in a dark world. Like Daniel in Daniel chapter 10, the answer may not be immediate and there will be opposition from Satan, and even from other Christians, but an answer will come. Daniel was heard because he humbled himself and sought Gods ways (Daniel 10v12), he turned from what was sinful and disobedient, and sought to do the will of God. If we will do this God can lift us out of this bed of sin in which we lie.

Jesus is coming back for a pure bride, which is a certainty; the word of God tells us this. It is time for the bride to get dressed. There are two ways. Either we volunteer, or we are volunteered. God is the same God who allowed Israel to suffer until they cried out for mercy. Let us cry out now, why wait until we have to be forced.

*"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow leads to death."*

*2 Corinthians 7v10*

The repentance we need in the church is not the sorrow of this world, a sadness at being caught. We need a true repentance, a turning away from the ways of this world and a following after the ways of God. The example for us is Christ, we have the Bible to learn from and the Holy Spirit to convict and guide us. We have no excuse and none should be offered. Let us bow the knee and cry for mercy. The blind man was not worried about what was said by those around him, all he wanted was the Lord's mercy. So we too should not worry what the world will say as they see us repent in our congregations. It is not them we need to fear but our creator, God. Fear Him.

*"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom..."*

*Proverbs 9v10*

*"Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trust in the Lord will be kept safe."*

*Proverbs 29v25*

# Chapter 4

## Lord I want to see.

*"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will."*

*Romans 12v2*

One of the great problems that face the church is that we have become so used to being part of the world, and allowing the world to come into the church, that we no longer see sin as sin anymore. Things that in some countries should, according to scripture, be viewed as outrageous behaviour are accepted as standard behaviour in many churches. We need the Lord to give us sight to see ourselves, we need our minds renewed.

Now some may say that they can see, that they already know the mess we are in. If that is true then we are in a worse position than if we were blind, for if we can see why have we not repented earlier? Jesus during His time in this world was hardest on those who claimed to be able to see, for their hypocrisy was far worse than the sin of those who sinned because they knew no better.

*"Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.""*

*John 9v41*

Today, we often meet such people. They have left the church as they felt it was not good enough or spiritual enough for them. In their eyes they were above the rest of the body of Christ, living on a higher plain. If this is so, then pride is their sin. Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah did not separate themselves from those in sin; they lived among them, so that through their lives and testimony, they could lead by example and word in order that the rest of Israel would come back to the Lord. Leaving is no answer; a living, loving example is what is needed in the church today.

We need to see the truth about ourselves. Like the people living by the busy road, we once more need to hear the traffic, but how? The answer is through a renewed mind, a mind that thinks the way of God rather than the ways of man.

We need to immerse ourselves in the word of God, to examine ourselves in its light, and change what needs to be changed in our lives through repentance.

It is not enough just to read the Word of God; we need to apply it to our lives. Matthew 7v24-27 tells the story of the wise and foolish builders. In both cases Jesus talks of people who heard His words, yet only the wise builder put them into practise. We need to be reading the Bible and asking God to show us what needs to change in our lives, allowing Him to speak to us through the Holy Spirit.

For the years before we came to know the Lord our culture was the culture of the world, the culture of the society around us. We are no longer of this world, the culture that should be ours is "Kingdom culture", the ways and the practises of God, the ways of the Word of God.

When I look at Nehemiah, Ezra, and Daniel, I see people that did not compromise with the things of this world. We can see that Daniel and Nehemiah were men of wealth, probably Ezra as well, yet they cared more about the things of God than finance. They cared more for the things of God than being popular. These men did not lead because they compromised to keep the peace and be liked; they led because they stood for the truth and because others could see the truth in them. We see in Nehemiah 13v6 that Nehemiah had to leave Jerusalem for a short time, and immediately the Jews went back to compromise and sin. Nehemiah on his return did not compromise or come to terms with this sin, he took action.

He threw Tobiah out of the temple courts (v8), he rebuked the working man (v15), he rebuked the nobles (v17), and he even rebuked those who wanted to trade with the Jews (v21). Nehemiah was willing to deal with the world, to live in it, and to trade with it, but on terms that were according to the Word of God.

Today if ever there was a word that was eating away at the Word of God it is the word "but". That little word that makes an exception for us. So often excuses are made with that "but". There cannot be "buts" in the Kingdom of God. The "Word of God" is God's word and He is a God that doesn't change.

*"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."  
Hebrews 13v8*

Instead of excusing ourselves with a "but" we need to repent and ask Him to give us the strength to live His way, for when it is His way He is there to help us walk the path of truth. For too long we have tried to keep people happy, it is time to make God happy. The Kingdom of God consists of that which submits to the rule of God, exceptions and but's go against that rule, and put our ways and

desires before the Lords.

*"Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ."*

*Galatians 1v10*

For the Christian, being popular with people should not be our priority, we do not help people by making excuses for them or their sin. Instead we need to stand for the truth and be leaders by living holy lives among the people of God. Nehemiah built a wall around Jerusalem, it was there to keep out the enemies of the Jews; it was there to restrict the entrance of the world into Jerusalem. I believe that now is the time for the church to rebuild the walls, to show the world that we are separate from them and that if they wish to deal with us it must be on our terms. However, this wall needs to be built in each one of our lives. Let us ask the Lord to help us see our true state, that we may throw out the rubble, the sin in our lives; and then let us rebuild the walls of holy living.

*"...Come let us rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and we will no longer be in disgrace."*

*Nehemiah 2v17*

# Chapter 5

## Big "buts".

*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.*

*Genesis 2v24*

I must admit I thought a few times before writing this chapter as it may well be offensive to some people, however, the gospel is offensive, especially when it reveals the truth about our situations. It would have been nice to have left it out, and would probably have saved me a lot of problems, but I feel the Lord would have it included. Sometimes when we are trying to see something, it helps if we are pointed in the right direction.

As I said in the last chapter, we as a people of God have become a people of "buts", a people of exceptions and excuses, a people who just let things be to keep everyone happy. It is a sad thing that in doing this, our testimony fades before the world. In some areas we are especially prone to let things be when it involves the subject of love.

Over the years I have noticed the amount of teaching at youth groups, warning of the dangers of sex before marriage, and of forming relationships with unbelievers, and this is good. The Bible is very clear about this in 2 Corinthians 6v14 and so it should be taught. We need to teach the young people so that they may grow up in the Lord and in His ways, and that they should follow our example, but what example do we set?

I find it so strange that a youth leader can approach a teenager and tell him or her that they are going the wrong way, yet it seems that the same teaching isn't applied to the lives of older Christians. I have often been shocked at the joy on a Christians face as they announce a forthcoming marriage in which one of the partners is an unbeliever. It should not be with joy but with sadness that this news is broken. Often we will go even further. We will attend the wedding, we will join in the celebration of this sin, we will ask Gods blessing for this disobedience to His word. In some cases we will even allow the marriage to take place in our churches, the house of God.

*"...yet even he was led into sin by foreign [unbelieving] women."*

## *Nehemiah 13v26*

The great men of God in the Old Testament were the ones who cleansed the house of God, who threw out the idols and those things that were set up in opposition to His word. I wonder what these men would say today? Was it not intermarriage that led the Israelites astray so many times, (even Solomon himself), yet we are willing to celebrate it today. "You must think of their happiness" we say, but what of the Lord, what about His happiness. Is it more important to celebrate a friends sin, than to stand firm in the Lord? For if we do not stand for the truth, and name this as sin, who will?

Yet we go further in our degradation of marriage by giving greater and greater support for divorce and remarriage among Christians. I have been astounded at the excuses that are given, to allow these things to go on in the church today. How can we set an example to the young Christian if those who are older, not only in years, but often in the Lord, allow this sin to continue. Are we brave enough to confront those over twenty one with their sin? Are we strong enough in the Lord to speak on this truth, or are we also involved in it to the extent that the finger may be pointed straight back at us; or are we just worried that we will lose members from the church? We are the church of Jesus Christ, we are His followers, we are those who are endeavouring to follow His ways. If someone does not want to follow His ways then are they part of us? I know this sounds very hard but then the truth often is. It is time to stand for the truth and not concern ourselves with the loss of friendship and popularity. What we need is popularity with the Lord.

The subject of marriage is an emotive one. So often we only look in the short term, at a temporary worldly happiness, but we must look beyond this, to the purity of the Kingdom of God. We cannot support these things any longer but must make a stand for the Word of God and declare sin for what it really is.

*"This is a profound mystery - but I am talking about Christ and the church."  
Ephesians 5v32*

You may be thinking; "What is so important about marriage, why go on about this?" Well the answer is very simple. Marriage was one of the first things that happened to man after his creation. It is a Holy ordinance of how God wants us to live as man and woman. More than that however, it is a physical representation of Christ and the church. So often marriage is used as a picture of Gods relationship with Israel and the church, and so often, divorce, adultery and intermarriage are given in the Bible as a picture of their sin. It is a living

symbol of something that God established at the beginning of mankind. As we see the sin of the world increase, marriage is something that we see more and more despised and belittled, even in the church.

If we want to show and teach the young people in the church the way to go, then we must walk that way first, and be willing to speak out when brothers and sisters go astray. If we do not speak out, what kind of friend are we? It is a time to cleanse the house of God of these idolatrisers and purify ourselves once more. This will not be easy, it will not be popular, but it must be done. When it is, God will once more pour out His blessing by making us a light in this world; that once again we will be seen as a Holy people living only for the Lord. This sin is not only evident to those in the church, but also to the unbelievers. If we do not take marriage seriously then why should they? We need to stand very firmly for the truth in this area, for how else will we be able to speak out in other countries when all the world does is look at our example. We need to encourage and strengthen each other in these areas, it is often the greatest test of who we love most in our lives, and let us remember we serve a "jealous God", Exodus 20v5. It may mean losing a love in this world, but it will mean gaining a greater love in the Lord, and if we walk in His ways He will always bless us with more than we give up.

Love and marriage are very emotive subjects, but we cannot be ruled by emotions. We must learn to stand firm on the word of God. We cannot have "buts", exceptions and excuses for anyone, no matter how close a friend they are, but instead we must stand for the truth. If we do not, then we are no friend at all, neither of the one close to us, nor of the Lord.

*"Remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins."*

*James 5v20*

# Chapter 6

## Let us rebuild the walls - Starting at the top.

*"But the priests, who are Levites and descendants of Zadok and who faithfully carried out the duties of my sanctuary when the Israelites went astray from me, are to come near to minister before me; ....."*

*Ezekiel 44v15*

If the church is to stand out in this world as a true example of holy living, then the leadership of the church must stand out as an example for the congregation to follow. As the apostle Paul would say:

*"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."*

*1 Corinthians 11v1*

A leader, by definition, is one who goes ahead, who knows the way and walks in it. If you want to walk in the mountains, the best guides are the ones with years of experience, who know the area and its dangers well. So we too need leadership who lead us by the example of holy living. It is not enough to have an academic knowledge of the word of God, but a life that shows by example as well as words is what we need in leadership today.

In 1 Timothy 3v1-10, Paul explains to Timothy the attributes he should be looking for when choosing the leadership of his church. In this passage on the qualities to look for, most of the chapter deals with the mans day to day lifestyle, and only at the end of verse 2 does it mention "able to teach". It is good to read the whole passage, but it is notable that it starts by saying that "he must be beyond reproach", in other words his life must be a constant testimony to those around him. This man must have preached with his life before preaching with his mouth. The passage then goes on to mention his marriage, and for very good reason, as you have seen in the last chapter. If, as leadership, we want to teach the church about marriage then we must live it, for how can we guide others if we cannot live it ourselves. Before writing this chapter I had a problem with the computer. I found many who had had the

same problem and could sympathise, but the man I sought out must have already overcome the problem. He was the one I needed to look to for help and advice on how to get out of the mess I was in. I didn't need sympathy, I needed solutions. How sad it is today that so many would rather just have sympathy. How much sadder if, as leaders, that is all we can offer.

As Paul continues in 1Timothy 3, he talks of men (v8) "worthy of respect", and (v9) "who keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience."

They need to be men who do not compromise, men whose first priority is to live a Godly life before the Lord. Over the years I have been most encouraged by this type of person, not someone full of sympathy and compromise but one who is straight with the truth in love.

*"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is Christ."*

*Ephesians 4v15*

There should be no room for compromise, or the dreaded "but", for surely a leader must be one who stands for the truth, in spite of emotional pressures and compromises. It is interesting that Paul never mentions that a leader must be popular, but that he should be respected. So often today, popularity is won at the cost of truth, by letting the people have what they want. It was this that disqualified so many of the Levites from ministering before the Lord in Ezekiel 44. Only the sons of Zadok had stood firm against the tide of pressure, and so were called to serve before the Lord.

There is no denying that being in leadership is tough, there are often great emotional pressures just to let things be. Many churches have leaders who are good friends with each other, or even family, and so it can often be a great temptation to say nothing, rather than cause possible friction in relationships. However, leaders should stand for the whole truth of the Word of God; they must stand out as examples of Christian living. This will require that leaders be ready to deal with problems and sin head on, not skirting around the issue, or pretending it does not exist. So often churches have been destroyed because sin was not dealt with, instead it was ignored and allowed to grow. In extreme circumstances it may mean that people will be asked to leave the church, Paul himself advised this in cases where there was no repentance; 1 Corinthians 5v13. It is no wonder Paul says that leaders are worthy of respect, for these things are not easy to do, and often do not come naturally. Certainly many things leaders are called to do are not pleasant, but they must be done if the body of Christ is

to be holy.

However, harder still is maintaining a constant testimony in our own lives. It is something that I have become more and more aware of, that people, both believers and non believers, are watching. They are looking at our lives, looking for the truth in us, looking at our marriages, our work, our whole life. Before they listen, they watch.

*"If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task."*

*1 Timothy 3v1*

# Chapter 7

## A fresh look at the church.

It is easy to stand back and criticise the church, to point out what is wrong, but this is of no use unless an alternative is suggested as to what we should be doing, and so this is the next step.

The church's role can be broken down into three basic parts, which put simply consists of "getting them in", "keeping them in", and "bringing all glory and honour to the Lord". These three parts are, of course, broken down into many divisions, but they are the basic roles of the church, and we must look at ourselves as the Body of Christ to see that we are fulfilling all these roles.

*"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

*Acts 1v8*

"Getting them in" I feel should be broken down into three parts; the first is what I would call "local evangelism". By this I mean the reaching out to unbelievers to bring them into our home church. This I believe should be our first evangelistic priority, as it enlarges the body allowing it to go onto the next stages of evangelism. Stage two; I would call "national evangelism". This consists of reaching out to other areas in our own country, and is basically church planting. We should be seeking to set up new fellowships in our own country, in different geographical locations, and among the different people groups that live in our nations. Finally, the third is overseas missions; working to plant, encourage and train believers in other lands.

*"In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost."*

*Matthew 18v14*

*"...To prepare Gods people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."*

### *Ephesians 4v12-13*

Just as "getting them in" can be broken down, so also "keeping them in" needs to be broken down to make it more manageable. The first part of keeping them in must be teaching, followed closely by Pastoral care, which includes discipline. The priority should be to get an individual into a close relationship with the Lord; once this is done many of the other problems just fade away. The third area of "keeping them in", I believe, should be training; the building up of an individuals gifting and calling, that they may be more effective in the work of the Lord.

*"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of Gods mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship."  
Romans 12v1*

Finally, we come to the part that many would say is the most important but I have left till last. Bringing all glory, honour and praise to our Lord. It would be easy to just say that this is the praise, worship and prayer times in our meetings, but how wrong we would be. I have left this part until last because although it includes our praise and worship times, it includes our whole lives, all day every day. It includes bringing our lives into the complete will of God, and putting ourselves in submission to His will. It is something that will have been accomplished if we are completing the other areas mentioned earlier.

It would be so easy at this point to just take a quick glance at the church and say, "we're ok, we're doing all that," but are we? Just as it is time to look at our own lives, and ask the Lord to show us what is wrong and in need of change, so I believe it is time to cry out to the Lord, and ask Him to help us see our churches as He sees them. It is so easy to say that everything's alright, it often goes against our pride to admit things are wrong, but for the sake of the Kingdom of God we need to repent of our pride and humbly seek the Lord that He would show us what He sees.

*"He who has an ear, let Him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."  
Revelation 3v13*

# Chapter 8

## Getting them in - part1

### Local evangelism, the church in the community.

*"...And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem....."*  
*Acts 1v8*

One of the greatest curses of the modern church is our buildings. As well as being a constant drain on our finances and time, they tend to be the focal point for the members of a fellowship, a place in which we live our Christian life, a place in which we teach and preach, and a refuge from the world outside. Now there is nothing wrong with these things, however, it can get to the point that nothing is done outside of the building.

When we look at the life of Jesus we see someone who was out in the community. He was found on the roads, in the houses, by the well, He was out among the people. Jesus told us to go to them. Unfortunately we expect the sinner to come to us. We, as believers, need to go out among the people and get into the community, to be involved with it, not just to sit in our buildings in a holy huddle praying that they will come in. Why should they, do they know us, do they see us, do we even bother to invite them apart from the odd poster on the church wall. It is incredible how much effort we will make to tell others of forthcoming events in the church, as long as they are believers. So often I have spoken at evangelistic events only to find the congregation made up of the churches from the surrounding area. We need to forget the other churches and invite those who need to hear. It is here that the curse of a building can become a great blessing, a tool for the Kingdom of God.

We need to make our churches a focal point in the community, to find out what the community needs, rather than just what we want. It would be nice at this point to be able to write a 1,2,3 plan of local outreach, but each community is different and we must be seeking the Lord and talking to the people to find out what they want, and how we can help. We are to be servants, and that means giving out to others. If there is no nursery facility in

the area, use the church, not as a preaching session, but to fulfil a need. The evangelism can be done one to one over a period of weeks. If there is nothing for the youth, provide something. Not just something for the church kids, but something the local youth will enjoy, maybe a concert. There are many good Christian groups who, as we get older, may seem too loud, unintelligible, and generally not what "we" like, but it is not "us" we are doing it for. It is "them". It is a way of getting people to cross through that great psychological barrier called "the front door". We need to make the people feel welcome. I am a great believer in church news letters, not for the believers, but to be posted around the surrounding houses every month or two. The local people can be made aware of what is going on, and inviting them in; thereby showing them that we are aware of them, and want to help them in their needs by being there to talk to. We are not of this world, but we want those in the world to leave it and become part of us, and for that reason they must know we exist.

These local needs can often be met very cheaply and effectively, it won't look spectacular, but it will fill a need, something Jesus always did. Yes, He met their spiritual needs, but also when they were hungry, He fed them, when they were sick, He healed them. Take a look at your congregation and ask how many live local to the church. If it is very few then you are failing in your Jerusalem. I am not saying we should compromise our faith, far from it. In all these things the truth of the Word of God must come first, but it is not a sin to allow our buildings to be used to benefit the local community.

Starting ministry in the churches' locality has many advantages, the people are local, and this means no transport or parking problems. Youth can be walked home if necessary. Even if someone needs help due to age or disability, it is just a matter of running across the road before the meeting to help them in. Having visited many churches, I have noticed that those who evangelise their local community win new disciples for Christ, and experience church growth through new decisions, while churches that just publicise to other Christians seem to get most of their growth through being the "in" church to go to. The first is real growth in the Kingdom of God, and it takes long term effort and commitment, but brings joy to the heart of God and to members who are committed to their fellowship. The second is a change of statistics in the Kingdom and accomplishes little in the eyes of the Lord, it creates a congregation who will most likely leave when somewhere else is "in". Local people are not interested in our church image before other believers; they are interested in what we provide for them, and whether we even care for them. If they feel loved they will come in.

Local evangelism should be the starting point for all outreach, a training

ground on which we can train those who will go into all the world. What is the use of sending people overseas, and to other parts of the country, if they have not been trained and proven at home first. Local evangelism is essential, not just for the unbeliever, but for those who are saved. Again, however, it brings up the subject of holy living. These people see us at work, in our cars, in the shops, and going in and out of church. If we are working among them they will come to know us, and will be watching. Unlike the quick overseas mission, where we can put on our holy act for two weeks, in the local community we must learn to live the Word of God all the time.

Starting our evangelism in the local community also makes financial sense. It is much cheaper to walk a hundred metres than drive or fly a thousand miles. Also as people get saved and the church grows, so does its income, allowing funding for outreach in other parts of the world. We thereby finish up with a larger congregation of locally trained Christians with the funds to minister in other parts of the world.

Ministering to a local community also has the advantage that those saved are living in that same community and therefore provide a testimony to the life changing power of Jesus. Local evangelism is not an option it is a command, and we should go.

# Chapter 9

## Getting them in - part2

### National evangelism.

*"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."*

*Matthew 28v19*

In the previous chapter I have talked about the advantages of local evangelism, not only its benefits in terms of growth in the church, but also as a training ground to prepare people to move out further for the Lord.

The next stage, "Judea and Samaria" as Acts 1v8 would put it, is an often neglected stage, especially in the UK, and indeed many other Western nations. It is the area of church planting in our own nation.

Many times I have heard it said that church planting is not needed because there are so many churches in our countries already. Well if that is true why does our country have such a small percentage of believers in its population? Let us be realistic for a moment with some simple mathematics. I live in a city of over 100,000 people. If 10% of the city knew the Lord, that would be 10,000 people. If we had churches of 500 people each, it would require 20 such churches, a far cry from what we have. The fact is that we have hardly touched our city for the Lord. To reach many of these people we must move out of our churches' geographical area and plant churches in new communities to bring in those the Lord is calling.

*"Then the master told his servant, "Go out to the roads and the country lanes and make them come in, so that my house may be full.""*

*Luke 14v23*

Jesus went to the people, and because He did this, the people came to Him. He went to their villages and communities to teach them, and the church today needs to follow this example. For, just as our zeal for evangelism in our local community has worn thin, so too has our desire to see our nation won for the Lord. We need this desire renewed, but for more than just holding prayer

meetings, we need to be doing something. Once we have built up our own fellowship through evangelism, thereby bringing a new growth of new people coming to the Lord, we need to move into other more distant areas, both inside and outside our city. This is not instead of local evangelism, but as well as, for if the church has been added to through new converts, these new converts should be encouraged into the work, making more workers for the harvest. The need for more churches is essential as a witness to the unsaved. My dream would be for everyone to be within walking distance of their church, not out of some great environmental concern, but out of a desire to see churches in every community. I believe this is the Lord's desire as well. If we are to meet the needs of the people we need to be where they live. Two groups that Jesus told us to take special care of were the young and the old. More than anyone else they need local fellowships, as they are the ones who do not have transport or finance to travel long distances to church, we must go to them.

Church planting can be done in various ways. If it's in another part of our own city it can come through growth of a house group. The main church can separate off some of its leaders to take on this new role, that means a cost to the home church in a loss of quality leaders, but if we are doing our job and training new believers, we will have others to take their place. It really comes down to a matter of priority, do we want to be bothered.

If we plan to plant a church further away, maybe in a nearby town or village, then a tent crusade, or use of a local school for an evangelistic event may be the way in which we get the beginnings of a new fellowship. Again new converts must be followed up and cared for by people set apart to do that work. It cannot be just some kind of after thought. Sometimes it is very hard to plant a new work, we need vision from the Lord, not just a good idea. It takes constant sowing of the Word before we see fruit. It may take many years to build up a new church. One church I have been involved in from its formation in Poland took many years to bear fruit. I have lost count of how many evangelistic events were held, and are still held. For many years there was no fruit at all, and many gave up, but through the dedication of a small group, a church was planted and is growing to the glory of God. At the beginning however, we were realistic. We talked of five years before seeing a church that could be independent. We went in with our eyes open to the work that lay ahead. If things were to move quicker then praise the Lord, but if not, a commitment to the Lord had been made to complete the work that He had given us. It certainly wasn't through professional skills or experience that the church was built, we felt totally inadequate for the task, but we held on to the

vision that He wanted a church in this small town. As I look at this small church today I marvel at what the Lord has done, I find it incredible how the people got saved. The Lord built this church, all we had to do was stay true to the vision that He gave us. He could touch people through us as long as we were available to be used. So too in our own countries, we need to seek the Lord as to where He wants new churches planted. Maybe it will be in an immigrant community, an unloved community, the Lord loves them all. Maybe a surrounding town, housing estate or village, all these areas need to be reached with the gospel.

Jesus said something to His disciples that is often missed in Acts 1v8. He spoke of Judea and Samaria. I'm sure the disciples would have had no problems with going into Judea, but Samaria! They didn't like the Samaritans; they were a different culture, a different class. This too is a stumbling block to the modern church, often we will only reach out to those in our social class, but "they're not like us" is no excuse. We must reach out to all sections of society. Some of the most despised people of society were the very people that Jesus went to, and He even called some of these people to be His disciples. Indeed, I believe that some of the worst areas of society are the best to reach out to, because we are dealing with people who have no illusions about the fact that they are sinners, or the fact that they have a need of the Lord, even if they don't at first realise it is the Lord they need.

Like local evangelism, if there is one thing we need it is a vision from the Lord, a vision for the lost, the suffering, and more than that, a vision of the broken heart of God crying out for those He loves, but who do not know Him. We need to build up our own church as a base to work out from, as a training ground for what lies ahead in "Judea and Samaria".

Over the past ten years I have travelled to many nations to minister, but have never yet come across one that was one hundred percent saved. Yet I have heard complaints when a new work is set up, "this is our area" they say. Well as long as we are building a fellowship from new converts, rather than stealing from other churches, I can see no conflict. If it is "your area" then treat it as such, and win it for the Lord. If you are not winning it for the Lord you have no right to complain when the Lord brings in harvesters with a vision. There is always a need to reach out to new areas of our nation, so that it can become a nation set apart for the Lord, "One nation under God" as a constitution says, this should be our goal, our vision for our countries.

It will take time, commitment, and money, but the Lord will bless us in this work.

*"Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."  
Matthew 6v10*

We pray it, do we mean it?

# Chapter 10

## Getting them in - part3

### Overseas Missions.

*"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age."*

*Matthew 28v19-20*

If we are evangelising our local community, and seeing growth in the church through new souls won to the Lord, then not only can we move into other areas of our country, but also other areas of the world, that we might see all souls come under the sound of the gospel. I know not all will respond, but just as I believe all of mankind deserves to be treated with dignity, to have food and water, so too I believe before God, that a man deserves to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. He died for all people no matter how remote an area they may be in, and it is here that I see a problem in world missions. Certain places are popular while others are not.

This often leads to a situation where certain countries are full of missionaries and mission teams, while other areas have not heard of Jesus Christ. In all missions we need to be led of the Lord, and not by emotions or a selfish desire to visit some more exotic location. I have also noticed that even within a country certain areas are favoured over others. I recently visited a small church in Poland where I was the first overseas visitor, yet not far away is a large church that has many visitors. Was it because this church was "too small" that no one wanted to visit? Many times people say to me, "visit this place, they have revival". It's tempting to leave a hard area to go and work in a place where many are getting saved, but there again is it any wonder so many are getting saved with such a concentration of ministers? We must listen to the Lord and ask Him where we should go, and who we should speak to, remember that success is not measured in the number of souls that you claim to have seen saved, but in your obedience to the Lord and to His wishes.

Other countries should not be used as a training ground for evangelism. I

find it incredible how many young people feel they are called to go and evangelise in exotic locations, but those same people would never get involved in their home church and community. Surely, if some one has a heart and vision for evangelism, it should be a continuous vision no matter which town or country they are in.

*"...Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."*

*Acts 13v2*

Here we see Barnabas and Saul working away in the local church, and through this they are called by the Lord to go into all the world. They already knew how to teach, and had proved themselves faithful in their work and testimony. Surely this is the type of person we should be sending on missions today. I have no objection to young believers going out with a more senior minister to guide them, but we should not take the attitude that anyone will do. If we are not allowing someone to minister in our own fellowship, then we should not be sending this same person out, until we have taken up our responsibility and trained them. Anything less is to insult the brothers and sisters in other lands, they are in no way inferior to us.

Over the years I have seen that we preach with our lives as much as our words and it is here too that we must set an example in missions. In a way we are the message. Those we send out must be of good testimony; otherwise we can do more damage than good. Many countries are happy to copy the behaviour and culture of Western nations, so we must make sure that the example we set is of a Godly life. Too often I have seen churches destroyed by poor testimony and teaching from an overseas visitor. The same rules applied to leadership in chapter six must apply to those going overseas for ministry. We must set an example in marriage, ministry, and general testimony if we are to teach and show others the way they should go. In many countries they already have a faith of some kind, and many of these have strict moral codes, they are hardly going to believe in the God that we serve if our lives do not show it.

*"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations..."*

*Matthew 28v19*

Here too is something that we can learn about evangelism and missions; we cannot ignore, wherever it is in the world, that we are called to make disciples

not just get people saved. A disciple is someone who is willing to be disciplined and who will give his whole life to the Lord. There is no way around this, just because someone lives in a particular country or culture, the same Word of God applies to us all, hence the need for a good testimony. Where there is sin in the body of Christ it must be pointed out, both in the home church and overseas. These things cannot be ignored but must be dealt with if the church worldwide is to bring glory to God.

Missions is not an easy task, the missionary must learn to deal with different cultures and languages, as well as being able to filter out his own culture from his beliefs. He must learn to rely totally on the Lord when in difficult situations far from home, and even from other believers. It is not a game, or a church paid holiday, it is a ministry for the Lord and should be treated as such. Any less dishonours God, whose harvest field we are working in.

We need to go into all the world, and for this job we need to send well trained men and women who have proved themselves reliable in their home church. We are called to go out into the world and sow our lives to reap a crop in new fields. Let us always remember that seed reproduces itself, and if it is bad, then so will the crop be. Likewise if it is good seed it will produce a good crop.

*"...And surely I am with you always."  
Matthew 28v20*

# Chapter 11

## Keeping them in - part1

### Teaching

*"And teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."  
Matthew 28v20*

*"To prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

*Ephesians 4v12-13*

It is one thing to get people into the church, but quite another to keep them. I have been astounded over the years by the turnover of people in many churches; people come, get saved, and fall away or leave to go to another fellowship. Now we know that some will fall away. What Jesus taught in the parable of the sower (Matthew 13v3-9 & 18-23) shows us that Satan (birds of the air), persecution (shallow roots) and the cares of this world (weeds and thistles) will all take people away from the Lord, but in spite of these a farmer still expects a high percentage of his seed to produce a crop. The end result being a return on his original seed for replanting, as well as grain to sell and eat. Too often I feel the church has not looked into its losses but has just accepted them as inevitable. A church should be growing both in maturity, and numerically, if it is not then something is wrong. Many times we see churches that have enjoyed a time of growth, which has subsequently stopped, and then remains at the same number or even loses members over the following years, why is this? It's impossible to know all the answers, but it's good to look at some possible causes, and the first of these will be the area of teaching.

Teaching comes in many different forms in the church. I include everything from Sunday school and youth groups, right up to the Sunday meetings and the mid week Bible study. Also there is the example of the lives of other believers around us, we teach by example as much as by word. When someone is called to bring a message what should they teach?

I have always believed, and still do, that God has a message for every meeting and it is the job of preachers and teachers to find out what that message is. Who wants to know what man has to say, it's what the Lord has to say that counts. Often we rely on our intellect, training and correct presentation to reach people. There is nothing wrong with these things, providing we are getting across the message that the Holy Spirit has given us, and that these other gifts remain in submission to the Word from the Lord. Only then are we able to touch deep into the spirit of the listener, and the Holy Spirit can minister.

*"Deep calls to deep..."*

*Psalm 42v7*

*"...A man reaps what he sows."*

*Galatians 6v7*

Let us always remember that we are not ministering to the intellect. We want far more than an intellectual or emotional response; what we are after is a deep movement in a person's spirit.

Teaching needs to focus on some very basic areas, as well as ones that are essential to a believer's growth, the main area being the individuals' relationship with the Lord. Yes, we need to teach the do's and don'ts of the Christian life, but even more important is getting the walk of the individual closer to the Lord. If someone really knows God, it is much harder for them to go away from Him. The very basics of listening and talking to God are often overlooked in the rush to provide intellectual stimulation. Preaching does not need to be complicated, indeed if an average fourteen year old cannot understand a message, then the preacher is not doing his job, which is to simplify and explain the Word of God, rather than making it sound much more complicated than it really is by using words that are longer than anything contained in the Bible. We live in a time, when more than ever, we need anointed men of God to teach the Word. People who teach by their life and by simple anointed messages from God; this is what we need to feed our congregations with today, for them to remain strong and healthy in the Lord.

Many people drift away from church looking for something, but not knowing what it is. I believe often they hunger for the anointed Word of God that penetrates deep into the heart. Inside they hunger for the bread of life, a stream of living water that only comes from the Lord.

It is our responsibility to provide this in our churches today, not just on a

Sunday morning but at all meetings. We should not treat any meeting as a lesser meeting, that is to look down on those who attend as being of lower importance. Those who teach must take the time to pray, indeed I believe if more time is spent preparing ourselves before the Lord, and listening to Him, not only will we have less work to do, but we will be repeating what He has given us. More importantly the message will be used by the Spirit in a more powerful way than we can ever imagine.

*"As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."*

*Isaiah 55v10-11*

For those who preach, it is your duty before God to supply the fresh bread of life; straight from Him who prepares it, that we may build up the body. It does not take a clever man, it does not take a good speaker or a man with a famous name, what it needs is a man who will take the time to sit before the Lord and listen to what His word is for the church today.

*"Jesus said, "Feed my sheep.""*

*John 21v17*

The people are hungry, let us take up the challenge and feed them.

# Chapter 12

## Keeping them in - part 2

### Pastoral Care

*"...Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep.""*  
*John 20v16*

Just as good Spirit led teaching is essential in the church today, so too is good fatherly teaching. The church is a body with Christ as the head, but within that body God has appointed people to different ministries, and one of these ministries is that of pastor.

*"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers."*  
*Ephesians 4v11*

A pastor is a shepherd. He is someone who cares for the flock and keeps it clear of danger; a man who leads the flock to good food and water and bandages up the sick; a man who knows the sheep by name and loves each one as an individual. Just as a good shepherd makes a big difference to the lives of a flock, so too a good pastor can have a huge effect on a church.

A shepherd of sheep is not always gentle with the flock, he carries his rod and his staff, and regularly has to discipline the odd stray and pull it out of danger. This too is an attribute needed in pastoral care today. So, we see that a pastor is a man who cares so much for the sheep, that he is willing to discipline them; he really desires to be a father to those in his care.

Let us use the analogy of a father and look at what the family needs. Firstly, we need a head of the household, a man that we can look up to and trust. It is here, therefore, that a pastor needs to be setting an example in lifestyle and relationship with the Lord. He must be a man who is in touch with what the Lord has to say, and a man who can be relied upon to carry it out. If a man is to lead, as I have said before, his spiritual and home life must be an example to those who follow him. People will follow someone they trust and can see has gone before them. This does not mean that a pastor never has

problems, but he is seen as one who overcomes these problems with the Lords help.

A pastor also needs to be a man who can be trusted, a man with whom things can be shared in confidence, a man who will really listen to the needs of those in his care. That does not mean we will always get the answer we want, a pastor has to lead us in Gods ways, even if we do not want that way, he should not be a "yes" man. A pastor who always pleases men is led by the congregation rather than the Word of God, and it is here that the congregation, the body, must be willing to accept discipline from the pastor.

It is very much a two way relationship. Many times problems occur in churches when a pastor expects respect and obedience, even though he has not shown that he cares for those in his flock. Trust takes time to develop, and time is a key word in pastoral care, for if there is one thing that people need it is time. Time spent with someone, even just a quick phone call, can make a big difference between someone just attending a church or feeling part of that church. So often I have been in churches where people feel they are only wanted for what they can give, or what they can do, not for who they are, and so it is important that time is given to the whole body, not just those shouting the loudest. Just as time needs to be given to so many, so also, a pastor's time is a limited commodity, and so his time must be managed wisely. As churches grow so also does the amount of time that needs to be spent with the body. However, unfortunately for the pastor, his week stays the same length, and it is here that others must learn to take up the needs of others, for we can all be pastors to each other, keeping an eye on those around us to make sure that no one strays.

At the same time pastoral care needs to be more than surface deep. Let us remember that the body of Christ, the church, is not just about turning up on Sunday, but is based on a relationship with God. It is here that so often we are embarrassed to really touch the heart of people, and enquire as to their spiritual well being, yet many are crying out for just this. Discernment and wisdom are two gifts a good pastor needs to take care of the body around him.

In the same way, a pastor needs pasturing; and it is here that deacons and elders must be available to support the pastor in his work, to lighten what can often be a very heavy burden. However, like all relationships this is a two way affair, and pastors need to communicate openly and honestly with their leadership, not only for their own sake, but as an example to those under them.

*"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ."  
Galatians 6v2*

Indeed, taking the burdens of the body can often be seen as a major part of pastoral care, but at the same time the leadership need to help the pastor with these, and his own personal burdens. Both leadership and congregation need to recognise that a pastor is human and needs time for himself, let us always allow the pastor his Sabbath rest. The pastor must learn to take this rest, so often the pastors' burden for the church makes him feel he needs to be available all the time. This is pride. The church ultimately is the Lords, and He is well able to care for it for a few days without us. Pastors must show trust in the Lord, and in the rest of the church leadership, and even more must show trust in the body of the church.

The church today needs pastors and leadership that are there for their congregation. They also need to be approachable and trusted, not just trusted to keep a confidence, but trusted to answer in truth, even if we may not like that truth. This role of pastor extends to far more than one or two men at the top; it expands to all those in leadership over others. Just as people are drawn to the Lord as a Father who cares for them, so it should be with pastors. Let us make our churches places of real care, for often it is love expressed through fatherly love that can draw men unto Christ, and as time goes by, that same love and care will help people to grow in Christ and keep them feeling part of His body.

*"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."  
John 13v35*

# Chapter 13

## Keeping them in - part 3

### Training

*"It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers."*

*Ephesians 4v11*

*"Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. ...."*

*Romans 12v4-6*

The body of Christ progresses through an interaction of its members, with each member having a specific part to play. Sometimes there is only one of a particular member, such as a heart, but we may have many fingers, these all have the same function, yet are still individual in size and operation. So to in the body of Christ we all have a part to play in the body. Despite this, many churches limp along, one member taking a huge burden, while others lie inactive because no one recognises their part of the body or the gifts that they have. Let us look afresh at the body of Christ.

Firstly it is the "body of Christ", the body over which He is the head. We as members of that body, are to serve the head who controls all the movements of the body. As such, we must recognise that we are part of the body and not the head, and must be willing to be led by the head. Our part is to serve in whatever capacity God gives us. If we look at Romans 1v1:

*"Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle..."*

*Romans 1v1*

Paul regarded himself first as a servant of the Lord, and then an apostle. We too must be willing to take whatever position the Lord gives us, and also be prepared to be replaced. It is here that we often find difficulty; we become stuck in a ministry, afraid to go forward, and unwilling to train others to take

our place. Yet this is what ministry is about, the training up of others. If, after many years, we see no one to replace us, we risk slipping into one of two problems. Firstly we may well be suffering from pride, and think that we can do so much better than those around us, or secondly we have failed in our ministry by not training a replacement. If we look at any living creature, it spends its life trying to reproduce itself so that its breed may survive. So often we fail in the church by wanting to remain the sole survivor, which is only one step away from extinction. Leadership need an awareness of the members of the body, and look to building them up in a ministry, and not just the smaller positions. If the members are to be the future teachers and evangelists, we need to provide opportunity in the church for them to develop those gifts. This may mean making pulpit time available to the growing Christian, it means taking a risk at times, but it is one of the ways they will grow.

Many times there is a fear that we will have nothing to do if others grow to replace us, but this is just a lack of faith on our part. God does not retire us when someone new comes along, he leads us into fresh areas of ministry. However, it is the thought of new areas that so often scares us. We can easily become settled in our ways, comfortable in our routines, and often it takes a change to stimulate growth. Just as a plants growth can be stunted by being in too small a pot, so we too can stop growing through being in the same place for too long. Sometimes the Lord will transplant us to get fresh growth from us. Are you too comfortable in what you are doing? So often we can get into such a routine that we just know what to do, and do not keep seeking the Lord afresh. The Lord may give fresh challenges so that once more we need to rely on Him totally.

Instead of the fear of being replaced, there should be an excitement on our part as to what the Lord will do with us now, a growing expectation that the Lord will do new things. If we have this attitude, instead of a fear of replacement, we will actively train others so that we can be moved on. In this way the trainee grows and develops, and so do we.

However, just as important, is the fact that when someone knows their own part in the body, it gives them a sense of purpose. They cease to just make up part of the congregation, but instead become an active part of the body. This in turn drives them on with their relationship with the Lord, stirring new growth in their lives. This is not just a good idea, but is essential for the continued growth and development of the body of Christ.

Training is more than just giving someone something to do; it includes taking an active interest in that person's ministry, and includes discipline as well as encouragement. Discipline has become a dirty word in the church today,

especially in Western churches, but is so important if we are to train people. If we want disciples we must be prepared to discipline, and like so many things it takes time and a real desire, motivated by love, to see growth in a brother or sister in Christ.

Recognising and developing an individuals ministry is of vital importance to the church today. If we are to be witnesses in this world for the Lord, we must train up and be trained up as evangelists and teachers, to go out into it. If we wish to plant new churches we will need new pastors to care for these congregations. The best training ground for any of these ministries is in a living and active church, it is the duty of leadership to develop the body, and it is the duty of the body to be willing to serve the Lord wherever He leads us.

Those who think they must do everything should learn to rest, and allow others a chance to grow; those who are doing nothing should actively seek the Lord as to where He wants them to serve.

*"...a servant of Christ Jesus"*

*Romans 1v1*

# Chapter 14

## All Glory and Honour - part 1

### Prayer

*"What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.'*

*"I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go.*

*"Which of the two did what the father wanted."*

*Matthew 21v28*

In the previous chapters we have focused very much on "doing", of building up the kingdom of God both numerically and in quality. However, in parallel with doing there must be prayer, notice though the two are in parallel. Prayer must accompany the work of the church, but likewise the work must accompany the prayer, one supports the other. So often we are in danger of becoming on the one hand a group of spiritual recluses, hiding from the world in our prayer times, while on the other hand we can go on with "works" whilst never seeking the Lords will for what we are doing.

Let us start by looking at what prayer is. Often prayer is a word surrounded by mystery. Put simply, prayer is the communication from man to God and God to man, notice it is a two way communication, something that many Christians forget in this day and age.

So often we are willing to cry out to God and tell Him all our needs and wants, to tell Him our plans for the church, and ask Him to bless them, yet how much time is spent listening to God, to hearing His instruction and then doing it. We can be so busy with what we have to do for God in church that often the relationship with God Himself is forgotten, yet that is the very core of Christianity, a living relationship with God.

Often in church we are happy to sing the songs we like, to listen to the preacher we like, yet we spend little time speaking with the God who we are supposed to love and who loves us, who gave His son for us on the cross. Maybe a time has come for us to re examine how our time is spent in our

meetings. We need to allow more time for that still small voice of the Holy Spirit to talk to us, for how can we serve according to the will of God unless we hear His instructions? How can we go if we have not heard directions? How can we hear if we do not listen?

*"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says..."*  
*Revelation 2v17*

In our meetings we would benefit so much by spending more time talking with God, and even more important, listening to God. God already knows what we need, but we know little of what He wants and so it is important that we listen to Him. Often it seems we are embarrassed by silence, but there is nothing to be uncomfortable about. When you stand by a telephone cable you hear nothing, yet the line is busy with thousands of conversations, so it is in the silence, the noise of prayer can often not be heard, but it is still happening. Perhaps it is a symptom of a lack in our relationship with the Lord that we do not want to be silent before Him, it seems we would rather make a joyful noise before each other instead.

If we look at the life of Jesus we see someone who spent time alone with God, time with His disciples and God, and time with the people and God. We should not be uncomfortable with times of prayer in our meetings, for they are a sign to the unbeliever that we know Him. They can sing the songs, they can listen to the message, but only we know the Lord, and it is this that shows we have something more in our lives. In Poland new believers have told me how it was the prayer in meetings that touched their lives; it showed them that there can be a living relationship with the Lord.

Prayer should not be something just slotted into the service, but should be central to our meetings, otherwise it is like having a birthday party without including the person who's birthday it is, singing to them, giving gifts to them, but leaving them in the corner in silence, unspoken to and unheard. We enjoy the celebration intended for them, yet they are left out. How often do we do this to God?

If we are to bring glory and honour to God then we must give him the pre-eminent position in our services. He, as the one glorified, should have first opportunity to speak, we as servants of the living God, should be the ones who listen in silent adoration to the words He has for us. If we wish for God to speak to us, then we first must be willing to listen to Him. Let us look again at our meetings, for whom are they designed to give pleasure? Us or for the Lord? Do we spend time in prayer, or is it just a one minute opening acknowledgement,

asking God to bless us? Do we really give Him the time He deserves, not just in our services, but in our home life as well? However, even more important, do we listen?

If we are to be true servants then we must listen to His instruction, to listen to that still small voice of the Spirit. More than the worship, more than the pastors or teachers, we need the Holy Spirit speaking into our lives in order to change us. He will lead and guide us, and He will show us how to bring glory and honour throughout this earth to Our Father who deserves it.

Let us pray:-

*"Your kingdom come, your will be done..."*

*Matthew 6v10*

# Chapter 15

## All Glory and Honour - part 2

### Worship

*"Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker, for He is our God and we are the people of His pasture, the flock under His care..."*

*Psalm 95v6-7*

Bringing all glory and honour and praise to the Lord God, our Maker and Redeemer, should be the ultimate goal of all Christians. To present before Him our gifts of worship and praise; to bow before Him who is above all others, should be a central goal of the church.

It is easy to think of our worship and praise as the songs we sing on a Sunday, yet it is so much deeper. To bow the knee means to come into submission, to surrender our lives to Him who saved us, but more than that, He who loves us and gave His life for us. This surrender means an unconditional giving over of our ourselves to God, to His will for our lives. It is a surrender with no terms or conditions, but just allowing God to have free reign in our lives.

Just like in a wedding when we give the vows, "for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health," this means that whatever comes upon us in the future we pledge our love and faithfulness to each other. So too with God we should give of ourselves to Him, whatever the future may bring. We need not fear, for when we know the one we are giving our lives to loves us and cares for us more than we care for ourselves fear is cast out by that perfect love. We are surrendering into the hands of a God who wants the best for us, we need not fear.

The church is often seen as faceless, as a cold organisation, yet the God we serve is a God who cares enough to have sent His one and only son, Jesus, to the cross to die that all may know Him. The time has come for the mask to come off the church and for it to reveal its real identity. We as the church should show the world through our words, and deeds, that not only do we serve a living God, but we serve a God who has made Himself known to us at the cost of His son and who wants to know them too.

There will be a cost to us for this; it will mean having to discipline and having

to be disciplined. It will mean giving our time to others instead of ourselves; it will mean a total dedication of our lives to the Lord, that His name may be glorified on this earth. We have to learn to bow the knee and surrender our lives to the will of God, even when it doesn't fit in with our own plans, for this is what being a servant means.

It is often said that "actions speak louder than words", yet so often all we offer is words. The lost people of this world today need more than to just hear about God, they need to see the Word of God in action through our lives, they need to see us as a living signpost, that we know and show the way to God. In our daily lives we see warning signs, be it on our roads, or on electrical appliances, they are usually very bold and clear, so that they stand out to point out the danger to us. We, as a living signpost to God, need to stand out in the crowd by our words and actions, so that they can see that we are different. We, by these words and actions, can earn the right to speak and warn the lost of the dangers that lie ahead. We can also share with them the salvation that we have obtained through Christ.

Our motives for ministry should be to serve, not to succeed. The goal is to serve the Lord, and through that, serve others. Whether we are recognised as having a successful ministry or not is irrelevant. Success is in following the commands of the Lord. If our ministry bears fruit that can be seen, then praise God, if not then praise Him that you are called to serve.

*"Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief"*

*1 Samuel 1v16*

In 1 Samuel chapter 1 we see how Hannah was desperate for a child, so desperate that she was willing to give him to the Lord (1 Samuel 1v22). She was not worried about the cost; she just wanted to have a child.

In the church today, I wonder what cost we are willing to pay to see souls saved? Are we really in anguish for them, do we really care at all? Yet the God we love is in anguish for the lost. He is in anguish over the fact that millions will perish if they do not hear and respond to the good news of Jesus Christ.

For too long the church has held back, and been a faceless institution to those around it. The time has come for us to repent of our lack of vision, of our lack of holiness and example to those around us. We need to seek the Lord afresh, to seek again His will for our lives and desire to live in obedience to Him.

There will be costs, there will be discipline and hardship, but this is the life of

a servant. How much greater however, is the thought that the name of the Lord will be spread to those who are perishing, and His name will be glorified among the nations. The time has come for our praise and worship to be more than just words, the knee has to be bowed in surrender to God so that our lives and actions would bring glory to Him. We are the church of the living God, we represent Him on this earth. What do people see in us?

God is going to build His church, just as He told Israel they would inherit the Promised Land. It was through unbelief and disobedience that Israel wandered in the desert for forty years. It would be tragic if we just continued to wander with no direction, while others wander into Hell.

God will build His church, it will be victorious, are we willing to be part of that victory today? Do we want to serve our Saviour as an act of worship, or do we want to serve ourselves?

*"...I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it"*  
*Mathew 16v18*

# Chapter 16

## Lift Him up.

*"But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."  
John 12v32*

When Jesus spoke the above words, He spoke primarily of His being lifted up on the cross, that all men may be drawn to God, and have free access to the Father through the blood He shed on the cross. Today, we too need to lift Him up, not onto the cross, but high and lifted up to an exalted position in our lives. If we, as individuals lift Him up in our lives, others will see and also be drawn unto Him.

With all the problems of life, and even problems in the church, it can be easy to forget that our goal in life should be to exalt the Lord our God to the highest place in our lives, and to let Him rule over our ways. For this we need a fresh vision of the Lord, we need to once again seek Him for who He is, and not what He can provide. We need to repent of our selfish ways, and give our lives as a gift to Him to use as He wills.

*"In all the travels of the Israelites, whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out; but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out - until the day it lifted. So the cloud of the Lord was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel during all their travels."  
Exodus 40v36-38*

Here we see Israel, following the Lord. When His cloud lifted up, Israel moved, they moved another step towards the Promised Land. So too, we need to see the Lord lifted up that we may follow Him in the path He has given us. Only when the Lord was lifted up was Israel victorious, so too in the church. We need to lift up the name of Jesus in every aspect of our life, that others may be drawn to Him and make Him Lord of their lives, expanding the Kingdom of God, and bringing more glory to the King of kings.

The nations around Israel knew them as the nation whose God travelled with them. So too in Christ, we should be known as the people whose God dwells

among them, a people who serve a living God, and are set apart for Him. The Israelites lived under the law to show themselves as holy to the Lord, and to show themselves as His chosen people. We too need to live in the world, yet separate from it, living our lives according to the Word of God, that people might see us as a people set apart for Him. Not for reasons of pride, but so that we can be "light in the darkness", that "city on the hill." Only when we lift up the name of Jesus in word and deed can we expect the world to be drawn unto Him. We must be the ones to lift Him up.

*"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

*Acts 1v8*

If we claim to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and claim to have His power in our lives, the time has come for each one of us to call upon the Lord to give us the strength to live according to His ways, that His name may be glorified, that we may be His witnesses to the very ends of the earth. It's not impossible, for the Lord has instructed and will enable us to do it, we just need to ask ourselves, who will we serve, us or the Lord?

*"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light."*

*1 Peter 2v9*

The Lord has a vision for His church; He has called us, saved us, and desires us to be a holy nation set apart for Him. Let us grasp hold of the vision that God has for our lives. Let us look again at the path He has set for us and walk in it, that we may bring Him glory, and that He would be lifted up. Let that be the face of the church...His people.

# Chapter 17

## Final thoughts.

### The Face of the Church.

*"But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong."*

*1 Corinthians 1v27*

It is very easy to sit back and say, "well that's never going to happen in my church, how can I have an effect on so many people". Yet over the years revivals have started from one or two people who have given themselves over to seek the Lord, and do His will.

God has used the weak and the foolish to overcome the wise and the strong throughout the history of mankind. All it has taken is a trust and obedience to what the Lord has said in His word.

God knows us, and He knows what He is able to do through us, which is usually far more than we imagine possible. Great men and women of God have not always been the strongest or the most intelligent, but they are those who have put their faith in Him, and have been obedient to His words. It is through this that the Lord has brought glory to Himself, and His praises have been spread abroad.

God is more than able to bring victory to His people, all He asks is that they repent, seek His face, and live in obedience to His commands. We are the face of the church whether we like it or not, and God is often judged by our behaviour. Let us admit our sin and come before Him in repentance, and seek once again to live lives that bring glory to Him.

May the Lord bless His church, and may this be our prayer, our life:-

*"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."*

*Matthew 6v9-10*