

Celebrating God at Church, Part 3 | the kind

I. Denominational preferences don't inherently make a church the right kind of church.

- Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28; I Peter 4:16
- When born again believers first started assembling, there were no denominations. As modern born again believers, we are followers of Christ. The Greek word for follower of Christ is *Christianos*, which — historically — has been transliterated into the word Christian.
- The early church only had one denomination — followers of Christ.
- However, denominations are not necessarily bad. A denominational title is designed to tell you what the church believes about the Bible. This is the case because not every church that claims to follow the Bible believes the same things. In some ways, the things they believe may not matter, but in others it definitely does.

II. The right kind of church is one that does the right things in the right ways.

- The first purpose for assembling was that we want to glorify God by obeying Him, and since He commands that we assemble, we must do so.
- God commands us to assemble so that we can personally grow in our conformity to Christ's image and help others do the same.
- When everyone is involved in that personal growth, the result is that the whole body of Christ grows up together. The body grows qualitatively as we are all matured, and the body grows quantitatively as more and more are added to the church.
- The church needs to be intentionally dedicated to the sanctification of its members. As we mentioned in our introduction to the Season of Power, sanctification is the process by which God transforms His people into the image of Christ.
- So, the whole assembly should understand that they are there out of love and obedience to God. And obeying is not merely showing up. If we're going to obey God by assembling, we need to be actively participating in the growth and maturity of the body. That includes us as well as the people sitting around us.
- The pastor needs to be equipping the saints for the work of the ministry, and the people need to be actively involved in being equipped as well as doing the work of the ministry. That work includes evangelism of the lost and discipleship of the saints.
- If your church is not vibrant in those two areas for that one reason — you need to find a new assembly.

III. The right kind of church is one that does what it does for the right reasons.

- Any church of *any* denomination can do what it's doing for the wrong reasons. Churches that rally around personalities and programs and celebrities and entertainment are particularly susceptible to this temptation just like the Corinthians were. But tiny churches with no celebrities can also try to celebrate God for the wrong reasons. It's a universal problem.
- Therefore, you need to start with the potential log in your own eye, and see if you've been assembling for the wrong reasons. And then cast some light on why your church does what it does. Perhaps they're doing a great job for the right reasons. Perhaps they're not doing a great job, and God wants to use you to start a revival in the church. And perhaps He wants you to join another assembly.
- The real question to ask is, "Why are we doing what we're doing?"

IV. The right kind of church is one that evangelizes the right way.

- Evangelism is not about boosting church attendance.
- It's not about voting in more tithing members.
- It's not about growing into our building project.
 - Your church needs to be active in evangelism, but their only goal should be to glorify God by introducing as many people to Him as they can. If that means they attend your assembly thereafter or they go to another — it's not big deal.
 - What matters is that they're a citizen of the Kingdom of God that we celebrate on Pentecost.
- Evangelism is not about scaring people into the kingdom. It's not giving some a fire-insurance or a fire-escape.
- True evangelism is about a relationship with the God of the universe. That relationship has responsibilities and expectations. That relationship requires work — not to have the relationship — but to grow in it.

V. The right kind of church is one that disciplines the right way.

- You can tell the health of a church far better by this one characteristic than you can the others.
- It's impossible to fake the one-anothers because they don't actually work unless we're doing them in the right way for the right reasons.
- Church is more than merely being preached at. That's only part of the purpose of assembling. That means that unless you have a schedule or a health issue that keeps you from assembling with a local body of believers, then Internet Church is out.
 - You can't one-another a TV or a computer screen. Yes, you may be receiving sound biblical teaching, but it's impossible for you to be one-anothering if you're not actually interacting with other believers.
 - There are times that internet ministries, radio programs, and podcasts have a ton of value. They provide amazing ways for *additional* study and equipping throughout the week. They're perfect when you're not physically well and you still want to hear the preaching of the Word. And they're good on those occasional times that you may be out of physical reach of a local body of believers because you're traveling and there are literally no good options around you.
 - But other than that, you need to be meeting in person. Even if that means you invite your Christian friends over to your house to watch the internet preacher. Fine. But at least then you can engage in one-anothering with the people in your house.
- We are *not* going to just *know* or *feel* if our churches are glorifying God. We must study to show ourselves approved unto God. And we can only do that by rightly dividing the Word of Truth. What matters is what they actually *believe*.
- Do you know what your church believes? Do you know where your pastor stands on the doctrine of soteriology? Do you know what he believes about baptism? What does your church believe about the end times? What do they believe about the trinity, sin, gifts, creation, miracles, inspiration, sign works, and countless other significant truths to which the Bible speaks?
- If you ever want to celebrate God, you must know His Word. You must know it so well that you can spot counterfeits. That means you need to start by knowing what God says, then compare that to what your pastor says, and then you need to lovingly confront your pastor if he's preaching more opinion than Bible.
- Our church's mission must be to make and mature disciples of Jesus Christ for the glory of God. But it has to be more than a slogan, it has to be a working reality.