
Subject: What is missing from Ch__ch? UR
Posted by [william](#) on Wed, 01 Feb 2006 05:48:46 GMT
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What's missing from Ch--ch? YOU ARE!

Since "Church" means different things to different people, let me first establish what I mean when I use the term. I believe that we are the Church, the living, breathing, functioning, members of the Body of Christ. Many people use the term to designate the building where the Christians meet instead of using it as a term to describe the Christians themselves. The shift in usage came about (imo) when more attention began to be paid to the place where the congregation gathered rather than on the congregation itself. Most scholars agree that this occurred when the Roman emperor Constantine converted to Christianity. Christians were persecuted and maligned, sometimes severely, until Constantine "legitimatized" and "institutionalized" the Church. It is said that at this point there was a large influx of people who "converted" to Christianity without the benefit of the "born again" experience.

The supernatural power that was commonplace in the lives of the Christians begin to wane and in many cases the congregation ceased to be a dynamic force and there began to be a clear distinction between the leadership and the membership. The concept of the whole church being involved in ministry gave way to a full-time "clergy" who ministered for (and to) the "laity" (which is an unscriptural concept, imo).

Church history is clear that the supernatural was common in the first few centuries and Christians everywhere experienced the supernatural gifts of healing, prophecy, tongues, miracles, etc.. When the church became institutionalized, (by Constantine's actions,) the gifts begin to be less and less in evidence (but never completely absent) and the building became the focal point instead of an active power-laden membership. To describe this phenomenon, we sometimes use the phrase "the church became an organization instead of a living organism."

Personally, I believe that until Christians everywhere begin to exercise the gifts there won't be any significant world-changing (in the book of Acts sense) revival.

It's much too great a task for a "clergy" to be able to accomplish by itself.

In my opinion it will take a radical change in both the leadership and membership for there to be significant changes in the status quo. The leaders continue to blame the congregation for the apparent deadness in the church program and the congregation blames the leaders for not doing their part (which in most churches is *everything*--obviously an impossible task!)

To assure job security, the pastor must be constantly brainstorming new exciting programs, visiting the sick, shaking hands, preaching dynamic sermons (that he has no time to prepare),

evangelizing the city, etc. etc. etc.. (It also helps if the pastor's wife plays the piano or organ which makes it seem as if the church is getting more for its money!) The congregation usually views church participation as passive involvement with the exception of those few times that they are drafted by the pastor to head up his latest pet project.

Isn't it the job of the Church to meet all of the needs of the people? How can this happen unless you are actively involved in exercising the gifts that God gave you?

In the early Church if one of the members needed finances, they responded, if someone needed healing, they responded, when spiritual help was needed, the church responded, if a person was in prison because of their faith, the church responded. They responded to every need, (I'm not talking about responding by just adding them to a prayer list) they responded with tangible and often times supernatural help. The "clergy" won't be able to accomplish that by itself!

The Church had the answers for *every* need. Imagine what would happen if the gifts were as prominent today as they were in the early Church? What if, on a given Sunday, there were a couple of blind eyes opened, a cripple person healed, and a person healed from AIDS. Do you think that there would be a need for a "program" the following Sunday? Would there be a need for a door to door witnessing campaign? If this happened, there wouldn't be room in the building for the meeting.

What's missing from Ch -- ch? UR! You are missing if you aren't taking seriously the call to function as a part of the Body of Christ, utilizing the gifts that God gave you.

Let's pray for the gifts of the Holy Spirit and then be willing to use them

moulder
