

IN CHURCH-OUT OF CHURCH-FUTURE CHURCH

Blog from Andrew Strom:

I have met and fellowshiped with many wonderful Christian people over the years â€” from all kinds of backgrounds. But I just need to comment on this â€œIn-church/ Out-of-churchâ€” thing â€” because it keeps cropping up.

Let me be clear about this. I meet wonderful â€œIn-churchâ€” people all the time that I absolutely love â€” and I meet lovely â€œOut-of-churchâ€” people too that I absolutely love. One of the biggest problems is that often these two groups do not understand each other at all. And neither do they necessarily see the need for a â€œfuture churchâ€” that is beyond anything that any of us are seeing â€” a church that is literally just like the Book of Acts. That is supposed to be our goal â€” but too often we are satisfied basically where we are.

CHALLENGES FOR the â€œIN-CHURCHâ€”

Many of the Christians who are totally â€œinâ€” the church system truly see the need for â€œchangeâ€”. They are not wanting to sit still. They see there has been a great â€œdeclineâ€” in Christianity away from the old paths â€” and they are praying that God will move to restore and purify His Bride. I have met many godly, warm-hearted people like this who care passionately about Godâ€™s kingdom and His true gospel. I usually get on very well with such ones because we share a common desire to see things â€œrightedâ€” â€” especially the gospel message that has become so diluted and lost.

I guess the biggest challenge that I see in these settings is that I believe God is about to move â€œoutside the boxâ€” in such a drastic way that if we allow ourselves to be too attached to the current â€œsystemâ€” or â€œway of churchâ€” â€” then we can easily get left behind. To get us back to true â€œBook of Actsâ€” Christianity will take such a leap â€” and such change â€” that I wonder if we truly have it in us to go with Him where He wants to go. How â€œlooselyâ€” do we hold all these things â€” our buildings, our â€œmeeting formatsâ€”, our labels, titles and ways of doing things? When these things are shaken or challenged, it is sometimes surprising to discover what a hold

they have on us â€“ even if we think they donâ€™t. This is the biggest challenge that the â€œsystemâ€•-type people face, I believe. But our love of the true gospel and true â€œBibleâ€• Christianity will take us a long way.

CHALLENGES FOR the â€œOUT-Of-CHURCHâ€•

I have moved amongst many â€˜House-churchâ€™™ and â€œOut-of-churchâ€• type Christians (which are not the same thing) over the years. In fact I have been part of these circles myself at times. One of the biggest problems I have seen is that some of us really thought we had the major â€œanswerâ€• to the churchâ€™s problems. Those of us in the â€˜House churchâ€™™ movement would think, â€œIf only the church would get out of buildings and into houses and become more â€˜relationalâ€™™ â€“ most of our problems would be solved!â€• We truly thought that simply by â€œchanging boxesâ€• we could get back the Book of Acts church! What we ended up with, of course, was simply the same people in a different â€œshellâ€• â€“ slightly more â€˜relationalâ€™™ â€“ but hardly anything like the power and purity of the early Christians. We had changed the outward â€œformâ€• but the POWER of Jesus Christ was still mostly lacking.

I can remember having arguments over â€œplurality of eldershipâ€•, the precise â€œcorrectâ€• way of taking the Lordâ€™s Supper, and all kinds of things. None of it seemed to make the slightest bit of difference. That is because the â€œoutwardâ€• things and the â€˜formâ€™™ of things are all â€œsecondaryâ€•. This is not where the power is. But it took such a long time to learn this lesson.

The â€œOut-of-churchâ€• people are even more radical. They often fellowship with almost no-one â€“ and many of them will tell you that the organized church is the â€œwhore of babylonâ€•, etc. A lot of them are lovely people with a real heart for people and for TRUTH. But some can be very judgmental and harsh. They will often â€œwrite offâ€• church people as being totally bound by â€œreligionâ€•. But I found many of us in that circle had our own â€œanti-religionâ€• religion going on! We despised having â€œleadersâ€• or â€œorganizedâ€• things of any kind. We said we believed in the â€œ5 foldâ€• ministries but we couldnâ€™t stand to have any actual â€œleadersâ€• â€“ even godly ones. And we were secretly filled with PRIDE â€“ because we could see everything that was wrong with the â€œsystemâ€•. Man â€“ did I have a â€œhumblingâ€• coming when I got into this mindset! I was so â€œreligiouslyâ€• anti-religious. I was so filled with arrogance and looked down my nose

at so many "system" people! I "judged" them just because they went to a "building" on Sunday! God forgive me.

Of course, none of this is the answer either. I had to repent. I had to RENOUNCE very deeply this harsh "anti-religion" religion that made me so proud and arrogant towards people. I found that many of them loved Jesus just as much as I did. And many of them prayed more and were kinder, more loving and more godly than I™d ever been. I had been kidding myself. When it boiled right down, we "out-of-church" types were no closer to the Book of Acts than many of the "system" people that we judged so harshly. We just knew more "stuff" (supposedly). But clearly it wasn™t the stuff that mattered.

It was only when I deeply repented and RENOUNCED this whole prideful mindset that God gradually began to show me what was really important. And it was not the "outward" stuff " though of course there is some importance to structure, etc.

Each of these things (below) I believe will be a crucial part of the

FUTURE CHURCH that God wants to bring about. You could literally write a book about each one " they are so important. It was these very things that meant the early church SHONE FORTH the GLORY OF JESUS every day. Here they are- We must have-

(1) An APOSTOLIC gospel being preached with Apostolic-type anointing and authority. (Whenever this has happened down through history there has been real Revival). -SO CRUCIAL.

(2) The powerful moving of the HOLY SPIRIT " filling people, healing people, convicting people, transforming people.

(3) REAL LOVE and an emphasis on ministering to the POOR. (-Just like the early church).

(4) REAL DISCIPLES who actually "forsake all" to follow Jesus.

(5) REAL PRAYER " in the Holy Spirit. -And lots of it!!

(6) THE WHOLE BODY MINISTERING " Starting with the "5-fold" ministries " whose goal is to release the whole body into ministry.

(7) MIRACLES and HEALINGS. -These are a must!

Of course, we could go on and on. But let me just conclude by saying this:-

It doesn't matter if we are 'In-church', Out-of-church, Over-churched or under-churched. If we don't have the above things (which the early church had in abundance) then we really don't have ANYTHING. It doesn't matter what we 'know' or whether we meet in houses, barns, on the streets or in sun-porches. If we don't have these crucial things that the early church majored on, then we really have NOTHING that matters.

So I don't really care if you are 'out' church, 'over' church, 'ethru' church or 'half' church. We need to pursue and pursue until we GET REAL CHRISTIANITY BACK!! And none of us have got it " so we had all better repent of our pride and start seeking that which is lost! A glorious Bride beckons. What price are we willing to pay to see this glory restored?

(Ouch,I found my name in the out of church part of the blog !
I repent !)
