

I. Introduction

A. Restoration Fellowship has been pressing in for many years alongside many other church families concerning questions of biblical church leadership versus current cultural church leadership. Our entire leadership team agrees that the Lord is once again placing these questions before us and asking us to make changes accordingly for His sake. We will be looking at these questions and our directions through a three-fold lens.

1. Biblical - We must be firmly established in the solid foundation and life-giving ground of the inspired and infallible word of God. Certainly every mainstream Christian would agree with this. However, great challenges arise when the written word contradicts our traditions, or normalcy. We are going to discover there are vast disparities between modern-day cultural church leadership function and biblical church leadership function. Regardless of how we “feel” about it, we must set our hearts to line up with the leadership of God given through His word. (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Eph. 4:11-16)
2. Prophetic - In recent years the Lord has been speaking to the leadership team of this church family to move more and more to a biblical model of church leadership, with a specific focus upon the five-fold leadership giftings mentioned numerous times in the scriptures. There has been a great increase in impressions, dreams, and visions concerning this shift in recent months which has caused us to make this a primary priority in 2021. We will be sharing these prophetic encouragements throughout this series.

2016 Word - I have called you to be a spring of living water, your waters will flow all directions and touch many people. It's time to press into humility as I lift you up. People will begin to seek you out because you have something that is totally different. Do not try to use the same structure or method that you did in the past or a pattern that someone else does. It is a new day and I am doing a new thing, I'm going to restructure you as a forerunner ministry. It's time to move forward with a fresh vision and I am going to pour out my Spirit in a new way upon you.

3. Preparatory - The bible promises us a season of shaking that is going to come upon the earth in an increasing way as we approach the end of the age. The pandemic and political shakings of 2020 have caused record numbers of church shutdowns and pastors resigning than anytime in the last 100 years. These statistics strongly indicate that the current cultural model of church leadership will not survive the shakings of the end of the age. (2 Tim. 2:1-4)

In October 2020 Barna research president David Kinnaman indicated that as many as 20 percent of churches (roughly 80k) will close within the next 18 months as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and political division.

“Please hear me clearly. The vast majority of pastors who communicate within our forums are saying they are considering quitting their churches as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and corresponding political upheaval within their congregations. This is a trend that we have not seen in our lifetime.” - Quote in August 2020 from Thom Rainer CEO of “Church Answers Central”, the world's largest online community of church leaders

II. Foundational Principles

- A. There are a few foundational principles that we must establish in our understanding at the onset of our desire to line up with Jesus’s leadership when it comes to walking out proper church leadership functions. These principles will guide us and establish the “why” behind the “what” of the decisions we make moving forward.
 1. Ekklesia, Seven Facets of the Church - The greek word “Ekklesia” is used 118 times in the New Testament and is translated “Church”. The word literally means assembly. The usage almost always reflects a gathering of believers in a specific home, city, or region. Paul specifically uses the singular use of the word when referring to a particular gathering in a home and uses a plural use when referring to a city or region. It is used only to speak of a gathering of those who are in Christ through faith and as a result belong to God. The church is described and identified as having seven different ways, revealing seven different functions, which are necessary for it to fulfill God's design.
 - a. Family - An assembly which ensures identity, love, and relentless commitment for all its members. (Eph. 3:14-15; Gal. 6:10)
 - b. Society - An assembly with holy social structure, government, and disciplines which voluntarily set themselves apart in order to point to the current and coming Kingdom of God. (1 Pet. 2:9)
 - c. Dwelling Place - An assembly which provides a spiritual and physical dwelling place for God and His glory. (1 Cor. 3:16-17; Eph. 2:20-22)
 - d. Army for Spiritual War - An assembly through which God engages in both protection and aggressive warfare against sin, satan, and satanic forces. (2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:12-18)
 - e. Bride - An assembly which experiences mutual, intimate affection and partnership with Jesus. (Mk. 2:18-20; Eph. 5:22-33)

- f. Priesthood - An assembly which offers worship and intercession in order to fulfill God's purposes for humanity. (1 Pet. 2:5-9)
- g. Body - An assembly which functions as an extension of Jesus through unity and diversity to build itself up in love. (1 Cor. 12:12-27)

The Church characterized by its multiple facets, is God's special possession. Paul calls it God's inheritance in the saints. We need great revelation into this reality in order to fully experience God's purposes. When we see the Church from God's point of view, then we will fully identify with and commit our lives to the Church. - Mike Bickle

2. Fellowship - Centrality of Personal Intimacy with Jesus - **The church being the church (7 facets) is directly related to the individual members maintaining a life of communion with God.** The divine flow of grace (power/ability/effectiveness) is given in context to a life of prayer, meditation, and communion with God. It is inconceivable to enjoy His life without obedience to righteousness and personal communion with Jesus. We have no life to offer anyone except that which we receive directly from God. This life is what manifests the reality of Christ. Everything is to Him, from Him, and for Him. (Jn. 15:1-5; 1 Cor. 4:7; 2 Cor. 1:4-6, 4:10-12)
3. Fellowship - Receiving From the Assembly - Jesus designed us to receive from other members as a necessity. God has ordained that we suffer lack in Him if input of others is not given and received. Many believers in isolation or limited fellowship seek in vain to be full of God. Jesus demands humility, honor, and submission as a vital aspect of our receiving the fullness of His Spirit. We must acknowledge our need of Christ in others in order to receive the fullness of Christ for ourselves. (Eph. 3:18-19, 5:21; Col. 2:9-10; Heb. 10:25)
4. Fellowship - Supplying to the Assembly - Communing with God and receiving from others is not an end in itself. We must understand that unless we supply, then others lack, and in turn, we lack. Our supplying to others is directly related to their empowerment through grace to give to us. God loves the corporate church and has chosen it as His inheritance. If we love Him and have His heart we will, by default, love and serve the assembly because of God's love for it. (Eph. 4:12; Heb. 6:10)

The vehicle which God has ordained by which we receive the life and love of Jesus from Him, and by others through Him, **is intentional fellowship**. Without intentional fellowship our hearts, by design, will atrophy and die.