

DAY ELEVEN

“Every church needing revitalization can assume at some point in the ups and downs of their existence that they lost sight of the Biblical model and structure of authority and must begin to recover it if any other patterns of dysfunction can be addressed to ensure a healthy direction for the future. Authority matters. Who is in charge in your church? Jesus is the bridegroom of His bride. He is in charge. He is the one to whom the church must submit if it is to have life and experience the unity that only He can bring, for it came at the cost of His own life (Eph. 2:11-15).:

--Brian Croft, *“Biblical Church Revitalization”*

WHO’S IN CHARGE?

When Peter correctly answered Jesus’ probing question about His identity, Jesus not only affirmed Peter’s answer, but went further to explain what it meant for Him to be *“the Christ, the Son of the living God”* (Matthew 16:16). Jesus went on to say that *“...I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it”* (Matthew 16:18).

As Brian Croft wrote in his book quoted above, Jesus is in charge. “He is the one to whom the church must submit if it is to have life and experience the unity that only He can bring...”

As a friend of mine often says when pressing someone for an honest answer, “If someone held a gun to your head demanding to know who was in charge of your church, what would you answer?” If it is anyone other than Jesus Christ then some serious repentance, prayer, and reorientation needs to happen.

PRAY...

Read Matthew 16:13-20

Jesus, I acknowledge and submit to Your authority, and Your authority alone, over Your church. I am not the authority in our church, nor is any other person the authority. Please forgive me for any time that I have attempted to exercise my own authority in Your church, as though it belonged to me and not to You. Please restore a deep sense of humility among all the leaders in our church, and a glad desire to submit to Your authority alone. I agree with Peter, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!” and thereby You have full authority to reign in Your church. I surrender and submit myself to You, King of all kings, and Lord of all lords! Amen!

DAY TWELVE

Read John 9:35-41

On Day Four we read the earlier part of John 9 in which we learn about Jesus healing the man born blind. In today's passage Jesus is having a conversation with some religious leaders about the blind man and his healing, not willing themselves to believe that Jesus had sufficient power to do such a miracle. Because of their stubborn hearts and unwillingness to believe, Jesus referred to the religious leaders as "blind" themselves.

List here the two greatest barriers you can identify that will need to be overcome in order for your church to be revitalized:

1. _____
2. _____

BELIEVE

The Pharisees in John 9 were insistent that Jesus could not have the power to heal blind eyes. Only God could do such a miracle. So, they questioned the formerly blind man twice; they questioned his parents. Yet they could not disprove that Jesus had done something unexplainable to them.

Don't you want Jesus to do something unexplainable in your church? Don't you long to see Him restore Gospel fervency and evangelistic effectiveness in your church family? Jesus is the One who can do it! Not a committee; not the remaining members of your congregation. Only Jesus. Do you believe? Do you think He can solve, demolish, and overwhelm the barriers you listed above? Do you believe?

PRAY...

Lord Jesus, we have evaluated our situation many times, even prayed over it; honestly our prayers have often been without true faith that You could actually do anything about our plight. But today, I renounce my own "blindness;" I turn away from my "blindness;" I embrace Your mighty power. You can do anything! I believe! You can walk on water; bring water from a rock; part a river and even a sea! You can raise the dead, and You can breathe life into dry bones! Jesus, I cry out to You, with the rest of my church family, pleading for Your miraculous intervention in our church. You are able! I believe You can overcome every barrier that stands against us, and I surrender my own defeatist perspective to your conquering grace! Jesus, come and do what only You can do in our church. In Jesus' Name. Amen!

DAY THIRTEEN

Luke 6:1-11 contains two specific instances wherein Jesus did something which did not fit the traditional understanding or interpretation of one of the Ten Commandments – “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8).

Read carefully through Luke 6:1-11 and write here how the Pharisees had misinterpreted and misapplied Exodus 20:8 in their approach to Scripture:

TRADITIONS THAT GO BEYOND SCRIPTURE

If Jesus were to visit your church this week, what are some of the things your church “traditionally” does that are not mandated by Scripture, but might be currently “treasured” as unchangeable as though they were mandated by Scripture? (In other words, some people might be upset if you don’t do these things anymore; or some people might be tenaciously insistent that these things never change.) List just four things here:

- 1) _____ 2) _____
3) _____ 4) _____

Can you recognize that things we often cling to, that do not come directly from Scripture are often some of the things that need to change in your church if you are going to experience revitalization? If not, ask Jesus to open your eyes to this reality, and then pray this prayer...

PRAY...

Heavenly Father, I believe the testimony of Your Word – that indeed You created the heavens and the earth and that Your creative work was performed through Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. I believe and affirm that through Christ all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, both visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities; that all things have been created through Jesus and for Jesus. He knows best about all the rules that should be associated with His creation and His church, which He bought with His own shed blood. Therefore, Father, today I surrender all the preconceived ideas which me and my church have added to Your design or to Your specifications in Scripture by way of our “sacred traditions.” I submit myself once again to the full authority of Christ and His Word. In Jesus’ Name I pray, Amen.

DAY FOURTEEN

THEY WERE AMAZED AT HIS TEACHING; FOR HE WAS TEACHING THEM AS ONE HAVING AUTHORITY, AND NOT AS THE SCRIBES” (MARK 1:22)

Read Mark 1:21-28. *In what two notable ways was Jesus’ authority realized by the people?*

- Authority in His _____ . (v 22)
- Authority over _____ spirits. (v 27)

After His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus declared His authority over everything! Matthew 28:18-20 records His words to this effect. What is the extent of His authority to which He refers in Matthew 28:18? “_____ authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”

ALL AUTHORITY

Throughout His life, and particularly during His ministry, Jesus demonstrated His authority, until, through His death, burial, and resurrection, He unquestionably held *ALL* authority!

- Authority over creation (John 1:3; Col. 1:17).
- Authority over all tangible and intangible resources (Phil 4:19).
- Authority over disease and physical handicap (Mark 6:53-56; 7:31-37; 8:22-25; 10:46-52).
- Authority over the spirits (Mark 5:1-13).
- Authority over religion (Mark 11:15-18).
- Authority over man’s plans (Matthew 16:21-23).
- Authority over sin, the grave, and death (1 Corinthians 15:50-58; Revelation 1:17-18).

PRAY...

Jesus, You have demonstrated that You stand alone in creation and human history as the One with ALL authority. I bow in total submission to Your authority. You are our Sovereign God, Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, and victorious Savior vanquishing sin, the grave, and death! I praise You and worship You above all other things, for You alone are worthy to receive glory, honor and praise. Please exercise Your great, majestic authority over our church and bring revitalization to our fellowship, our effectiveness, our missional life, and our ministries, all for the glory of Your Name! Amen!!

DAY FIFTEEN

“*Who is this man?*” is a question that occurred on several different occasions during Jesus’ ministry. Some of Simon the Pharisee’s friends asked this question when Jesus forgave the sins of the woman who anointed his feet with expensive perfume (Luke 7:49). Herod the tetrarch asked this question upon hearing about Jesus’ ministry (Luke 9:9). His own disciples asked this question after seeing Jesus calm a storm with just His words (Matthew 8:27). On each occasion Jesus had done something unimaginable; He solved an impossible situation; He prevailed where no ordinary human could possibly prevail.

WHO IS THIS MAN?

Read Luke 2:15-20 and 2:41-51

The Bible says that even _____ treasured the events, people, and surprise occurrences surrounding Jesus’ birth and later His conversations with learned teachers in the Temple. In a similar way to those who asked, “*Who is this man?*” Mary pondered everything about this miraculous Son promised by an angel, and given to her by God!

He is God incarnate! (John 1:1-5). God in the flesh; Risen Savior; ever interceding at the right hand of God the Father on behalf of His children. That means His exaltation is for the glory of God and the good of His people. Yes, and even those who are a part of a church in need of revitalization! He is your God! Powerful in every way to restore and renew all things for His glory!

PRAY...

Jesus, please forgive my doubts about our church ever being restored to Your purpose. It is so hard for me to see how you can bring revitalization, but I am convinced again today, by Your Word, that You are Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth; the One who walks among the stars and calls each one by name. The God of salvation and mercy. Nothing is too hard for You!! Please restore my faith in Your strength, wisdom, and power. And grant me faith to believe that nothing is impossible for You! I ask this in the Name above all other names. Amen!