

JESUS AND HIS ZEAL FOR GOD

There is a book called "Natural Church Development." It is the result of a survey of over 1,000 churches in 32 countries and 5 continents. This survey set to find out what essential characteristics are needed for churches to be healthy and growing. The results showed that there are 8 principles, which God is using all over the world that will bring growth to the church. What is shocking is that none of these principles has to do with prayer. We have often been told that praying has to do with revival and church growth. But the survey discovered that how the church prays does not affect its growth. Some churches have a lot of prayer meetings and some do not have them. Some always fast and pray while others do not do it often. However, all of them can grow.

However, there is one principle that says that all growing churches are on fire. What is it saying? It does not matter how much you pray. It does not matter how long you pray. If your praying does not result in your church being on fire, then there is no use. The key is being on fire.

This is such an important fact for the church today. It is not methods or money. It is not talents or gifts. What matters is whether we are on fire.

People say it is good to be a Christian but do not go overboard. It is good to believe in Jesus, but do not be too serious. It is good to love, but do not be over enthusiastic. But to be on fire is to be overboard. We need to be an overboard Christian. Since we are to love, why not really love? Since we are to follow Jesus, why not give it all for Him?

After all, Jesus is like this. He gave himself for us – his own life – with no reservation – even die on the cross for us. Is that not going overboard? Is that being over enthusiastic?

(John 2:17) "His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me.""

Jesus is totally consumed by the things of the father. His whole life is taken up with doing what God wants him to do. He is an overboard person. Some people see him as a mad man – he is abnormal. He is a person who is on fire. Listen to his words:

John 9:4 "As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work."

John 4:34 "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work."

That is Jesus demands the same fire from his followers.

Mark 12:29-31 "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this:

'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

A disciple can be forgiven if he does not have great mental ability. He can be forgiven also if he does not display outstanding physical prowess. But no disciple can be excused if he does not have zeal. If his heart is not aflamed with a red-hot passion for the Savior, God is not happy with him.

Every year we have many people who would take 2 weeks off and pay money for Short Term Missions. This is quite abnormal.

Some young people take a few weeks off to serve the Lord full-time as summer staff. They do not give their summer to just have fun or to just earn money – but to serve others. This is overboard.

Every year many Christians would take one year of their life to get trained to be fighters for God at Ministry Training College. This is quite going overboard.

There is no substitute for zeal. In fact the world knows this. Look at anyone who has really succeeded in the things of this world – find me one who is not enthusiastic about what he is doing – find me a person who is not on fire but is successful in what he is doing. It is a universal law – “there is no free lunch.” If you do not put in the effort, you cannot reap the harvest.

(Psalms 126:5-6) “May those who **sow in tears** reap with shouts of joy. (6) Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.”

You cannot hope to reap in joy when you do not sow in tears. The issue is this – a person cannot work hard at something he is not enthusiastic about all the time. There are those who are not willing to work hard – these need to repent – there is no substitute for hard work. However, there are those who have worked very hard for a time, but cannot maintain the momentum. They eventually give up – why? Because they have lost the fire – no inward enthusiasm – no zeal.

How can we not lose the fire? Let's learn from the life of Jesus.

COME TO ME ALL YOU WHO ARE HEAVY LADEN

(Matthew 11:28-30) “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. (29) Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (30) For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Christians usually start the Christian life with great enthusiasm and fire. That is why young Christians are usually quite on fire. The problem is that the fire often goes out. Why does the fire go out? A key reason is tiredness. We can all press ourselves for some time but not many people can last the long haul. In any race, there are often much more starters than finishers – we get tired during the race and drop out.

Why would a Christian get tired? It is because we do not draw on the source of

strength that we can have.

Jesus says that he is living water – we can come to drink from Him and do not thirst. “Come to me” is the plea of our Lord. “Come, come, come to me.” Why? Because he wants to give us rest – make life easy for us – so that we do not get tired out. When we come to Jesus, then He will bear the burden and we will not tired out.

Jesus himself often goes to his father to hand over the burden to him – so why not? Don’t take up the worries of life on ourselves – let it go to Jesus.

APART FROM ME YOU CAN DO NOTHING

(John 15:5) “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

One key reason why people lose the fire and enthusiasm is failures or facing many problems. How many of us has had our fire been put out by the complaints of people about us or by failure in what we are doing?

Jesus says – apart from me, you can do nothing. In other words, whatever that we can do that is useful for God, it is not me, but Jesus who does it. I need to give all the glory to God. On the other hand, if anything goes wrong, it is Jesus’ responsibility. If we are abiding in Jesus, there is no need to worry about success or failure, because eventually fruit will come. It is not our responsibility to bear fruit. The fruit is borne on us, but not produced by us.

All glory belongs to God – so all problems belongs to God as well.

Therefore, focus your life on doing all things for the glory of God, and do it with passion. Then you will not need to worry about anything. Let God take care of the rest.

Be a man of zeal like Jesus.

John Wesley was a man of zeal. He said, “Give me a hundred men who love God with all their hearts and fear nothing but sin, and I will move the world.”

Let God move the world through us.