



HOW HEALTHY IS OUR CHURCH?



FROM MARIUS'S HEART TO YOURS

It is not a strange idea to visit your family physician annually for a routine check-up to make sure that your health is okay. If not, you might discover that you have a serious or life-threatening disease when it is too late. In the same way, a church will do well to consider its health regularly.

I deliberately avoid the word “successful” in favour of the word “healthy”. The criteria we select will be largely influenced by a “success” or “health” paradigm. Some people are considered to be successful because they own multiple properties, and vehicles and have great financial clout and influence. Yet, their marriage is shipwrecked, their children are scattered, and they have fallen victim

to various coping mechanisms. A public success, and yet a private failure.

What is the most biblical way to define a “healthy” church? Should a church be considered “healthy” when it draws large crowds of people to its meetings? Perhaps a church is “healthy” when most of its growth comes from new converts or has a social outreach programme serving the community. Is an effective children’s ministry or youth program the key element for “health”; or perhaps the fact that the church engages well with the culture in the city? There are many different things we could focus on.

Healthy churches grow, but not all growing churches are healthy.

Biblically, how should we define a “healthy” church?

In the New Testament, the church is compared to the human body.

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Romans 12:4-5 ESV

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:12 ESV

When a part of someone's body is not functioning properly, that person is, by definition, sick, or unhealthy. Therefore, a simple definition of a "healthy" human body is one in which every member is functioning properly. In the same way, a "healthy" church is, quite simply, *one in which every member is functioning properly.*

What does it mean to "function properly"?

In Ephesians, Paul shares a clear revelation of this:

From Him, the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows, and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. Ephesians 4:16

There are three things that each member must do for him or her to be considered "functioning properly."

1. EACH MEMBER MUST GROW

Connected to the life of Jesus Christ, the Head of the body, each member of the church must grow in spiritual maturity. There is no other source of life but Jesus Christ.

Paul's apostolic and missionary heart is made clear as he writes to the Colossians.

Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. Colossians 1:28-29 ESV

In the same way, our goal is to grow and raise mature sons of the Kingdom.

The entire universe is standing on tiptoe, yearning to see the unveiling of God's glorious sons and daughters! Romans 8:19 TPT

2. EACH MEMBER MUST SERVE/WORK

Every member of the church is a "minister"; we all have a calling from God and the corresponding gifting.

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ... Ephesians 4:11-12 ESV

Each of you has been blessed with one of God's many wonderful gifts to be used in the service of others. So use your gift well. 1 Peter 4:10 CEV

Of course, "serving" does not only involve what happens in the church but also serving in the broad, practical context of daily life and relationships. Outward focussed churches ultimately create the healthiest insiders.

3. EACH MEMBER MUST BUILD OTHERS UP IN LOVE

This has been the critical missing element. We should take deliberate, personal responsibility for building others. Usually we "delegate" that responsibility to others. So, for example, the children are taught spiritually at Sunday School, the new believers go to discipleship class on Tuesday night, the emerging leaders are sent off to Bible school, etc.

However, biblically, we all have a responsibility to build others. Parents are responsible to build their children (Ephesians 6:4; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:18-21). Existing believers are responsible to build the new disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). The older women are responsible to build the younger ones (Titus 2:3-5). The mature men teach the younger men (2 Timothy 2:2).

CONCLUSION

A healthy church is one in which every member grows, serves, and builds others. We must have all three. And all three must come from life – the indwelling life of Christ in each believer’s life as he or she grows, serves, and builds.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:4-5 ESV

This is an important paradigm shift for many believers and churches. It is a shift away from a program mentality to a people mentality. However, if we can create a church culture in which every believer takes responsibility to grow, serve and build, our churches will transform their worlds.

Healthy Churches will optimise the fruitfulness of every believer and healthy believers will reproduce themselves. This is what God blessed us for; to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth!

By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit.... John 15:8 ESV

The fruit we bear reveals its source and gives glory to the source!

Marius



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KINGDOM CLIP



IMPACT THOUGHTS FROM OUR 50 YEAR JOURNEY

TRANSITION LEADS TO NEW POSITION WHICH RELEASES NEW PROVISION

Marilyn and I have recently returned from Australia where we completed our global journey since the Covid lockdown, on which we saw in person everyone, with one or two exceptions, who relate to us.

Almost everywhere the thoughts were the same. The world is different, we are different, some priorities have shifted, we don't want to go back and we are excited, if not a little apprehensive, about the future.

The heading of this Clip, that I received many years ago, prepared us well for this day. Although I have said these things many times it is good to be reminded and in the words of Jesus "Again I say unto you."

Transition: Change is inevitable. An early slogan around COTN was "Constant change is here to stay". In this ever advancing Kingdom we hold fast to our values and remain flexible in our methodology. Remember, "Structures are many, values are few, structures change often, values rarely do."

New Position: Let transition reposition us for great effectiveness. What we last did may no longer be relevant today.

New Provision: As I write this we are being reminded again how fragile the economic systems of the world are. Keep God as your financial source and allow him to use whatever means He will. In Deuteronomy it says. God will give us the wisdom on how to make wealth. Never let one means of supply become your source. Develop multiple streams of income and operate your finances in line with Scripture.

Finally: "The just live by faith" not fear so embrace Transition, be correctly Positioned and enjoy His abundant Provision!

Tony



**TONY & MARILYN
FITZGERALD**