



Part Ten in the series: "Towards a Christocentric Ecclesiology, or A Christ Centered Church"

| CHURCH POSTURES | |
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| Institutional Church | Early Church |
| Non-relational / Political | Relational / Non-political |
| distant | INTIMATE |
| private | TRANSPARENT |
| goal oriented | PERSONHOOD ORIENTED |
| warm | WARM |
| community | COMMUNITY |
| Ecclesiastical Authority | Spiritual Authority |
| Human Authority | Spirit's Sovereign Authority |
| RIGHT | right |
| IN CHARGE | little control |
| LORDSHIP LEADERSHIP | EXAMPLE LEADERSHIP |
| EMPHASIS ON EVANGELISM | EMPHASIS ON LOVING CHRIST |
| VISION ORIENTED | PEOPLE ORIENTED |
| GOAL ORIENTED | RELATIONSHIP ORIENTED |
| BOSS LEADERSHIP | FATHERING LEADERSHIP |
| LARGE GATHERING | SMALL GATHERING |
| DISCIPLESHIP = OBEDIENCE, ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY TO LEADERS, LITTLE TIME WITH BUSY LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT DO-DO-DO | DISCIPLESHIP = RELATIONSHIP PRODUCING OBEDIENCE, ENCOURAGEMENT AND EXAMPLE FROM LEADERS, TIME BEING TAUGHT BY RELATIONAL LEADERS BECOME-BECOME-BECOME |
| EMPHASIS ON GROWTH NUMERICALLY | EMPHASIS ON GROWTH PERSONALLY |
| AGENDA ORIENTED | JESUS ORIENTED |
| PEWS | FACES |
| PULPITS | HEARTS |
| STAINED GLASS | LIVING ROOMS |
| PREACHING | SHARING |
| MONOLOGUE | DIALOGUE |
| MAN IN CHARGE OF SERVICE | JESUS IN CHARGE OF GATHERING |

Interpretation of the Chart

1. Non-Relational / Political vs. Relational / Non-Political. The Institutional Church (IC) talks relationship, but it tends not to be modeled from the top down. It may long for this, but the business model keeps them so busy they rarely have time for, and when they do, it is generally just with their leadership team, and not the flock. The leadership tends to be aloof, too busy, more goal oriented than personhood oriented, as elite church businessmen and political figures rather than tender fathers who have time for people. Church politics and one-up-manship can rule the day. Relationship is rarely preached from the pulpit and when it is it isn't followed up by the leadership example. It only gives lip service to relationship. As a result IC feels relatively cold, right (overly righteous), and insensitive.

The early Church was relational with minimal politics. It was less about who was right, and who was in charge, and more about service and heart.

2. distant vs. INTIMATE. IC doesn't preach against intimacy, but because the leadership tends not to model it, it is indirectly communicated that intimacy is optional. Leadership meetings are too easily cold, boring, non-relational, and business oriented rather than personhood oriented. Time needs to be taken to discuss how the brethren are doing. How's your marriage, how are you doing with your kids, how is IC enhancing your personal life vision or stifling it, how are you feeling about your ministry, are you discouraged or encouraged, if you aren't encouraged don't feel you need to hide it - leaders aren't expected to hide pain they're just expected to let it bring them closer to Christ, etc. When 99% of the leadership discussions are business oriented, vision oriented, goal oriented, and listening to the party line, then some important elements are greatly lacking. When personhood issues are downplayed, evidenced by the small amount of time spent discussing them, then a cold and impersonal business environment tends to prevail. It tends to make leadership cold and harsh. It reinforces a cold posture before the people. It reinforces a "Get the job done" image, rather than "Let's bring everyone closer to Christ and more intimate with one another."

What is it that we are really trying to bring people to anyway? Do we just want people saved so that they won't go to hell? Or, do we want to bring people to a living and wonderful God, Who wants to reveal Himself to His people, and lift them up into deep relationship with the One Who loves them most? Do we think heaven is primarily going to be a place where the Supreme Commander of Heaven stands on His parapet, day by day, and issues His daily commands? Heaven will not be this way.

3. private vs. TRANSPARENT. Leadership must not posture a cold, we are nearly perfected, we aren't really touched by the feelings of your infirmities and neither should you be, sort of stance.

The people must see that leaders are real people, with real struggles. The people must not feel like the leadership think they have arrived and everyone else just needs to rise to their level of spirituality. This will cause them to appear inhuman, untouchable, too private. We need a greater degree of transparency.

4. goal oriented vs. PERSONHOOD ORIENTED. When most of what the saints hear is from the pulpit and is goal oriented, vision, do-do-do, then something very important is lacking. Too little emphasis tends to be put on personhood issues. It isn't that the IC never discusses these issues, but is too easy to ignore them in favor of what appears to be more important.. We can talk in terms of lofty visions and great goals, but where is the emphasis on the issues that people face on a daily basis. (How to handle suffering, how to build their marriages, how to develop intimacy with Christ, how to raise godly kids, how to face temptation, how to manage their money, how to resolve guilt,

how to work through life's disappointments, etc. etc. We can be so shallow on these areas, and yet this is where the people live. Sure we need vision, but we need much more practical teaching.

Leadership meetings must not be painfully goal oriented rather than personhood oriented. When leaders most frequently leave frustrated and empty from leadership meetings this is not a good sign. We can tend to deal with everything in the kingdom as though it were just cold business.

5. warm vs. WARM. We talk warmth, but do we model cold? Have we learned to quickly glad hand people, but we don't make them believe we really care about them as people? IC leadership can too easily learn to navigate through the congregation with quick smiley faced platitudes, but end up communicating "Hurry up, I'm busy, and I have to get into the prayer room, or on to the platform, or to my next meeting, or etc. etc." The message is clear. It talks warmth, but it models coldness.

If the Church is too large to communicate warm intimacy then it is too large. We are called to be relationally warm.

6. community vs. COMMUNITY. In the IC, cell groups tend to just be another program, rather true Church and deep relationship. The people believe congregational gathering = church, and cell = ends up as just another program. We need to take a deep look at the whole area of community.

Church is more than a meeting, it is 7 days a week relationship with those we gather with and know. The gathering is to simply be one manifestation of community, not the entirety of it. We need to practice "life together," rather than just "a meeting together."

7. Ecclesiastical Authority vs. Spiritual Authority. A shift must take place to where authority is no longer connected to a position, a title, or a job description, but upon the Word of Christ dwelling richly within the leadership and body. True authority exists, but it is less in a human person and more in the person of Jesus. Leaders' authority comes from their being connected to Jesus, not their position.
8. RIGHT vs. right. Leaders must learn that simply because they believe something to be "right" doesn't necessarily make it right. The body must be given the liberty to believe differently than their leadership. Less emphasis on Law, more emphasis on Grace.
9. IN CHARGE vs. little control. Leadership, as defined by the Lord Jesus and the Apostles, is more about example than control. Leaders are not bosses, they are the chief examples of love and grace.
- 10 LORDSHIP LEADERSHIP vs. EXAMPLE LEADERSHIP. As mentioned above, Jesus taught His disciples they were to focus on being examples not lord's. All too often leaders see themselves as being lord's over the body.
- 11 EMPHASIS ON EVANGELISM vs. EMPHASIS ON LOVING CHRIST. While evangelism is a wonderful thing and a call upon every believer, the gathering of the saints is less about evangelism and more about drawing near to Christ. The nearer God's people draw to Him the more evangelism will happen spontaneously. The purpose of gathering the Church is not evangelism, it is edifying the saints.
- 12 VISION ORIENTED vs. PEOPLE ORIENTED. All too often Churches are overly concerned about their vision statement and less focused on the people before them. To endlessly discuss our vision statement is far less productive than to simplify things and just love people.

- 13 GOAL ORIENTED vs. RELATIONSHIP ORIENTED. Because the Institutional Church has as its model the business corporation it sees bottom line as a critical issue. It can tend to be cold and uncaring. The Church is called to be a warm relational environment where caring and touching supercedes goal setting and accomplishments. Creational vs Ideal.
- 14 BOSS LEADERSHIP vs. FATHERING LEADERSHIP. The concept of Senior Pastor does not exist in the New Testament. It is a throw back to the Catholic Church that the Protestant Reformation failed to address, and even a further throw back to Moses and the Old Testament Jethro principle, that is never referred to in New Testament definitions. There is no CEO in a Church, other than the Lord Jesus Himself. As a result we call for Fathers to arise and gently, wisely, and humbly serve the family of God.
- 15 LARGE GATHERING vs. SMALL GATHERING. In the beginning the Apostles designed the fellowship as a small gathering that met in folks' living rooms. The building and Church growth seminars came much later. It is not an improvement on small. Small encourages every member participation. Large encourages the spectating of the professional clergy. Large consumes millions of dollars. Small is simple and inexpensive. Large drives the people to give. Small encourages the people to care for the needy.
- 16 DISCIPLESHIP = OBEDIENCE, ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY TO LEADERS, LITTLE TIME WITH BUSY LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT, DO-DO-DO vs. DISCIPLESHIP = RELATIONSHIP PRODUCING OBEDIENCE, ENCOURAGEMENT AND EXAMPLE FROM LEADERS, TIME BEING TAUGHT BY RELATIONAL LEADERS, BECOME-BECOME-BECOME. Too often discipleship is much more of fulfilling the leadership's agenda than relationship and learning to become the people of God.
- 17 EMPHASIS ON GROWTH NUMERICALLY vs. EMPHASIS ON GROWTH PERSONALLY. We see no call to grow the Church numerically, in the New Testament. We see much call to grow spiritually. Numerical growth will follow spiritual growth, but an emphasis on numerical growth is killing.
- 18 AGENDA ORIENTED vs. JESUS ORIENTED. While it doesn't seem like these two should have to conflict all too often they do. If Church isn't everything about Jesus, and that feel isn't in everything we do, then we are off course, though we may be fulfilling many seemingly worthy agendas.
- 19 PEWS vs. FACES. Thanks to John Calvin we all come to Church and look at the backs of heads each service. The early Church looked into the faces of those sharing Jesus with them. Pews put people to sleep. Faces brighten and enlighten.
- 20 PULPITS vs. HEARTS. Thanks again to Calvin, we all experience the thousand yard stare, trying to stay awake during boring sermons. Instead we should be hearing from many members as to what Jesus is saying and doing in their hearts. Church is to be about participation not spectation.
- 21 STAINED GLASS vs. LIVING ROOMS. Buildings have become the focus of Christianity. We spend millions on them. Those monies could be better spent on the poor, extending the Gospel, releasing the leadership, and touching the world. It is time to return to our living rooms where we touch people instead of admire stained glass.
- 22 PREACHING vs. SHARING. Again, thanks to John Calvin we all sit and listen to endless sermons and call this Church. In the beginning we sat and listened to Jesus in each other's lives, and experienced being needed each time we gathered. Teaching is fine, but to call it Church is incorrect. We need to return to seeking the Lord each

week for a Word of edification when we gather, rather than to sit passively and listen to a professional expound on his understanding of Scripture.

23 **MONOLGUE vs. DIALOGUE.** The whole approach to communication, hidden behind a pulpit, where no one is free to ask questions, disagree, or share a truth on the same theme as the message, is foreign to the New Testament, and unhealthy for the body, in comparison to the value of their listening to God and adding what they hear in Him.

24 **MAN IN CHARGE OF THE SERVICE vs. JESUS IN CHARGE OF THE GATHERING.** Who ever termed the gathering of the saints as a service? John Calvin. Why, because service supports a professional clergy and a quiet laity. Gathering implies an active leadership and body. Jesus is in charge of our gathering. Men are in charge of services. It's time to turn it all back over to Jesus.