



Chapter 13 Conclusion

Where is the Church heading as we enter a new century? Will we continue to see the secularization of the Church, as it tries to provide a smorgasbord of programs and amenities designed to entice the casual Christian into its doors, or will it recognize that the attempt to compete with the world is really a downward devolution?

Where will the trends of leadership lead us? Will we continue to see a movement towards the corporate image, or will the Church wake up and recognize that the leadership of Christ and His disciples has very little correspondence to the forms of this world?

Revival rallies, and believers have become anxious with longing for a genuine move of God. Madison Avenue has swept into the Church to fill the void of powerful confrontation with the Living God, with games, programs, fancy buildings, elaborate sound systems, etc. etc., but how long can the Church fail to recognize that these things will never fill the void, and return to seeking God for a true outpouring of His Spirit?

The secularization of the Church is slowly but surely killing its impact on a lost and hungry world. Divorce, drug abuse, immorality, and the pursuit of power, money and entertainment are as critical issues within the Church as outside of it. When revival rallies the Devil is quick to capitalize on the drives of men and women, whose spiritual vacuums will not long endure failure of substance to fill them.

Our Church leaders are accused of becoming immoral, insensitive, controlling and covetous of power and money, and partly these indictments are accurate. What are we to do with these things? Dateline, 20/20, 60 minutes and other sensational tabloids have made a mockery of the Church over the last 10 to 20 years. How long is God going to have to use the world to discipline and expose the Church in America before the Church wakes up and recognizes that it has gotten off course?

These are not matters to take lightly. If leaders replace true Church experience for power grabbing, money grubbing, materialistic showmanship, the Church is going to continue to decline. If our Church members don't begin to return and seek the Lord, the tendency of the flesh to self seek is threatening to so overshadow the entire Church experience that we run the risk of entirely losing our way in the midst of a needy and hedonistic world.

Leaders must become true leaders in the face of such critical concerns, and return to humility, transparency, and godliness. The body must no longer demand the Church to keep pace with the world. It is time to return to the quiet, simple, godly approach to Christian living that the early Church so genuinely experienced. If we fail to do so the writing is on the wall. Apathy will strangle out our remaining life and lead us into the quagmire of insipid worldly complacency. If our children don't see that we really have something powerful to offer to them, they, like their worldly peers, will leave the Church looking for something that doesn't offer one thing but deliver another. Little by little our entire culture is becoming glutted with self pursuits. The result is that everyone is sleepy from overeating, sated, and frustrated that nothing really satisfies.

Our culture is imploding on itself. If in the next 10 years we don't see the Lord move into our culture in fresh and powerful ways, as a nation we are headed for nothing less than a downward spiral at mach speed. It is time to seek the Lord. It is time to recognize that we have bought too much of the world's ways, and it is time to wake up. Isaiah, Joel, Paul and John's words are all the more applicable today, than ever before:

Isa 26:19 (NIV) But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, **wake up** and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead.

Joel 1:5 (NIV) **Wake up**, you drunkards, and weep! Wail, all you drinkers of wine; wail because of the new wine, for it has been snatched from your lips.

Rom 13:11 (NIV) And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to **wake up** from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

Eph 5:14 (NIV) for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "**Wake up**, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

Rev 3:2 (NIV) **Wake up!** Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. 3 Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not **wake up**, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

Some will say, "*You're being too negative, things aren't that bad.*" But I encourage you to remember that the frog in the hot water thought the same thing. Over just the last 10 years I have observed a growing move towards worldliness in the Church. People are restless, searching and hungry for a genuine touch from God, and in its place they have been given glitz and showmanship. It may be a pretty substitute, but it does nothing for the spirit and therefore the longing remains. And those who have passionately pursued the renewal God has brought in many places, have been labeled all kinds of insensitive things. Instead of over controlling the Spirit's movement in our midst, when He begins to move, why not stand back a bit more and see what God will do. We who lead are often so concerned about people being upset by what God does that we shut it down just at the point where He was about to reveal great and wonderful things.

My cry is that leaders will become the leaders that Jesus taught His disciples to be. If we don't look away from the corporate example of our day with its emphasis on power, glamour, and flow charts of increase, and look back to Jesus' pattern, we don't stand a chance of ever seeing the Church come to great strength. We need a revolution of thought to take place. The answer isn't laissez faire, nor is the answer despotic control. The answer isn't glamour and Madison avenue showiness, nor is it drab and dowdy. Love, service, simplicity, character and balance should be our hallmarks.

We've lost our way somewhat, but I am hopeful because of the incredible God we serve. If, having read this study, you find yourself in substantial agreement, then be a channel of influence towards these principles. Never, never, never give up until you find a group of people who are willing to enter into the great experiment of doing it Jesus' way. If your heart has caught the vision and your spirit has been ignited even further by what you have read then pray, discuss, weep and believe it into existence. All it takes is people who will not lay it down until they see it lived out. If you can live without these things, then you will. If your spirit has said "*Yes*" to what you have read then you can never lay it down until you see it lived out. May God's wind fill your sails and move you to His vision for His Church, even if it is nothing like what I have written here. What matters is that He have His way. Don't let yourself be satisfied with anything less!