

You Can't Water Down The Message Of Christ And Yet Expect To Quench The Thirst For Jesus In The Souls Of People! We Are Messengers With a Message Bigger Than Us. What Does Your Message Say?

1 Corinthians 1:10-17, "I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say that you were baptized in my name. (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power." (NIV)

Witty, engaging Christian Preachers and Speakers and vibrant, charismatic Spiritual Leaders still have the power to mesmerize and motivate believers today! And there is nothing inherently wrong with such power. The danger comes when the speaker, preacher or leader, and not the Message, becomes the focus of attention! Christian Preachers, Speakers and Leaders are Merely Vessels Through Whom God's Word is Communicated. Exalting Them for the Message They Proclaim is a Misunderstanding of Their Purpose. Put Simply, It's the Message, NOT the Messenger That Matters Most! As believers today, we must guard ourselves against identifying too closely with Human Leaders or placing too much emphasis on them or chasing personalities. Our Loyalty and Identification Belong Only to Jesus Christ and His Unadulterated Gospel Message!

The sad truth is that today's church has not changed much from the Corinthian church. And if we were to tell a deeper truth, today's church just may be worse off! There is still dissension, discord and division. *There is still the highlight on the Messenger and the dim light on the Message!* This however, should not be! Which is why it's so vital that we emulate John the Baptist! *"He must increase, but I must decrease. [He must grow more prominent; I must grow less so]" (John 3:30 AMP).* Can you imagine what the church, and more important what the pulpit, would reflect if we took on such an attitude?

Sadly, Pride and Arrogance have become the "Norm" in today's churches, and it's simply masked as "Self-Confidence" or worse, "God- Confidence". When the truth is, making Our name great, at the expense of using His is what's actually being done! For some reason we're under the sad impression that if your name is not heard, you aren't accomplishing much! However, I beg to differ!

We're never told Naaman's servant girls name, *but could you imagine his story without her?* The woman caught in adultery, her name is never shared, *and yet for all who have fallen short in this area, she is a reminder that God forgives and grants a fresh, new start without judgment and without punishment of your past!*

It wasn't a person with a grand name that impressed Jesus with his "Thank You", nope, it was an Unnamed Leper that was simply Grateful!

We would never know the heart of kindness if we didn't have the story of the Good Samaritan, who remained nameless, but deeds were unforgettable!

And dare we not mention the unnamed boy with a lunch that fed a multitude! Surely he should have had his name read in the credits!

The woman with the issue of blood is still renown, and yet, No One But Jesus Knows Her Name!

There was the man with an unclean Spirit and a maniac in the tombs, both healed, and no one knows the name of these two powerfully delivered men!

The two thieves on the cross with Jesus, surely the one who Made It In, despite his past, would want everyone to know his name?!

The wise men who brought wonderful gifts to Jesus (now of course they would want their names known, after all, they bought Him gifts, and you know we don't know how to give a gift without telling the world we gave it; secondly, they saw Jesus as a baby and became a part of His early-days story – now you know folks will stand in line to make sure you include them in the book of your life, because they "knew you when"...)

And can we really leave out the wise virgins? Naturally they would want it known that they came prepared, with oil flowing!

Do you know how long this list can go on?! A Multitude of Nameless People In the Bible Made An Impact and Didn't Need Their Names Mentioned To Do It! So, Leaders, Can You Handle Being Nameless?

What happens if God calls you to write tirelessly, encouragement that inspires and empowers daily, all over the world, and yet you never write a book of your own to put a price tag on? Can you handle it?

Can you handle preaching and watching multitudes be saved and yet your name isn't even known in your own backyard? Can you handle it?

What if God calls you to lay hands on people in the hospital and they recover, but never say thank you and never mention you in the telling of their testimony...Can you handle it?

Never forget, that the purpose for us is simple: We Are Messengers With a Message Bigger Than Us! 2 Corinthians 4:7-12, "If you only look at us, you might well miss the brightness. We carry this precious Message around in the unadorned clay pots of our ordinary lives. That's to prevent anyone from confusing God's incomparable power with us. As it is, there's not much chance of that. You know for yourselves that we're not much to look at. We've been

surrounded and battered by troubles, but we're not demoralized; we're not sure what to do, but we know that God knows what to do; we've been spiritually terrorized, but God hasn't left our side; we've been thrown down, but we haven't broken. What they did to Jesus, they do to us—trial and torture, mockery and murder; what Jesus did among them, he does in us—he lives! Our lives are at constant risk for Jesus' sake, which makes Jesus' life all the more evident in us. While we're going through the worst, you're getting in on the best!" (MSG)

Listen: If we never live in the mansion; if we never own the yacht; if we never drive the latest car; if we never travel the world; if we're never on TV or radio or never write the book...If We Share The Message, We've Done A Remarkable Work On Earth for the Kingdom of God!

*People of God you don't need a pat on the back; you don't need accolades, applause and entourages! You don't need a ring the size of your hand, a cross covering your chest and 12 different robes to change monthly! You don't need a special seat in the church! You don't need to hand out your business cards to every person you meet! **Just Share The Message! God Himself Will Commend You, And Isn't That More Important?***

In A Nutshell: It's Time To Stop Wearing Crosses, And Start Carrying Them! It's Time To Stop Perfecting Our Image and Mirror His Instead! The focal point of ministry is the Message, nothing else! That's it in a nutshell! Preaching Jesus! It's not about being in the church that pays you the best salary; it's not about being the "favorite" in your circle of influence; it's not about your name being called more than anyone else; it's not about you receiving preferential treatment; it's not about your cross, ring, robe, organization or fellowship, It's About the Message of Salvation! The focus of the church should not be on anniversaries; birthday celebrations; conferences; convocations; gala's, brunches or banquets! It's about the Message of the Cross!

You Can't Water Down the Message of Christ And Yet Expect to Quench the Thirst for Jesus in the Souls of People! And You Can't Persuade Them to Come to "Your Church", Because That's Irrelevant! It's not important whether they receive Jesus through Paul or Peter, It's Important That They Simply Receive Jesus! So This Coming Weekend Think Hard About the Message You're Sending to the Multitude! Do the People You Preach to Know that it's about the Message and NOT the Messenger? And to take it a step further, What Exactly is the Message You're Proclaiming? Is Jesus In It? Is Salvation In It? Is Healing In It? Is Deliverance In It? Is Heaven and Hell in it? Is Holiness in it? Is Forgiveness in it? Is Growth, Maturity, and Development In It? Is it even Biblical? Does It Challenge? Does It Change? Does It Confront Issues? Does It Correct, Instruct, Reprove and Rebuke? What Does Your Message Say?

Are People Coming to Your Church Because They Know They Will Hear an Impacting Message From God, or are They Simply Coming Because They'll Hear an Inspirational Memo From You?

*One of the main problems facing the first-century Corinthian Church was **Division!** When Paul wrote to Corinth, the church there was divided into at least four factions, each of them aligned with one of four **Prominent Christian Leaders.***

One group identified itself with the Apostle Paul. The members of this faction may have been attracted by Paul's emphasis on his ministry to the Gentiles. Acts 9:15, "But the Lord said to him, "Go, for this man is a [deliberately] chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel" (AMP); Acts 22:21, "And the Lord said to me, 'Go, I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'" (AMP)

A second group identified itself with Apollos, one of Paul's fellow missionaries. He may have attracted a following because of his eloquent speaking abilities (Acts 18:24-28, "Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent and cultured man, and well versed in the [Hebrew] Scriptures. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and being spiritually impassioned, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things about Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John; and he began to speak boldly and fearlessly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained more accurately to him the way of God [and the full story of the life of Christ]. And when Apollos wanted to go across to Achaia (southern Greece), the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples, [urging them] to welcome him gladly. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who, through grace, had believed and had followed Jesus as Lord and Savior, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public discussions, proving by the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed)." (AMP)

A third group identified itself with Cephas, another name for the Apostle Peter. This group may have been mostly of Jewish background. Galatians 2:8, "(for He who worked effectively for Peter and empowered him in his ministry to the Jews also worked effectively for me and empowered me in my ministry to the Gentiles)." (AMP)

A fourth group identified itself specifically with Christ. While on the surface, it might seem that this group was the "godly" contingent of the Corinthian Church, this may not have been the case at all.

Paul does not commend any of the groups, not even the "I am of Christ" faction, suggesting that all of their professed allegiances were causing division and dissension in that church as well.

Paul then uses three rhetorical questions, each expecting a negative response, to show the absurdity of the Corinthian divisions: "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" Paul pointed out that in the act of baptism, a person Identifies Himself or Herself With Christ, PERIOD! Baptism does not align the believer with any Human Leader or with any Faction of Christianity, but with the Lord Himself! The Corinthians, who prided themselves on their wisdom and understanding, had misconstrued this truth. They had begun to identify themselves with the men who had performed the baptisms rather than with Jesus Himself!

Now, we might be tempted to write off this problem, attributing it to “*those silly, immature Corinthians,*” if it were not for the Fact that the Tendency to Exalt Dynamic Leaders is Still Prevalent Today!

Are You a Voice Crying Out In The Wilderness For Repentance, Or Has Popularity Tamed Your Tongue?

Remember: It's About the Message NOT The Messenger; And the Message Should Always Be About Jesus!

“And He said to them, Go into all the world and preach and publish openly the good news (the Gospel) to every creature [of the whole human race].” (Mark 16:15 AMP)

“Every Scripture is God-breathed (given by His inspiration) and profitable for instruction, for reproof and conviction of sin, for correction of error and discipline in obedience, [and] for training in righteousness (in holy living, in conformity to God's will in thought, purpose, and action), So that the man of God may be complete and proficient, well fitted and thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17 AMP);

“But avoid all empty (vain, useless, idle) talk, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness.” (2 Timothy 2:16 AMP);

“From that time Jesus began to preach, crying out, Repent, (change your mind for the better, heartily amend your ways, with abhorrence of your past sins), for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 4:17 AMP)

“Behind most church fights and unresolved divisions is ugly human pride. And the worst kind of pride is religious pride, the Pharisaical pride of self-righteousness and superiority.” (Alexander Strauch)

“Preachers who should be fishing for men are now too often fishing for compliments from men.” (Leonard Ravenhill)

“If Jesus had preached the same message that ministers preach today, He would never have been crucified.” (Leonard Ravenhill)

“You can preach a better sermon with your life than with your lips.” (Oliver Goldsmith)

“Modern Christianity has been watered down until the solution is so weak that if it were poison it would not hurt anyone, and if it were medicine it would not cure anyone!” (A.W. Tozer)

Blessings

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