

I. Introduction

Francis Chan asks this question frequently: If you were stranded on a deserted island with nothing but you and your Bible, could you honestly read the book of Acts and the epistles and believe that our modern concept of church is God's ultimate intention?

If you were given the assignment to read the New Testament without any outside influences, cultural sway, or personal biases and plant a church that most closely resembles the churches of the New Testament, would you honestly design it to be like most modern churches?

Would you really build a church that was characterized by:

- A 2-hour service led by only one pastor and a worship team with music, a message, and ministry;
- Consumers who pay their tithes in exchange for an anointed and excellent performance by a skilled worship band and eloquent communicator;
- Dependence upon the pastor and the worship team to experience God;
- A fully functional, well-oiled machine that operates by sheer creativity, gifting, talent, and human wisdom alone, so that if the Holy Spirit didn't show up, no one would even notice;
- A leadership hierarchy, where the senior pastor sits at the top, is given a special title, and gives chain-of-command orders to those "under" him;
- Org charts, organizational models, and humanistic wisdom, reflecting the values of corporate America more than the values of Jesus Christ and the kingdom?

Most likely, you would not build a church that mirrors what has become popular in the Western world.

Rather, you would build a church that was:

- God-centered and people-oriented, functioning through deep, personal relationships that were forged by the Holy Spirit;
- Based upon regular gatherings of those who have Christ's indwelling life—the body of Christ coming together under the headship of Jesus Christ to wait on Him and to express His indwelling life together;
- A living organism comprised of active participators who have sought the Lord for a word, song, exhortation, and teaching for that gathering (1 Cor. 14:26);
- An interdependent body of individuals who have taken ownership and responsibility for each gathering and have learned to express Christ's indwelling life together interdependently in divine order;
- Equipped to experience God independently but also realized their dependence upon the entire body for life and growth;
- So utterly dependent upon the life of the Holy Spirit to operate, that if He didn't show up and anoint, lead, and direct the gathering, the church service would end and everyone would go home;
- A community held together by deep relational bonds of love, trust, and care for one another, functioning like a healthy family.

In short, you would build what we see in the New Testament. You would build a church that was aligned with God's ultimate intention.

II. Consumer Christianity Compared to the Body of Christ

Consumer Christianity	The Body of Christ
Views church as a place you go to on Sunday.	Views church as a <i>people</i> who regularly gather together under the headship of Jesus Christ, where we wait on Him and learn to express His indwelling life together.
Pay tithes in exchange for a quality two-hour service with music and an uplifting message.	Active participators who have taken ownership and responsibility for each gathering.
Doesn't think about the Sunday gathering until they are 15 minutes into worship.	Seeks the Lord throughout the week for a word, song, Scripture, or other expression of Christ's indwelling life that will help build up the body.
Depends upon the pastor and the worship team to experience God.	Equipped to experience God independently but also realizes their dependence upon the entire body for life and growth.
A spectator who comes to listen and be spiritually entertained.	An owner who takes responsibility to do their part to contribute to the maturing of the body.

III. Four Signs of Consumer Christianity

1. We decide where we go to church and when we leave a church.

- The Lord places us into His body as He desires. Paul said, "But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired" (1 Cor. 12:18).
- One of our most important decisions is what body do we gather together with.
- If Jesus Christ is truly our Lord and we truly have His Spirit dwelling within us, it is not up to us where we go to church. Nor do we decide it's time for us to leave. We obey the Lord to place us in His body just as He desires.
- Where we go to church is a lordship issue—one of the most important decisions we make in our lives. I personally believe it ranks right up there with deciding who to marry, choosing a career, and picking a house.

2. We depend upon a leader for spiritual growth.

- Every pastor, at one time or another, has received the complaint, "I'm not being fed here anymore. I'm not growing here anymore."
- Show me one place in Scripture where we are to be solely dependent upon a spiritual leader to grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ. If you have the indwelling Spirit and have access to the Word of God, you have everything you need to grow in your relationship with Him.
- Take responsibility for your own relationship with the Lord and stop relying upon a spiritual leader to grow closer to the Lord.

- Peter said, “But you are A CHOSEN RACE, a royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God’s OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).
 - The priesthood of the believer, a vital truth that was restored during the Reformation, means that we each have direct access to the presence of the Lord. We can draw near to God ourselves without having to go through a spiritual leader. That means you are as close to God as you want to be.
3. We don’t take responsibility for the weekly gathering.
- How much time did you spend seeking the Lord for this Sunday’s gathering? How much time did you spend this week obeying 1 Corinthians 14:26? Seeking Him for a psalm, teaching, revelation, tongue, or interpretation.
 - Most of us (forgive me!) don’t even think about our Sunday gathering until we are 15 minutes into worship. Whenever you are responsible for leading worship or speaking, you seek the Lord throughout the week about what He wants to do. You consecrate yourself more than usual. Typically, you wake up early on Sunday to pray and seek the Lord. You get to church early. You are much more focused when you are responsible for leading than when you are not.
 - Here is the American view of church: You don’t think about church until you wake up late on Sunday. You cram down breakfast. Get ready. Drive to “church.” And then sing the songs the worship team sings. You listen to the message as a spectator. Talk to some people. Go eat lunch. Take a nap. And then forget what happened. There’s no seeking of the Lord Monday – Saturday. Then the whole process is repeated indefinitely until you die.
 - The truth is: We are all responsible to seek the Lord for our gathering together on Sundays.
 - When David first attempted to bring the ark to Zion, he didn’t follow the Lord’s prescribed method. He tried to bring it to Zion on a new cart. This resulted in Uzzah being struck dead when he tried to steady the wobbly ark of the covenant. God’s glory will never come on a new cart. It will never come by fancy lighting, smoke machines, and a ten-member cutting-edge band. God’s glory still only comes one way. On the shoulders of the priests. His glory comes as we take serious our responsibility as priests to shoulder the burden of His glory. This demands a much greater consecration and sanctification than we are accustomed to.
 - Consider the weight of the ark of covenant. The ark was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Inside the ark were the stone tablets of the law, the mana, and Aaron’s rod that budded. One calculation has the total weight between 330 to 615 pounds. This would equate to somewhere between 85 to 160 pounds per priest, who were responsible to carry this on their shoulders.
 - Carrying the ark was hard work. It was heavy. It was a burden. Though it was an honor, the poles pressed into their shoulders. I’m sure it was uncomfortable. Think about when you have to move furniture. You know a little what this was like. It was a heavy responsibility. It was not taken lightly. Doing it wrong would get them killed, like Uzzah.
 - We are now the priests who are responsible to carry God’s glory. We are the priests who are called to shoulder this responsibility. This means there is a pressing upon us. There is a restraint upon us. There is a narrowing, where can’t just live however we want to live anymore. We are being hedged in with a responsibility to bring in the glory of God. We must live a more consecrated, sanctified life to bring in His glory. The responsibility is upon us all as priests.
 - Imagine if one or two priests carrying the ark didn’t take their responsibility serious. Imagine if they didn’t carry their part of the weight and walk stride for stride with each other. The ark of the covenant would be in jeopardy of falling to the ground. The priests were interdependent upon

one another to bring the glory to Zion. If they failed, their lives were at risk because they were shouldering the glory of God's presence.

- When we take our responsibility seriously, we won't place other activities above our corporate gathering. We won't skip church because we don't feel like going. When take our responsibility serious, rather than being a consumer, we won't neglect our gathering together nor will we be late.
4. We don't take responsibility for the God-given mission of the local church.
- At Restoration Life, our mission is to see God's eternal purpose fulfilled.
 - For God's eternal purpose to be fulfilled, the church must be made ready. To accomplish this, the Lord raises up forerunners in the spirit and the power of Elijah to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.
 - Speaking of John the Baptist, Luke writes, "It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17).
 - To fulfill our mission, we have developed a model from the church at Antioch (Acts 13). This model has the following five components: 1) Local church; 2) Prayer Center; 3) Teaching Center; 4) Ministry Center; and 5) Missions Center.
 - On Saturday, October 18, 2019, around 5 a.m., I woke up with an unusual burden. I could feel the Spirit stirring me as I woke up. I felt a real burden for us at Restoration Life that we need to shift away from being consumers, who hear a message about God's eternal purpose, to a corporate body, who together knows, owns, lives, proclaims, and multiplies the truth of God's eternal purpose. This is a revelation that the Lord has given to us corporately. Together, we are to be faithful stewards of this revelation.
 - 2019 has been a year of transition, where we shifted from *blueprint mode* to *building mode*. 2020 is to be *building mode*. As 2019 comes to a close, I believe the Lord is giving us a final window of opportunity to *really* understand His eternal purpose. Over the years, I have learned that revelation is progressive. We think we have a revelation of a truth but then the Lord reveals the truth to us deeper. This is where we are in the last 3 months of 2019.
 - Whenever the Lord initiates something, He provides the grace to do it. I believe the Lord wants us to take responsibility from now until the end of 2019 to solidify God's eternal purpose in our hearts. To really have the eternal blueprint planted deeply into our hearts.
 - As a corporate body, each of us are to be wise master builders who are working together to build the house of the Lord. We are not to be consumers who visit God's spiritual house every Sunday to "be fed." As wise master builders, the most important thing we need is a deeper revelation and understanding of God's eternal blueprint. We can only build what the Lord desires if we are on the same page corporately.
 - The Lord is about to release the eternal blueprint through Lifeschool into Africa in 2020 and it's important that each of us have this revelation planted deeply in our hearts. It's also important, before we move into a new building, that we firmly establish the revelation of God's eternal purpose in our hearts.
 - As an apostolic mission base, the Lord is about to use Restoration Life to bless the nations with a timely message of God's eternal purpose. Before this happens, we want to really have this revelation in our own hearts. We have a responsibility to know it, own it, and live it so that each of us can proclaim it and multiply it.