

The Church

by Victor Choudhrie

Victor Choudhrie's sermon explores the historical and theological significance of the house church movement and the need for participatory worship in today's church.

Duration: 21:10

Scripture: Psalm 139:23-24, Matthew 16:18, Mark 11:17, John 4:23-24, Acts 2:42, 1 Corinthians 14:24-26, Ephesians 4:11-12, Revelation 2:4, Revelation 3:1-2

Topics: "Church History", "Ecclesiology"

Description

This sermon delves into the journey of spreading the Great Commission and the emergence of the house church movement. It explores the historical deviations of the church from its original form, highlighting the need for a return to the participatory and interactive nature of the early church as described in 1 Corinthians 14. The narrative also touches on the impact of figures like Constantine and Pope Gregory the Great on the church's evolution.

Transcript

Then we went and started sharing the model with the other districts. All this time I was pretty well in my own place. I used to go here and there.

Once I went to the city of Gopal, which is on the other side. About 30 pastors gathered and I talked to them about this thing, Great Commission. I wrote a document.

I was not well, so I normally don't have any documents, papers, Bibles, this, that. I just speak from my heart. So I spoke there.

But I got sick, so I couldn't go. So I wrote the document, you know, these are 20 points, something like that. But then on the day I got better, so I went with the document.

And I said, this is the document that I wrote. So one of them got up and said, are you from Don? I said, no, I never heard of Don. What is Don? So a disciple of the whole nation.

Oh, no, I never heard of it. But this is exactly what their document is like. So God was affirming what was happening in so many different places.

Not just I, but, you know, I was running into people, but, you know, we thought of this. You know, we've been practicing this or we thought of this and we're planning to change it. Everywhere I went, God was preparing His own people who were sprouting up, literally sprouting up everywhere.

It's nice to see you all here now sprouting up in Australia. Probably for a long time, at least 20 years, it's been going on. What movement? The house church movement.

House church movement? House church movement has probably been going on. According to me, it's been going on for the last 2,000 years. So just surprise, it's just coming up again.

It is. We're just beginning our journey. So when we caught up with this house church movement, there was a young man in Chennai, Madras, Wolfgang Simpson.

So Wolfgang Simpson and myself got together and we wanted to understand, both of us didn't understand what the house church movement is all about. So anybody said, house church, we go there. Yeah, would you like to have some coffee? Can you tell us what you know about the house church? And we picked up little, little things here, there, everywhere.

And we started documenting what we were listening to. And Wolfgang wrote that book, *The Houses That Changed the World*. And I wrote the book in Hindi.

This one was translated later on. Both of us started at the same time. And he would give me his draft to read.

And it was, you know, bad German-English. So I'd get lost in what he was trying to say. He says, hey, don't look at my English, he said.

I want to look at the content. And I'm sort of meticulous about the language. So I had a great difficulty reading through his manuscript.

And so it's a very interesting time. We had sort of, over time, he became a prophet. In the sense, you know, a very prophetic understanding he had of the house church concept.

And I became an apostle, in the sense I implemented it. So we worked together very closely with each other. I don't know if Wolfgang ever planted a house church.

But, you know, he knows more about house church than anybody else does. But, you know, he's very prophetic till today. He still is.

And he has, God has given him insights that very few people have. Original that he comes up with. Both of us now busy with this new thing, marketplace, workplace, ministry.

Working on that. It's amazing how parallel we run, even when we don't see each other for months. And we discovered we're talking the same language, both of us.

Then a whole lot of, God exposed a whole lot of other people. Tony and Felicity Dale came here. Right here in my apartment, first time.

All over the world. And it culminated last year in November when we had the global summit in Delhi. On house church.

And 40 nations came. And the place we had hired, we could accommodate only 200 people. So we had one big difficulty in saying yes and no to people to come from different countries.

But it was, you know, now we have, the summit was preceded by three days of this kind of thing. So a lot of people came for the three day training period. What is house church? And how it functions? And what are you supposed to do? That made the conference summit so successful.

Because people already had understanding of what it's all about. Otherwise they wouldn't have understood half the language that we use commonly in house church. Jargon, so to say.

You have to get used to the jargon. My understanding of the house church began very early when Campus Crusade people came to my house. In this little village.

And the only thing they talked about was the Great Commission. You know, first time I discovered there is a thing called Great Commission in the Bible. And then from IMA, what was his name? Boss's name? You know Williams.

First time I came across Matthew 16, 18. I will build my church. All this time I had seen everybody else building the church.

And there is Theodore Williams talking about Jesus. I will build my church. You guys, you quit building my church.

You go and make disciples. And I will build my church. The trouble with us is we want to build his church and say you make disciples, we'll build the church.

And we'll build concrete like that. And we'll say that's the church. So a lot of education came from different, different sides.

The maximum input in my life was from these tribal boys that I was learning from bottom up. So my education started from bottom up. Then people like Wolfgang who were seekers.

We were all seekers trying to find out the right way. And he is a taxi driver so he is always looking for the road. And I am a surgeon so I was always looking for a successful operation that I can save.

And being a cancer surgeon, mostly later in life I was being a cancer surgeon. And my study showed the church is just riddled with cancer. And cancer surgery is very easy.

A lot of cancer here is cancer of the jaw. Because people eat a lot of beetles and tobacco. Beetles eat red stuff, they keep spitting all over the place.

So a lot of my job was chopping off jaws. Removing half the jaw, half the face sometimes. And then food bite, throat.

We don't have as much cancer that you are affected in the West like cancer of the breast and cancer of colon. We have much more. We have less because we have more children so women feed the babies so we have less cancer of the breast.

But we have more cancer of the uterus because they have too many babies sometimes. But colon is very less because our food is a lot of roughage. Whereas yours is all butter and jam and cheese.

There is no roughage. And white bread. So you have to buy roughage to pour it into your food.

When we say church, what does the Bible say, what does it mean, what is church? And we discovered the present church is not the church, it's a duplicate church. So then we studied, where did it go off the track? And of course it went off the track from the very beginning because the seven churches of the book of Revelation are off track already. And John the Apostle is still alive and he is writing these seven churches and says, you know, you lost the first love, etc., etc.

Only one church comes out a little bit better than others but they were off track already. But the point at which the church really went off completely off the track was in 310 when Constantine went and invaded Rome. And when he invaded Rome, he was scared of attacking Rome because the king over there at that point, emperor, his name was Maxentine, was a practitioner of occult.

Constantine was afraid that this fellow might cast a spell on him and I might die, you see, so he was really terrified of attacking him. But his mother, Helena, had already got converted in the house church. So she went and counseled him and disciplined him and said, you believe in Jesus Christ and you will win this war.

And so Constantine saw a vision and in that vision he saw the solar cross, a cross on top of the sun. He was a sun worshipper. He never gave up that.

So the cross he saw was not just the cross, it was superimposed on his god, solar, on the sun. So at that point he fought the war and won the war and he gave credit to this Jesus of the solar cross. So all over, before he fought the war, when he saw the vision, he ordered his army to change everything they were wearing, the helmets, the bell, the sword, the hilt, the shield, everything had to have a solar cross, like this.

So you see those crosses, around the center you see a little sun. That sign of the sun has nothing to do with Jesus. That was popularized by him.

So overnight the cross became a symbol of war instead of peace. Completely changed his view. And then he was the first one to build the cathedral.

The cathedral that he built at Rome took him 10 years to build. Emperor taking 10 years to build a building. You have to imagine the size of that cathedral.

And then to man the cathedral he had to employ paid priests. Up to that point there were no paid clergy. Everybody was self-employed volunteers, 100%.

And then he introduced a system of when he started giving money to these priests. And the pagan priests saw that the money is flowing into the churches. So overnight they declared themselves that this temple is now a temple of Jesus Christ.

With no repentance, no conversion experience, nothing. Overnight temples, pagan temples became Christians with their priests being declared as priests of Jesus Christ. So the whole thing, hybridization took place of Christianity.

And Christianity shot up from 4% in that century to 84%. Everybody declared themselves Christians. At least got the label, I am a Christian.

He understood or not, that was a different matter. So from there on in the 5th century we had Pope Gregory the Great. From 590 to 608.

That is a very short period he was Pope, but he is called great. Because this man was a very disciplined man. He didn't like the house churches.

You see anybody starts singing, anybody starts praying, anybody starts giving his testimony, anybody starts teaching, anybody starts prophesying, he just had difficulty in that. So he designed worship. He said there will be 5 items of worship, which we call today Gregorian order of worship.

This is first is the Catholic word is called chant, which is praise and worship, we got it now. Then 2 lessons from the Bible. Then 7. And 4th one was collection, which was accompanied with announcements, what is going to happen next.

And 5th was dismissal. The Latin word *missio*, which means finished. That is blessing.

And the Catholics call it the mass now. This part is gone. It is the same word *missio*, with blessings.

So 5 parts. This was called Gregorian order of worship. So we have now praise and worship, 2 lessons from the Bible, 7 followed by announcements and collection, followed by a blessing and you are finished for the day, for the week.

This is a Gregorian order of worship, which every church, whether it is Pentecostal or Anticostal, everybody is afflicted with Gregorian order of worship. You can't get away. Even if Jesus Christ came to our church, they have to go through these 5 items.

They will say, excuse me Jesus, just sit here. We will announce your arrival at some appropriate moment. But this has nothing to do with the original church.

The New Testament church functioned like this. Well, not exactly like this, because I am doing all the speaking at this point. Everybody participated.

The first century church functioned basically on 1 Corinthians 14, 24, 25, 26. Can you read that one? 1 Corinthians 14. But if an unbeliever, sorry, but if an unbeliever or someone... The church starts with unbeliever, remember that.

But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand, comes in while everyone is prophesying, he will be convicted by all that he is. A sinner who will be judged by all. And the secrets of his heart will be laid bare.

So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, God is really among you. What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hint or word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue, an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.

And you read also 29, 30, 31. If anyone speaks in a tongue, two or at the most three should speak, one at a time and someone must interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God.

Two or three prophets should speak and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in tune so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged.

The spirit of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations. Mark 11, 17.

My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations. All nations should be there, not just Christians. And here is a church starting with verse 24 saying, with unbelievers.

Unbelievers in the church? And then we all prophesy, which means we speak the truth to him and he repents, he confesses his sins, he is convicted, he falls down prostrate and says, truly God is amongst you and he joins the fellowship. And the moment he joins in verse 26, then everybody, but everybody, but everybody, somebody has a psalm, somebody has a revelation, somebody has a teaching, somebody is a prophet, somebody has a testimony, somebody has a prayer request, somebody has something to contribute, everybody has something to do. In the Greek version of the New Testament, the word everyone, everyone, everyone comes three times.

In English it got abbreviated. So everyone has to participate. So here is a non-believer who is convicted and the church is being edified because he is growing already.

And this new person who has just joined has equal right to speak now because he is birthed into the kingdom already. In fact he might be the first one to get up and speak. I want to give my testimony now.

So I am not, when I am here, I don't sit here as a pastor or as a leader. I am only a facilitator. I might say to him, not him, you know, you are not speaking, what's the matter with you? Is not God revealing anything to you? So it's a very participatory, interactive church that was there in the beginning.

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