



Peninsula City Church

The Radical Christian

Engaging other Christ-followers

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Engaging other Christ-followers

An Introduction

Q. How do we radically engage other Christ-followers without any selfish or hidden agenda?

Sometimes it appears that people care more about pets than they do people. On occasions, we treat each other incredibly badly. It has been said that,

“Newspaper editors tell me stories about animal abuse often generates more responses from upset readers than articles about violence directed toward humans... The bottom line is that, at least in some circumstances, we do value animals over people.”¹

What a sad world we live when in some instances we value our animals over people.

1. Only one church

Q. What is meant by the radical thought that, there is only one church, not many?

Do you realise that there is only one church, even if there are varying denominations? So, if you answer yes to this question, do you live like there is only one church? That one church is made up of people who are healthy, but there are also those who are sick, broken, lost and confused etc. not everyone is a completed work yet, that will be the case when each of us breathes our last breath and goes home to be with our Heavenly Father. Until then the one church will be made up of the healthy and the wounded, both make up the church.

In the fourth century, some Christ-followers came together to outline what they believed regarding certain doctrinal matters. As a result, they produced a statement of belief called the Nicene Creed. The word creed simply means ‘We believe.’ One of the closing statements of this creed has stated that,

“I believe in one, holy, catholic (universal) and apostolic church.”²

If there is only one universal church, then we need to be radically engaging other Christ-followers without any selfish or hidden agenda. There is only one owner of the church, and it is not a denomination or group of church leaders or even the Pope. It is the creator of the church Jesus Christ. He said that,

“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt 16:18 ESV).

On the matter of there being one church or to use the illustration of a body, Paul said,

“As it is, there are many parts, yet one body” (1 Cor 12:20 ESV).

Therefore, we need to see things from this kingdom perspective and not from any hidden agenda. It has been said that,

“Although there is a plurality of churches in a given region, the vision of their fundamental unity in Christ is never compromised.”³

¹ “Why People Care More About Pets Than Other Humans.” <https://www.wired.com/2015/04/people-care-pets-humans/> (12th October 2017).

² “Ecumenical Creeds.” <http://www.pcca.org/about/official-standards/creeds/ecumenical/nicene> (17th October 2017). “This creed expresses the truth of Scripture concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, and it was occasioned by various errors with respect to that truth. In its earliest form the creed was adopted by the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325) over against the heresy of Arianism. It was revised by the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381), which enlarged the confession concerning the Holy Spirit.”

³ Hart, Larry D. *Truth Aflame: Theology for the Church in Renewal*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 546.

Or there should not be any compromise, but we know that throughout history this has not been the case.

2. Growing together

Q. So, how do we grow together without getting caught in agendas?

There is an interesting section of the gospel of Mark that highlights the fact that even Jesus needed to deal with sectarianism (religious discrimination or bias) from His own followers. It seems to be a human trait to have our clubs for the in's and the outs. We can be so narrow-minded when it comes to our own local church. We can tend to think that we are right and others are wrong, or that we are better than the rest. For example,

³⁸ “John said to Him, ‘Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to stop them, because they were not following us.’ ³⁹ But Jesus said, ‘Do not stop them, for no one who does a mighty work in My name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me. ⁴⁰ For the one who is not against us is for us. ⁴¹ For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose their reward” (Mk 9:38-41ESV).

If we are honest, sometimes as Christ-followers we can have some horribly selfish or hidden agendas when dealing with each other. Instead of looking after each other especially the wounded brothers and sisters in Christ, we would sooner kill them off. Shame on us for being like that, but without Christ (and many times even with Christ), we are just so self-centred. We can treat each other as a means to an end. We should be more loving towards each other as Christ loves us, and as Peter said in his first letter to the church. It has been pointed out that, “The most indispensable mark of the church is love.”⁴ This was what Jesus had already said to His disciples,

³⁴ “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this, all people will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:34-35 ESV).

Peter echoed this truth when he said,

“Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Pet 4:8 NLT).

Why would they need to say this kind of thing? Well, we all know how we can behave at times. On this matter, it has been rightly (but sadly) said that,

“Christians are notorious for bad behaviour. Some Christians and church people are just downright mean.”⁵

Why is this so often the case? Well, we all know that we can have a plethora of agendas and bad attitudes and intents of the heart. It is not really an excuse, but because we are being renewed, it takes time for these things to be put to death. It has been said that,

“We are made in the image of God, but the way we treat each other makes it hard to see ourselves as anything other than animals.”⁶

⁴ Hart, *Truth Aflame*, 5553

⁵ “Why are Christians so mean? Here are 10 Excuses Church People Give for Treating Others Badly.” <https://redeeminggod.com/10-excuses-christians-give-for-treating-others-badly/> (12th October 2017).

⁶ Yaholo, *What If Christians Grew Up? The Missing Story of Christianity*. (Bloomington, IN: Westbow, 2014), 60

Some concluding thoughts

So, coming back to the opening question,

Q. How do we radically engage other Christ-followers without any selfish or hidden agenda?

Is this even possible, while here on earth, or are simply too self-centred no matter what we claim? Can we ever grow up to not live without any selfish or hidden agendas and just love and accept other Christ-followers who are not part of our group or local church? Although there is a plurality of local churches in a given region, there is only one church. But, will we ever learn?

Remember that Jesus said that our branding is love for one another. But do we know what it is that Jesus Christ said it would be that people would recognise the one church? It was not the cross, or the image of a dove, or even our words or songs. It would be safe to assume that, many Christ-followers would not know what it is. As we said earlier, Jesus said that,

“By this, all people will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35 ESV).

But have we really learnt anything over the past two centuries? From the history of the church, it would appear that we have not. There have been small periods or pockets where the Christ-followers have died to self and their agendas and lived for Christ and loved each other. But what have we learnt from history? Well, it has been said that,

“We learn from history (from the German ‘geshishte’ which means reflected history) that we do not learn from history (reports from the past).”⁷

Why can't this generation reflect on (Church) history and learn from history? Why can't this generation be the first to engage other Christ-followers without any selfish or hidden agenda radically? Why can't this generation really and radically take up the cross and truly die to self and live for Him? Why can't this generation love one another as Christ-followers? Why not humble yourself before the Lord, repent of our attitudes come back to our first love and then obey Him and love our neighbour even other Christ-followers in other local churches?

If there is only one, holy, catholic (universal) and apostolic church it is about time that we believe this truth. There has been a lot of talk and planning, but overall we want to be right, rather than in unity, win the argument rather than serve. We would sooner kill each other (with words and in our hearts), rather than take up our cross and die. In the 1980's a Christ-follower by the name of Keith Green wrote and sang, “My Eyes Are Dry.”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=125&v=nyxoqHBkwqY (19th October 2017).

⁷ Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. “History.” In *A Toolbox for Humanity: More Than 9000 Years of Thought: Responses to the Nature of Ourselves*. Vol. 1. Lloyd Albert Johnson (ed.). (Victoria, Canada: Trafford, 2003), 56.