

Title: The Church at 10,000 Feet
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Theme: Who Leads the Church?
Resource: Gene A. Getz

When my daughters were in elementary and middle school, there is one issue that just drove me nuts. How could one think about walking out of the house to get on a school bus with first making their bed?

Now I have to admit that my OCD approach is really my issue, but I still make sure each morning that my bed is made before I leave the house. Even if Deb is still in it!

Actually, I used to talk to Deb about the girls and making beds. We would discuss the reasons for making our beds and what it would teach them. Now, whether you agree with me or not, it was valuable for me to move up to 10,000 feet and look at the scene. At that range, I couldn't even see the bed, and probably not the house.

Are there times when we need to back off from our pet peeves and significant opinions and look at our lives from a different perspective?

For me, and I believe for the Church, it is vital that we step back and evaluate our parameters or our boundaries.

You know what boundaries are! Those are the lines that define the borders of our properties. Our church building has property lines. My home has property lines. Our City has boundary lines.

* Just recently I was in dialogue with our city leaders about an issue that was not allowed to be determined by the Adams County but had to be decided by the city of Decatur. Boundary lines were very important.

* Our current culture would probably take issue with me, for they want us to believe that there are no absolute boundaries. They want us to believe...

- That sexual activity outside the boundaries of marriage is not only appropriate but healthy.
- They want us to believe that we have an absolute right to over our own bodies that we can engage in any bizarre or perverted way as long as “it doesn’t hurt someone else.”
- They want us to believe that it is appropriate to allow a mother to kill her own child for any reason. It’s called abortion.
- They will tell us that murder is wrong behavior but that it is our responsibility to pay for the housing, feeding, material and medical care for the assailant, as long as they are in the custody of the state.

Are you getting my drift? No absolutes, except the absolute that the absolutes of the Church are absolutely in error.

* How do we get a true view at 10,000 feet? We need a trustworthy lens.

I. the Bible serves as our lens, we accept it as the definer of our boundaries.

Titus 1:9

He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

* If you cannot accept that then you will dismiss the rest of what I have to say.

Nevertheless, I propose that the Word of God is...

Psalms 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

* The Psalmist was talking about God's Word. And he goes on to explain it more fully.

Proverbs 6:23

For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life,

What I am requiring, at this moment, is that you accept and believe that the Bible is our rule of faith! Can you go that far with me?

To look at the Church and her leadership from 10,000 feet requires a broad lens that can give focus and clarity. Do you believe the Bible to be that lens?

Guideline One: To formulate Biblical principles, we must look at the totality of scriptures on particular subjects.

Matthew 27:5

So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.

Luke 10:37b

...Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

- As you can see, a few words taken out of context can have disastrous results.
- The totality of scripture helps us understand the how and direction where.
- For example, Luke writes in Acts...

Acts 14:23

Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

- Appointing leadership is part of the function or activity Paul and Barnabas carried out in their missionary journey.
- On the other hand...

Titus 1:6a

An elder must be blameless...

- Function and directives are like two sides of a coin.

* Dan Brown writes novels that often accuse the church, even though church life gives depth to his efforts. His books are mysteries that involve clues, maps, symbols and unbelievable leaps of faith. His is a journey that keeps you looking and step by step moving to his literary conclusion.

Guideline Two: As we study a particular subject in Scripture, we must follow God's unfolding revelation.

- One cannot pick and choose from God's Word.
- The Bible is a continuing revelation.
- The concept of church leadership is not a brief pamphlet containing instructions on how to put together a cabinet or end table.
- It is a study that begins in the Old Testament and works its way through Acts and the Epistles.

*But how do we know we have it right?

*We all know of times when people screw up Bible teachings. In the Middle Ages there were people that beat themselves with whips because they had been taught that the flesh was evil and we needed to beat it into submission.

Not unlike seekers today that cannot accept the gift of God's salvation because they have been too evil. They are convinced that they must truly suffer and pay the price so that they can earn God's favor.

Guideline Three: We must be sure to interpret Scripture accurately.

- As we have stepped back to 10,000 feet, we must always look at the text in the larger context of Scripture.
- There are tools that help us do that (interlinear translations, concordances, a variety of Bible translations, word studies, commentaries, journals, and historical studies).
- When we study the events out of context, we can arrive at false conclusions.

*We have all done that at times. I still recall an event that took place when I was in elementary school. Arriving early one snowy morning, I was told we were going to stand in line outside in the snow.

Being a Brink, and forming my own conclusions, I turned around to make my way home. A crossing guard would not let that happen and we had an “issue.” Later, in the principal’s office the truth of the situation was revealed to me.

A better interpretation would have saved me some woe!

Have you ever been there?

*Another example is the common belief that church leadership is made up with people who believe in an authoritarian and secretive system that actually manipulates and abuses their followers, all in the name of Christianity. Of course this would violate what Jesus taught when he washed the feet of his disciples in the upper room. He taught that the greatest of all is to be a servant, which is a rightly interpreted concept.

Guideline Four: We must make general observations that summarize our more specific discoveries.

- When making observations, we need to see the specifics in relationship to the whole.

- In other words, the more carefully we look at Scripture, using the lenses of the totality of Scripture, unfolding revelation, and historical, cultural, and moral accuracy, the more clearly we will understand God's conclusions and his desires for our lives and those leaders that God has provided for us.

Conclusion: We need to discover Bible truth or what was called, years ago, sound doctrine. That truth is reliable.

Remember...

Titus 1:9

He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

What I am talking about today is...

Ephes. 2:8-9

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- [9] not by works, so that no one can boast.

If we fail to understand this, we may miss eternal life.

John 1:12

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

If we fail to understand and apply biblical principles, the church members will simply not become all that God intended them to become as believers.

Ephes. 4:13

Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.