

This is episode 6 of our 'Journey' podcast series entitled 'Clarion Call'.

- Today's podcast is meant to be a part-two of our last episode entitled 'Reasonable Service'. If you haven't already, I invite you to go back and listen to 'Reasonable Service' to gain much needed perspective; as it identifies that there are problems with the traditional church model. Today, we're turning our attention to addressing those problems, identifying what could perhaps be the single root cause; and discussing real solutions. And as with the last episode, I give you fair warning – ideas presented here may cause some to feel uncomfortable; especially for those of you (myself included) who were brought up in the traditional church. But I challenge you to join me and face them head on. Let's dive in.
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If you've listened to the last episode entitled 'Reasonable Service', then there's a good chance you have found yourself relating to some degree with the idea that there are real problems in the traditional church.

- Problems that have been chalked up to the church's good intentions, and therefore swept under the rug.
- Problems that can cause real and lasting pain and distress in unassuming individuals.
- Problems that persist in clear and blatant violation of the Lord's Commandments.
- Problems that can no longer be ignored.
- There's a chance you have found yourself relating to the idea that the institution of the traditional church often gets its own way; having the intention to lift members to a higher level of righteousness, but requiring them to place undue importance on the institution.
- But if the Lord is worth His salt, then we simply cannot afford but to assume that He takes those problems seriously.
- And we are hence obligated to address these concerns.
- Perhaps the best way to approach this is to determine what the Lord's true intentions for the church actually are.
- Generally speaking, there are two distinct constructs of the church described in the New Testament of the Bible.
- The first is the church of the Book of Acts, where Peter is the 'rock' of that church construct.
- The second is the church described in the epistles of Paul, where Paul is more or less the 'rock' of that construct.
- So if we were to compare our traditional church model with the first construct, we see clear and undeniable differences.
- In the first construct, the church was referred to as one singular entity.
- As recorded in Acts 2, Peter's address to the men of Judaea caused as many as 3000 souls to be added to the church in one day; and afterwards, the Lord added to that same church daily.
- But the key is recorded in verses 44 – 46 as follows:
- And all that believed were together, and had all things common;
And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.
And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart...
- If I may indulge you, ask yourself if what you see today in the traditional church model is the same as what is described in these verses.
- Notice that the emphasis is on the mutual spirit of having all things in common, having likeminded-ness and being with one-accord.
- Do you see this in our traditional churches, or do you perhaps see tendencies towards hierarchies, 'inner circles' and rewards systems of validation thru granting some with favorable recognition within the institution?
- Notice that the paradigm for obtaining prosperity was established by all men selling their possessions and goods and redistributing them to all men as they had need.
- Do you see this in our traditional churches, or do you perhaps see that the paradigm today is more like believing God for the personal attainment of material wealth; like a new car, a nice house, or a good job?
- Notice that the paradigm for continuing in fellowship with one another was men 'breaking bread' house to house and assembling in a single temple.

- Do you see this today, or do you perhaps see a church building on every other street corner where a family from one church will probably never in its entire lifetime meet, let alone 'break bread' with a family from another church?
- It should be painfully obvious; we don't see anything resembling the church of the Book of Acts in the traditional church model of our modern culture.
- But the reason that's a problem is because the church of the book of Acts is actually what the Lord intended.
- As stated by Jesus Christ, or by His Hebrew-given name, Yashua Ha Mashiach in Matt 16:18:
- And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
- It is literally undeniable.
- The church that Peter was the rock of is the one construct that our Lord Jesus Christ intended.

But what about Paul's church construct?

- At first glance, similarities between the modern traditional church we know today and Paul's church construct certainly abound.
- It's no secret that much of what we assume as normal protocol in modern church settings derives from Paul's teachings.
- In fact, it wouldn't be far-fetched to assert that this is almost exclusively the case.
- The idea of the fivefold ministry for the perfecting of the saints is conspicuously delineated in Paul's writings and accepted as foundational in our modern churches.
- However, the fivefold ministry is also conspicuously absent from the church of the Book of Acts.
- The idea of qualifying for and holding offices and positions within the church are conspicuously outlined in Paul's writings and accepted as foundational in our modern churches.
- However, both qualifying for and holding church offices and positions are also conspicuously absent from the church of the Book of Acts.
- The idea of adhering to a code of conduct in terms of maintaining the chain of authority and the preservation of etiquette are very conspicuous in Paul's writings and accepted as foundational in our modern churches.
- However, codes of conduct towards maintaining the chain of authority and the preservation of etiquette are also conspicuously absent from the church of the Book of Acts.
- But please don't misunderstand the purpose to which I'm bringing these points to light.
- We're not attempting to cast any negative connotations on Paul's teachings.
- What we're attempting to do is to simply determine what the true intentions of our Lord Jesus Christ are for the church.
- Think about it this way.
- Some things in life may be permitted, but that doesn't necessarily mean they were intended.
- Consider for a moment the reading of John 12:8a for example.
- In this scripture, Jesus says the following:
For the poor always ye have with you...
- Do you believe this scripture means Jesus' intention is that there should always be people who suffer in poverty?
- I believe the answer is an obvious no; but, that doesn't preclude the Lord's ability to state an obvious fact resulting from the fall of man.
- The point is, just because provisions are made for the poor on an 'always' basis doesn't mean He intends for people to 'always' be poor.
- And by the same token, just because it's abundantly obvious that the Lord has stamped His approval on Paul's teachings about the church doesn't necessarily mean that those teachings were part of His original intentions.
- There could be several reasons why the church construct described in Paul's writings is different than the church construct of the Book of Acts.
- Perhaps the difference stems from cultural norms of that day.
- Perhaps the difference stems from the fact that Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles.
- But one thing is for certain.
- There are real problems in today's traditional church model, and much of that model derives directly from Paul's teachings.

So what is the root cause?

- The single root cause of the problems of today's traditional church model is self-interests. Period.
- Our last podcast episode 'Reasonable Service' emphasized self-interests through the lens of the institution – where the institution creates an environment where people who are self-interest driven vie for favorable recognition and perpetuate a climate that lends itself to 'church hurt'.
- But here's the thing: there would be no issues with self-interests if there was no one in the church with servant mentality.
- That is to say, servant mentality is the reason why self-interests is such a pervasive issue in our traditional churches.
- One could argue that the problems listed in our previous podcast episode entitled 'Reasonable Service' arise primarily as a direct result of people being driven by a self-interest mindset within the institution of the church.
- So if servant mentality in people can cause all of this, then it seems that it should have at least been anticipated in scripture.
- Fortunately, Jesus Christ Himself anticipates issues arising from people with servant mentality.
- Within the Holy Scriptures, The Lord Jesus Christ makes repeated references to the tendency towards conflict that servants seem to always have in comparison to those who are sons.
- Again, however, it needs to be emphasized that He does not delegitimize the role of servants.
- But He does consistently indicate that (1) in comparison to a son, there are always limitations to the benefits that a servant can expect to receive; and (2) in comparison to a son, there seems to always be the potential for servants to run into trouble.
- In John 8:35, Jesus states the following:
35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.
- The great divide painted by Jesus with these words is undeniable; and indicate clearly that His intent for His people is that they become sons opposed to mere servants.
- Again, that's not to say that He hasn't both accepted and made provisions for the perhaps unfortunate fact that servants are always going to be around.
- Servants by definition are self-interest driven; whereas sons are relationship driven.
- I invite you to read Matthew 24:45-51 in your own time.
- It is an excellent illustration of the provisions and instructions Christ gave for people who have servant mentality and are by nature self-interest driven.
- It is summarized as follows:
- Who is a faithful servant that the Lord trusts with authority over His household?
That servant is blessed because when the Lord comes, He finds him about his work; in which he is rewarded with rulership over all his goods.
However, an evil servant rests in laziness, saying to himself 'My Lord delays his coming', and engages in unwholesome acts towards his fellow servants and concerning himself personally.
Therefore the Lord shall come when that servant doesn't expect Him, and cut him off; appointing him to utter destruction.
- Remember, the Lord gives this illustration to people who have self-interests in mind.
- That is, He knows how to speak their language by creating a scenario for them where the prevailing theme is their self-interests.
- But notice the subtle implications in the reward being offered to a good servant.
- Authority over the household and rulership over the master's goods does not equate to ownership of the land and property.

- You see, that's something that a son would be entitled to.
- Think about an everyday example like a restaurant.
- The restaurant's business manager exercises authority granted to him over the entire establishment, but that authority is subject to the terms of his employment.
- Whereas, a son of the owner of the restaurant is rather entitled both to authority and ownership as a matter of inheritance.
- This scripture indicates a clear divide between what a good servant can expect verses what a son can expect.
- Indeed, '... the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever'.

It's time for solutions.

- The Lord has issued a clarion call to His people.
- Mere servitude will no longer suffice.
- We as a people have grown comfortable with subjecting ourselves to the dealings of servants long enough.
- We've done so to the point that many times we have become blind to the prospect of crossing the line in terms of violating our Lord's commandments.
- In our traditional churches, we have mistaken our own self-interests for the perception of righteousness.
- In our traditional churches, we have mistaken our own personal intuition for the leading of the Spirit.
- In our traditional churches, we have crossed the line of presumption of determining what's truly in men's hearts with our own perceived ability to discern.
- In Luke 15, The Lord Jesus Christ gives us the parable of the Prodigal Son.
- What's most interesting about this parable is the characterization of the elder son.
- The Lord gives clear indication in this parable that the elder son had abandoned his entitlement as a son and taken on the role of a servant.
- And all the indicators of one being driven by self-interests are present.
- He exhibits absolutely no emotional connection to his long-lost brother who was just as good as dead moments prior.
- He feels more than comfortable throwing out inflammatory accusations concerning his younger brother based on his own personal sense of righteousness.
- He exhibits a high level of presumption; charging his Father with not granting him what he believed he rightfully earned.
- And he'd rather spend his time out in the field with the actual servants as if to prove himself through performance, climbing that ladder of vain recognition and prestige; opposed to spending his time in the palace with his father and simply embracing his identity as a son.
- And here's the lesson.
- It's too easy to cross the line in our traditional church being a servant.
- The Lord has issued a clarion call; calling all pastors, members, and everyone else in-between who are represented in our traditional churches to make the transition from mere servitude to son-ship.
- And it's easier than you perhaps you might think to transition from being a self-interest driven servant to being relationship driven son.
- Renew your mind to embrace the Father's identity.
- Accept that your efforts towards righteousness are no longer the result of self-preservation, but the result of what is now your identity.
- You will begin to realize that your 'righteous' actions indicate that you are now 'of' your Father.
- And by the same token, it's easier than perhaps you might think to transition from loving yourself above your neighbor to loving your neighbor as yourself.
- Reflecting back on the previous podcast episode 'Reasonable Service', it's clear that all of the problems identified in the traditional church institution are immediately resolved by a simple application of the Golden Rule – do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
- Pastors, do unto your members as 'you' would have pastors do unto you if you were a member.
- Members, do unto others as 'you' would have them do unto you if you were in their position.
- Remember, servants will always be with us; but that doesn't mean you have to be one of them.