

Response

by

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Where I am coming from and my approach

As a woman who grew up in a rural area of a third world country, my approach and response are different from Rev. Rowell's. His presentation, appropriate to the North American context, does not apply equally well to non-western contexts.

First of all, non-western cultures are predominantly traditional and group oriented. People have a strong group identity and have structured intimate relationships built into society. Western society by contrast is individualistic, particularly in the post-modern era.

Different minds sets between the two worlds

As a result of group mentality, church life could be geared to build intimate relationships and communication among believers. In fact, my husband, who lived in Japan for eight years, used to say he had culture shock every Sunday morning, because his American congregants would race to their cars as soon as the worship service finished. Not a single soul in our Korean worship, which starts at 1:00 p.m., leaves church until evening. As the senior pastor, I finally slip out and retreat to my residence by five o'clock.

Group oriented cultures do not necessarily create churches marked by unity and harmony. Unless they have the presence of the Holy Spirit, non-westerner groups and intimate fellowships are not free from the pitfall of divisiveness. Group orientation does not necessarily build or benefit the church. It can produce people movement, but it can manifest cliquishness. In the Korean context, for example, most churches split due to people's cliquish attitudes and the divisions that result. More Korean churches are multiplied by splitting than by new church planting. "Groupism" without the Holy Spirit can easily breed carnal power structures, backbiting, fighting, and scandals among church members.

I agree with Rowell's four suggestions regarding a holy church. Along with these, I consider "repentance and reconciliation" and "hunger for God" to be the essential for Christian worship. When people are repentant, reconciling, and hungry for God; the Holy Spirit is pleased to be among His people. Without the Spirit's presence a Holy Church cannot exist.

A genuine holiness church is grounded in Christ not criteria.

A holy church in any society should separate itself from immorality. Non-western churches must separate themselves from their pagan roots of idolatrous religions and traditions. A holy church follows Christ, not ancestors or traditions. Even in Western society, people

need to be separate from their old norms of life and value systems in order to become new people in Christ. Holiness must be grounded in relationship with the Holy Heavenly Father, who renews and reforms hearts and minds — not in codified holy criteria, which comes closer to Pharisaism than genuine holiness.

A Holy Church is full of the glory and power of God

Rowell points out important elements of a holy church: Worship with frequent Eucharist, forgiveness, unity, and service. These are all important elements; but I would like to add some further perspectives.

From a non-western perspective (as many missionaries know), people raised in pagan poly-demonic cultures of the non-western traditional world are bound by fear of evil spirits. They seek a god who is more powerful than their ancestors' gods. They need to be set free from that fear of the spirits by the holy and powerful anointing of God.

The Glory of God and His anointing shapes a holy church

Here I want take Jesus as our model. He was full of glory, grace, and truth (Jn 1:14). Where is that glory in our church today? What happened to the “Glory Barn”? Where is the power of God gathering people from east and west, as happened at Pilot Point?

Jesus shared communion with His Father through the night or early morning to unite with the Father's presence and power. By God's anointing He healed the sick and raised the dead. Jesus said to His disciples, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you” (Acts 1:8). The church has to wait upon the Lord.

Where is the sound of crying out to God in most Nazarene churches? Where are the shouts and joyful cries of praise? When we wait on the Lord, His glory rises upon us and His anointing will overflow in the church. When the Spirit visits us, we'll be busy with new converts and with growing spiritual children. A full house church will be chaotic and noisy. There will be a feast of celebration with shouts of joy and tears from prodigal sons coming home, healings of Mary Magdalenes, Lazaruses coming back to life. That is a holy church. The grace that flows from such a church will shine like a torchlight to all people. The fire of the Holy Spirit will burn away legalism and superficial forms of godliness in the church.

The Spirit brings truth encounter

Traditional group-oriented mindsets are more preoccupied with shame rather than with truth. Sometimes this leads to a lack of truthfulness even among professing Korean Christians. The Holy Spirit of Truth will challenge lies in the church. If the world is to experience Jesus, a holy church must be truthful in being and doing. We proclaim concerning life what we have heard, and seen with our eyes, and looked at, and our hands have touched (1 John 1:1-2). The Spirit of Truth will confront the work of lies in the church.

Your situation may be different from what I have discussed. Nevertheless, every holy church will be recognizable in ways people can see, hear, and touch. How does the church most necessarily and powerfully live out holiness in your context?