

# The Essence is Christ

by John Edmiston

## Walking In the Spirit – Series 29 (A Ministry of Eternity Christian Fellowship)

The essence of spiritual ministry is the Spirit of Christ and the character of Christ and the teaching of Christ. Jesus Christ is the cornerstone and the foundation upon which all spiritual ministry must be constructed:

**1 Corinthians 3:10-15 MKJV** *(10) According to the grace of God which is given to me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let every man be careful how he builds on it. (11) For any other foundation can no one lay than the one being laid, who is Jesus Christ. (12) And if anyone builds on this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, (13) each one's work shall be revealed. For the Day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try each one's work as to what kind it is. (14) If anyone's work which he built remains, he shall receive a reward. (15) If anyone's work shall be burned up, he shall suffer loss. But he shall be saved, yet so as by fire.*

So we see two categories here:

- a) High quality ministry, built on Christ, work done in gold, silver and precious stones
- b) Low quality ministry that is still Christian – building with wood, hay and stubble

Only the high quality ministry survives the fire of Judgment Day and receives a reward! The ministries of gold, silver and precious stones are those done carefully and faithfully using the materials of the Scriptures and the Spirit of God and refined in the fire of tested obedience.

The ministries of wood, hay and stubble are attempts to do Christian ministry with human strength. The people are believers but instead of using the Scriptures and the Spirit they try to take shortcuts. They attempt to build on Christ with human intellect and philosophy, or with business principles, politics and the strawy ideas of this world. A haystack can be made very large in a week and these methods can lead to large followings in a short period of time. But God does not think these ministries are worthy!

Even worse than ministries of straw, are false prophets and ministries of iniquity:

**Matthew 7:21-23 MKJV** *Not everyone who says to Me, Lord! Lord! shall enter the kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in Heaven. (22) Many will say to Me in that day, Lord! Lord! Did we not prophesy in Your name, and through Your name throw out demons, and through Your name do many wonderful*

*works? (23) And then I will say to them I never knew you! Depart from Me, those working lawlessness!*

These are self-deluded and believe they are prophesying, casting out demons and doing mighty works when in fact they are not even Christians in the first place!!

They are full of the spirit of this world and Satan, the god of this world, loves them and lavishes money on them. While they believe they are ministering "In Jesus name" they are in fact they are just building their own name!! They are disobedient to God and are often full of pride, greed and adultery. They operate like selfish egotistical corporate executives rather than as followers of the cross.

Combining the two passages above, we find that there are three kinds of ministry:

- a) High quality ministry that builds on Christ well and is rewarded.
- b) Low quality ministry that still builds on Christ, but in an inferior way. God will burn the ministry up, but the person themselves will be saved.
- c) Deceitful ministry, false prophets, and workers of iniquity who do not build on Christ in any way, shape or form - except 'in name only'. These false ministers are cast into Hell.

None of us wants to see our ministry go up in smoke on Judgment Day and none of us wants to be a worker of iniquity. So the question then becomes: "How do we build with gold, silver and precious stones?"

At the beginning of this study I said: *"The essence of spiritual ministry is the Spirit of Christ and the character of Christ and the teaching of Christ."*

A ministry that works with gold, silver and precious stones will have the Spirit of Christ which is reflected in the Beatitudes and the Sermon On the Mount. Christ was lowly, meek, and humble and was never self-serving:

**Matthew 11:28-30 MKJV** *Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (29) Take My yoke on you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest to your souls. (30) For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.*

The Spirit of Christ is one of self-renunciation. Of leaving the world behind and even one's life behind in order to seek after the Kingdom of God and His righteousness:

**Mark 8:34-37 MKJV** *And calling near the crowd with His disciples, He said to them, Whoever will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. (35) For whoever will save his life shall lose it; but whoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel's, he shall save it. (36) For what shall it profit a man*

*if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? (37) Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

A ministry that works with gold, silver and precious stones will seek to have the character of Christ and to follow in the footsteps of Christ who made Himself nothing, indeed who even made Himself a servant to all:

**Matthew 20:25-28 MKJV** *But Jesus called them and said, You know that the rulers of the nations exercise dominion over them, and they who are great exercise authority over them. (26) However, it shall not be so among you. But whoever desires to be great among you, let him be your servant. (27) And whoever desires to be chief among you, let him be your servant; (28) even as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.*

And a ministry that works with gold, silver and precious stones will obey the teachings of Christ and all His commandments, especially the commandments about to loving God and loving your neighbor as you love yourself. The 'red letter' commands of the gospels will be taken very seriously indeed. The poor, the needy, the sick, the suffering, the stray sheep and the unsaved souls will be given priority. There will be honesty, integrity, grace and compassion. The tongue will speak right words and people will be treated well.

The obeying of Christ's commandments will fill the whole ministry from the lives of the top leadership down to the volunteer staff. There will be a sense that the entire ministry is a place of obedience, and is submitted wholly unto God. This may even require the senior leadership to lead lives of personal sacrifice and example. They know they have received freely and they will freely give.

When the Devil sees Christ he attacks. And if your spiritual ministry is glorifying Jesus, it will be attacked relentlessly. Your faith, like gold, silver and precious stones, is tested by fire (1 Peter 1:7) and some of the most godly ministries have faced severe trials:

**1 Peter 4:12-14 MKJV** *Beloved, do not be astonished at the fiery trial which is to try you, as though a strange thing happened to you, (13) but rejoice according as you are partakers of Christ's suffering, so that when His glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy. (14) If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of God and of glory rests on you. Truly according to them, He is blasphemed, but according to you He is glorified.*

A ministry that is full of glory and of the Spirit of Christ is humble, worshipful, reverent, bold, truthful, long-suffering, gracious, God-fearing and free of ego. People tremble at God's Word and love the Lord with all their heart and mind and strength and they care about each other first and foremost.

A ministry that does not care much about its own people is in serious spiritual error. The ministry objectives or ministry finances are in no way more important than the health and spiritual well-being of those who work for the organization. The need for

staff commitment must be balanced with a proper duty of care by the leadership. (And I speak as one in leadership).

True spiritual ministry flows from the Spirit of Christ, is done in the character of Christ, and proceeds out of reverent obedience to all the commandments of Jesus Christ. These Christ-centered things must be the core of all we do, the essence of why we exist and the ethos and “flavor” of our church, our ministry or our missions organization.

If your ministry has wandered off-course, bring it back to center. Determine to get rid of ego and worldliness and to focus on full Christ-like obedience to God.

John Edmiston

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