

In Search of a “Liquid Church”

I read the phrase liquid church some time ago and never forgot it. It conveys the idea that Kingdom precedes form when it comes to serving God. It asserts that structures are created as they serve the Good News. This is radically unique because we as people tend to solidify our creations - especially church forms. We like to freeze-frame some special time in history and say “this is it.” **But liquids invade space**. They fill up cracks and make relevant unused areas. They are not fixed and rigid like the round peg in a round hole program. Instead, they are viscous, plastic, moldable, fluid, and powerful. I like that!!

It’s the kind of church I continue to look and pray for in Asia. I like the innovators who invade cultures and present a relevant Jesus to their own nationalities. I don’t care much for the “you gotta look like this crowd” or you’re not right. Nope, that one doesn’t float my boat. When we travel and look for ministry opportunities, we’re not looking for people who want to build their own Kingdom (although many seem to lean this way). Nor are we looking to present a **Westernized Good News** that turns Jesus into a commodity to be consumed and shares the same liturgy with the folks at First Baptist or First Presbyterian. We are looking for the message that fills the spaces and gaps. We’re searching for the men and women who have decided to inhabit their apologetics in powerful and innovative ways rather than spending their lives trying to explain a doctrinal statement. We want to see those who are living out the love of the Master for the pure joy of that alone. Barnabas looks for men and women who are “intentionally spiritual” and NOT in ministry for money. Besides, church takes so many forms, and people spend so much time validating their own form it’s absurd. Here’s an example we just experienced.

This past weekend we had the wonderful experience of spending time with our kids in Lynchburg. On Sunday we went to a service two hours from Lynchburg with our son, James. **It was a great service and we enjoyed just sitting with our boy**. We also enjoyed lively praise and free worship and these folks were very serious about their praise time. The pastor gave a good word and it was very edifying. The folks were friendly, prayed for us, welcomed us, and blessed us. We had a good time. But the blunt of the message was explaining to the congregation that their form of worship was the Biblical form (many scriptures, but primarily King David dancing before the ark) and why building a new 7.5 million dollar structure was necessary. It was a good message if you were looking for validations. But for anyone who didn’t like that form of worship ~ it would have been troublesome. (*Footnote~ I would gladly go back to this place, the fellowship, worship and love were genuine ~ and we would gladly worship in the new 7.5 million structure*)

Now Diana and I attend a small fellowship whose name includes the phrase “for Biblical Worship” and their meeting doesn’t look like the one just mentioned. We have friends meeting in homes who believe they are Biblical. We have friends who focus on the Reformation era and they believe they are Biblical. We have friends that prefer to practice SILENCE AND PRAYERFUL MEDITATION and they believe they are worshipping correctly. Whose form is right? Answer ~ It’s not that any one form is right. **As a matter of fact, it’s not about form at all**. It’s about Kingdom and Kingdom is everything, not methods of meeting. Here’s a great quote:

“There is nothing so secular that it cannot be sacred, and that is one of the deepest messages of the incarnation.” Madeleine L’Engle, *Walking on Water*

We should decide that God can use any form and any person, and that He is completely capable of handling His work without our control or freeze-framing. We should see Him working in many different people and places using a variety of gifts and talents that differ from our own in order to extol Him. Want to pray in accord with us on our trip to Asia? Then pray that we meet and encourage the brothers and sisters who have liquid perspectives. Be flexible and create some space ~ see what God will do. k.h.