

THE PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY OF CALVARY CHAPEL

by Pastor Chuck Smith

The philosophy of Calvary Chapel concerning the role and function of the church is found in Ephesians 4:9-13 where Paul speaks about Jesus Christ Who has ascended into heaven, but He is the One Who first of all descended into the lower parts of the earth. And when He ascended, He led the captives from their captivity. And He gave gifts unto men and gave to some to be apostles, to some prophets, and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers. He then declares why - for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ. We believe that the church exists primarily for Jesus; to bring pleasure to Him; that we might be to the praise and glory of His grace. The Lord has created the church for His own good pleasure, and thus, the church exists primarily for Him; it is His church. Christ said, "Upon this rock I will build My church." I am a part of His church. There is only One Person Who can say, "My church." And that is Jesus. It is His church. The interesting thing about His church is that you can't join it. You've got to be born into it. We are born again by the Spirit of God into the church of Jesus Christ. It is His church.

What, then, is the purpose of His church? To bring glory to God; to be God's instrument of ministry to the Lord. But also in a secondary sense, the church exists for the edifying or the building up of the saints; to bring the saints into full maturity so that they might engage in the work of the ministry.

When I was in seminary, Oswald J. Smith, pastor of the People's Church in Toronto, Canada and noted worldwide for being a missionary-minded church, placed a tremendous emphasis on foreign missions. In the seminars I attended, I heard him say over and over that the primary purpose of the church is the evangelization of the world. I heard him say it so many times that I accepted it as gospel truth. So, when I began in the ministry, I sought to evangelize the world. My sermons were always evangelistic sermons. They were always followed by an invitation, "Bow your heads, close your eyes, and no one looking around; you who would like to receive Jesus Christ tonight, just put your hand up and down again." Everything was geared toward evangelism. I sought to be an evangelist because I felt that the primary purpose of the church was evangelization of the world. That's what had been drilled into me.

I soon discovered, however, that the most difficult thing in all the world is trying to be something that God didn't make you to be. Paul asked are all apostles, are all prophets, are all evangelists? The answer is obviously no. Not everybody has the calling of an evangelist. Not everybody has the calling of a pastor-teacher. Not everybody has the calling of a prophet. And trying to be something that God didn't make you is the most difficult thing in the world. I was trying to be something that I was not called by God to be.

Paul, in opening his letter to the Ephesians, says, "Paul, an apostle by the will of God." I can buy that. I can say, "Chuck, a pastor-teacher by the will of God." It's important that we discover what we are by the will of God. For years I wanted to be "Chuck, the evangelist, by the will of Chuck." It was not by the will of God. I was trying to conform myself to the mold of the denomination in which I was serving. It was a denomination whose emphasis was on evangelism. Exhortation was held in higher regard than exposition, thus, they did not encourage the pastor-teacher role. They expected all the pastors to be evangelists, so we endeavored to be evangelists. But I was a miserable failure as an

evangelist. My wife sought to help me. She saw my frustrations, and she said, "Honey, you're just not dynamic enough." She said, "Watch Billy Graham. He just doesn't stand behind the pulpit; he moves around." She said, "You're going to have to learn how to move around, be more dynamic." I tried that, and it didn't work. I was frustrated, because I was seeking to be something that God didn't make me to be.

As I started reading and studying the Word of God, I could not find the Scripture that said the primary purpose of the church is the evangelization of the world; I still can't find that Scripture. But I did find in Ephesians 4 that God has placed gifted men, apostles, evangelists, prophets, pastor-teachers for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, the building up of the body of Christ. This brought into my life a tremendous philosophical change as far as my concept of the purpose of the church was concerned. Rather than seeing the primary purpose as being the evangelization of the world, I saw that the purpose of the church was for the perfecting of the saints, making the believers strong, bringing them into maturity, feeding them, loving them, strengthening them so that they would be able to be engaged in the work of the ministry, for I realized that God has called all of us and placed us into His body and He has a plan and purpose for each of us. Paul said that the types of men listed in Ephesians 4 were for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, the building up of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto the fully matured man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we're no longer like babes tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things which is the head, even Christ.

So, in changing my philosophy, I no longer preached evangelistic sermons per se, but began to teach the Word of God in a consistent way designed to produce growth within the believers.

When I first started out in the ministry, my sermons were all topical sermons centered around evangelism. I had two years of sermons, so every two years I would request the bishop for a change of church, and then I would move to a new area and preach my two years of sermons again. I did this in four communities until I finally landed in Huntington Beach, California. By this time my older daughter had started school and personally, I loved living in Huntington Beach. It was a lovely little beach community of only 6,000 people at the time, and I began to really know and like the people. But I was running out of sermons because preaching topical sermons, it is rather difficult to find the text. When you're searching through the whole Bible to find a text to preach on each week, it is difficult because the Bible's a good-sized book. Every week, though, I found myself going through, reading until some text really hit me. And of course, I had to have three sermons every week and it began to get difficult for me to find my text, especially since it had to be in the area of evangelism. Once I found a text, I was able to develop it, but finding a text was always a problem.

I came across a book at that time called the Apostle John, by Griffith Thomas and in the middle of the book, he had outlined studies of the book of First John. I began to read his outlined studies of First John and found that they were great expository outlines of this little epistle. There were 43 outlines, and I thought, "Wow, I can spend another year here in Huntington Beach if I just teach First John." So I announced to the people on a Sunday morning, that the next Sunday we would begin a study of the First Epistle of John.

The very first thing that Griffith Thomas explained in his book is why John wrote his epistle in the first place: in chapter one he said, "And these things write we unto you that your joy may be full"; in chapter two he said, "These things we write unto you that you sin not" and in chapter five he said, "These things we have written unto you that ye may know that you have eternal life."

I announced to the people that we were going to begin a study on First John and I said, "Now, there are three reasons why John wrote this little epistle. By next Sunday I want you to be able to tell me the three reasons. When I greet you at the front door when you come to church, if I ask you three reasons why John wrote that epistle, I'm expecting you to be able to tell me." I had people calling me in the middle of the week saying, "We've read the thing through seven times and we can only find two reasons, are you sure there are three?" And I said, "I am sure there are three; keep reading." My sermon that Sunday morning was the purpose of the book. I had three points: reading the book will give you fullness of joy, freedom from sin and assurance of your salvation.

There are six places in which John points to Jesus Christ as our example. So that Sunday I said, "Now, next week I want you to find the six places where John points to Jesus Christ as our example, and the key words are as he, or even as he. Six places where he has pointed to Jesus as our example. Find them."

Again the people started reading through the book and it took them 8, 9, 10 times to find all six: if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with the other; if we say we abide in Him, then we ought also to walk even as He walked. He is our example in our walk. We ought to be walking as He walks, walking in the light as He is in the light, our example in righteousness and purity, for we are pure as He is pure, we are righteous as He is righteous. He said we should love even as He commanded us. And finally, as He is, so are we to be to this world.

The next sermon was false professions that people make. First John lists seven false professions with the key words if a man says, or if we say. I said, "Find the false professions that people are making." The congregation was reading through the book again, and the following Sunday, we dealt with the phrase "to know." How do we know what we know? I had them reading through the book again. I then started an expository study through the book. Beginning with 1:1 and going straight through the book of First John, I spent a whole year in the book.

The interesting thing was that in a year's time, the church had doubled in attendance. I had not given invitations in every service to accept Christ, but we had more conversions and water baptisms that year than any previous year. And the exciting thing was that the people had a greater joy in their walk with the Lord than they had ever known before. They were experiencing real power over sin, and they were assured of their salvation.

Isaiah said, "As the rain cometh down from the heavens and returns not thither, but it waters the ground that it might give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so is My word that goes forth out of My mouth,' saith the Lord, 'it shall not return unto Me void. It shall accomplish the purposes for which I sent it.'" If God sent us this little epistle of First John to bring us fullness of joy, to bring us freedom from sin, and to bring us assurance of salvation, that's exactly what's going to happen to the people as you teach them that book. God's Word won't return void. Our words probably will, but His Word won't. If you are faithful in teaching His Word, it will accomplish the purpose for which God sent it. And that's why, when you read an epistle, it is always good to ask yourself, "What is the purpose of this epistle? Why was this written?" Find the purpose, and then you'll find out what it is that God is working out in your life and what you could be expecting to happen as you make a real study of that epistle or of that gospel.

I was able to stay another year in Huntington Beach, and with the new church growth it was greater than ever. As I was finishing First John, I was beginning to develop my own style of expository teaching. I thought, "What book of the Bible could I tackle in the same way as First John?" In seminary, I had a professor who told us that the book of Romans would revolutionize any church. I'd

always heard what a glorious book Romans was but, I have to confess, I had read it many times and it didn't really turn me on. But I had a lot of confidence in that professor, and if he said it would revolutionize any church, I thought it would be fun to be a part of a revolution. So I announced to the people when we came to the end of our study of First John, "Now, next Sunday we are going to begin a study in the book of Romans."

I went out and bought all the commentaries I could find on the book of Romans and I began to develop outline studies similar to the outline studies I had in First John. I spent two years on Sunday mornings in the book of Romans. Again, the church doubled; we had more people saved and more people baptized than we ever had had before. It was glorious; it was exciting.

I picked up a copy of Halley's Bible Pocket Handbook. In fact, I made a practice of giving one of these to every new convert. I've always said the first book you should have in your library outside of the Bible is Halley's Bible Pocket Handbook. It's just full of valuable, good, background information, cultural, archaeological, historical. For a little book, it's got more nuggets and more facts than any other book I know. So, they came out with a revised edition, and it had a new cover jacket on the front. And on this jacket it said, "The most important page in this book is 867." Now, I had so admired Mr. Halley that I thought, "I wonder what he considers to be the most important page in this book?" I mean, I had always gotten a lot of value out of the whole thing. So I turned to page 867 and there he said, "Every church should have a method of systematically encouraging the congregation to read through the whole Bible." And, "Ideally, the pastor's Sunday morning sermon would come out of the area that they had been reading the previous week." He gave a suggested reading, so you could go through the whole Bible in a year. I thought that was just a little strenuous, but I thought we could go through in two years. Taking ten chapters a week, fifteen when we get to the Psalms, we could go through the whole Bible in two years. And then the thought occurred to me, Chuck, you can stay in the church the rest of your life, if you just start teaching through the Bible.

I discovered that it was much easier to get sermons when I was confined to one small area for my text, and the quality of the sermons were much better, for I was able to spend much more consecrated study on the next text I was going to be speaking from than I did when I was hodgepodging around the whole Bible. When you have to find your text within a certain portion of Scripture, it makes you really push and do some consecrated and valuable studying. So I took up Mr. Halley's suggestion, taking the people straight through the Bible and that's been my practice ever since.

At the present time (1989), we are going through the Bible at Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa for the seventh time with our congregation. I have slowed down considerably. I am only taking a couple of chapters a week, sometimes three chapters, but I've really slowed down my pace going through. And I'm loving it more this time than ever because I am progressively learning more. The last time I went through I slowed down to five chapters a week. Now, I've slowed down to two, sometimes three chapters a week. By the time I'm through with the present systematic teaching, we will have a very thorough commentary on the entire Bible because I've made it a personal practice that every time I go through the Bible I read a new commentary, or sometimes two or three new commentaries, so, as a result, I've been able to read most of the major commentaries on the Bible.

A valuable lesson that I've learned is that the greatest way to learn is to teach. Once you start teaching, you really start learning, because you have to take in so much more material than what you can give out. You've got to take it in and sift through it. You've got to take in probably ten times the amount that you give out. So, it's a great way to learn - start teaching.

In the book of Hebrews, chapter six, the author writes, "Therefore, laying aside the first principles of the doctrines of Christ: the repentance of dead works, baptisms, laying on of hands; let us go on into full maturity." Having had an opportunity of looking back now on my ministry, the 17 years of struggling in the ministry, compared with the last 23 years of cruising in the ministry, the struggling years were when I was endeavoring to be an evangelist, preaching topical sermons. There was a marked transition. I actually began to teach and became comfortable with teaching in the fourteenth year of my ministry.

I don't know if the book of Romans revolutionized the church, but it did revolutionize me. I was never the same after that. I came into a new relationship with the Lord that was just primo. it revolutionized my whole spiritual experience. God just turned me upside down and inside out. I also realized an important truth through the book of Romans - when the people became strong and mature in the Word of God, they then began to be more effective witnesses for Jesus Christ. Christ became their life. We didn't have to have visitation nights and witnessing programs anymore. Witnessing became a natural function, an automatic thing. A witness is not something that you do; it is something that you are, and when your life is matured in Christ, your matured spiritual walk is a witness to others.

When I was trying to be an evangelist I discovered that the most frustrating thing in the whole ministry was to have the Lord lay on your heart a dynamic evangelistic sermon, and then have no sinners in the church to whom to preach it. I used to get so excited over some of the sermons the Lord would give me. Great evangelistic sermons. They were so powerful in their logic that no sinner could possibly sit through them without accepting Jesus. I would go to church and my heart would be just overflowing with this dynamic message that the Lord had given me. I could hardly wait to deliver it. I could hardly wait till I got to the invitation so I could see every sinner in the house on their knees, for I surely knew that would be the case.

But oftentimes with this kind of a sermon burning on my heart, I would come to church, sit on the platform while the songs were being sung, look over the congregation and know them all by first name. Not a sinner in the house. You can't know how frustrating it is to have a great evangelistic sermon and no sinners to hear it. I would get upset and would add a few points to my sermon: "You people are miserable failures. God is sick and tired of you not witnessing for Him. If you folks were all that God wanted you to be, you would have had your friends here tonight with you. You would have brought your sinful neighbors to hear the Word of God!"

I was laying it on the saints because I was angry that there weren't any sinners there. Those blessed dear saints. As I would take out the whip and begin laying it across their back, they would just sink down deeper and deeper in the pew as the conviction was coming heavy on them. Instead of making an invitation for anyone to accept Christ, I would ask how many wanted to commit their lives to really being the kind of witness the Lord wanted them to be, because I was of the spiritual mentality that you've got to get someone forward praying at the altar or your sermon was not a success.

The problem, however, was not a lack of desire to be better witnesses. They desired to serve the Lord. The problem was that they didn't really know how because they were not taught. All they ever had was the baby bottle. All they ever had was repent from sins and Jesus died to save us from our sins. All they ever had was evangelism. They were never really taught in the Word to where they could mature and where they could grow.

When the saints were perfected for the work of the ministry, however, they began to minister. They began to bring in their friends. Evangelism became the by-product of a strong and mature church. A

church that is strong in the Word will automatically be an evangelical church. It is the natural function of healthy sheep to reproduce. It's very natural. You don't even have to teach them how. It's just the natural function of healthy sheep to reproduce. When you make the sheep healthy by giving them a good diet, a consistent diet that will develop growth and strength, they will naturally reproduce.

I also discovered that in going straight through a book of the Bible, you avoid riding hobby horses. There are certain subjects in the Bible that I find more fascinating than others. There are some things that I love to preach on; there are other things I don't like preaching about. Those things that I don't like to preach about, I find ways of not preaching about them; sort of bypassing them. When you're going straight through a book of the Bible from beginning to end, you can't bypass them, and you're speaking on issues that people need to hear addressed, but rarely hear addressed in the church because they are not popular subjects, yet God would not have put them in the Word unless they were important subjects. If you go straight through a book in teaching, you will be declaring the whole counsel of God. If you go straight through the Bible, you will be declaring the whole counsel of God, and your emphasis will become a biblical emphasis. I discovered for years my preaching did not really follow the true biblical emphasis. I believe that as you study the Bible you will discover that the biblical emphasis is what God has done for man; that God is the Initiator, and that man is the responder. For the love of Christ is what constrains us. God initiated our relationship by His great love for me and I'm just responding to that love.

Looking back at my topical sermons, I realized that I was always emphasizing what man should be doing for God. They were sermons on the believer's walk; how we ought to be praying more; how we ought to be giving more; how we ought to be witnessing more; how we ought to be praising God more. It was always on what we should be doing for God. That is frustrating, especially for the congregation - yes, I know I should be doing these things for God, but I don't know how. You see, if you only pick those texts which are not usually at the beginning of a chapter but somewhere down the line where it says, "I beseech ye, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice," and you haven't gone back to that grace of God wherein we stand and that we know all that God has wrought and done for us, then my commitment can be just an emotional thing of the moment. I'm being called to present my body without any basis for it.

In the Scriptures, the exhortations to commitment usually begin with "therefore" or "wherefore." These words are never the beginning of a thought but rather, words that call for a response to the statements or arguments that preceded them. Paul didn't begin the book of Romans with chapter twelve, he began with chapter one. There's a natural progression of thought through the book of Romans till you finally get to chapter twelve where, because God has called you and justified you and glorified you, I beseech you, therefore, to present your bodies to Him.

Look at Ephesians, Paul begins the first chapter by saying, "Thanks be unto God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ in heavenly places." God has blessed us and Paul spends three chapters telling us of all these spiritual blessings we have in Christ. It's not until he gets to chapter four that again he uses the word "therefore." "Because of what God has done for you, therefore, walk ye worthy of the calling where you are called." It's not until you get to chapter five that Paul begins to exhort you how you are to walk in your relationship with your family, your wife, your servants, your employees, but again, only after he has given us the basis of what God has already done for us. If we are only emphasizing to the people what they should be doing for God, that is not a real biblical emphasis.

As I see it, the Bible teaches that God is the Initiator. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." God initiated His love towards me. God reached out to me. God initiated my relationship with Him. He chose me in Christ before the foundation of the world. God initiated the whole thing. What I am to do, then, is to respond to God. When you teach from this solid biblical perspective, you will discover that when the people really begin to understand God and what God has done for them, they will want to respond to God. You're not going to have to be begging them to volunteer for work; they are going to be volunteering on their own. You don't have to have all kinds of gimmicks to get them to give. They're going to be wanting to give. They want to respond to God. When they really know Who God is and what God has done for them, then they respond to God.

I have been in services where people were encouraged to "praise the Lord," so that God would bless them, because they have been told that "the Lord inhabits the praises of His people." In that case, you're saying man is the initiator; that you can get things going between you and God. All you have to do is praise Him a little bit. He'll respond and begin to bless you. The truest praise is not something that is done out of the motive in my heart to get a blessing. If I am praising the Lord just so I can get a blessing, that's not true praise. That's a self-centered attitude. The object for praise in that case is me, not God. The truest praise is that automatic response of my heart at the recognition of the grace of God to me when God has just done something fantastic for me, even though I have failed miserably, yet God just lays some rich blessing on me and my heart responds, "Oh, God, You are too much; I can't believe Your love and goodness." That's the purest form of praise; that which comes spontaneously from my heart at the recognition of God's grace in my life. I don't praise the Lord so I can create an atmosphere in which God will come down and bless me. My praises are a response to the blessings that God has bestowed. God is the Initiator; man is the responder.

The book of First Peter begins with a thanks to God who has "begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God." This is all God's part. We don't have anything to do with this. He's talking about what God is doing. Thanks to God who has caused us to be born again. Where do we come in? Peter says "we are kept by the power through faith." That's where we come in, by just believing that God has done all this for us. In John 6:29 Jesus said, "This is the work of God; just believe on Him who He has sent." Yes, human response is important, but I have to know to whom I am responding. I have to know God and I have to know what God has done. A person will receive this naturally if you are teaching through the Bible and through the books of the Bible.

In essence, the philosophy of Calvary Chapel is to perfect the saints for the work of the ministry and to build up the body of Christ, instructing them in the Word until they come into the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God and into a full maturity, unto the stature of the measure of the image of Christ.

As you look at the church of Jesus Christ, you'll find that there is a very broad spectrum. As you look at our society, you will see that there is also a very broad spectrum of people with many and varied tastes. So at one end of this broad spectrum you have the very formal liturgical church: the prayer book, the robes, the choirs with their chants, the incense, the candles, when to stand, kneel, sit, and respond; everything's worked out for you; it's a very formal, ritualistic, liturgical form of worship; on the other end of the spectrum, you have no form, no program, a lot of screaming, a lot of shouting, a lot of utterances in tongues, people going all over and everybody standing up here and there; there's no order; no form; you sort of sit there waiting for what's going to happen next.

There are some people who seem to be able to relate to God only in a very liturgical way. They like the rustling robes, the chanting choirs and the smell of incense. As they sit there, they have a sense of worship. When they walk out, they have a sense of having been in the presence of God and love to worship the Lord in that manner. I do not doubt that some people actually, truly worship and love the Lord in that environment and relate to Him in that liturgical way.

On the other hand, you have people who are all emotion and unless they've had an emotional jolt and have gone through a wide variety of physical kinds of things, they don't feel that they have worshiped God properly. In fact, they'll often come out of a teaching church and say, "That was the most dead thing I've ever been in. I don't know how you get anything out of that old man; it was so dead. Why didn't they have utterances in tongues? Why weren't there miracles?" Their whole thing is an emotional kick. They live for an emotional high and in that emotional high, they have the sense of worshiping God. That's the way they relate to God, in an emotional way. God knows that there are emotional people; He also knows that there are people on the liturgical side. And God loves them all.

Because God knows that there are some people who can only relate to Him in a liturgical way, He has the liturgical churches so they can minister to those people who need the liturgy. Because He knows that there are people who can only relate to Him in a highly emotional way, He has the highly emotional churches where the people can go and relate to Him through emotional experiences. I thank God for these churches and I see their place in the body of Christ. The swing of the church pendulum, then, is marked by the highly liturgical on one side, and the totally non-conforming experiential on the other.

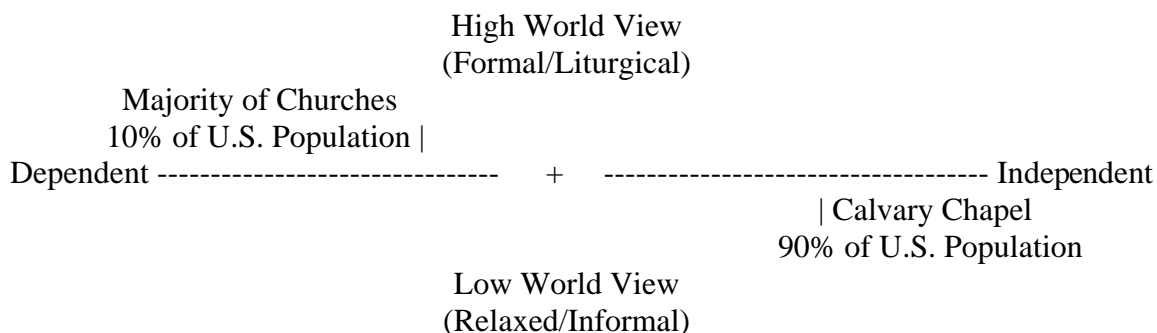
Coming down the spectrum from the liturgical side, you have those churches that teach the Word of God. Their services are somewhat a ritual, that is, you can know every Sunday just what's going to go on. It's been going on for the last 100 years and you can feel rather secure because you know you're going to have the call to worship, the opening hymn, the announcements, the offering, then the sermon, the benediction, and time to go home. The sermon is an exposition of the Word and there are a great many gifted teachers. Unfortunately, though, many of them deny the anointing and the power of the Holy Spirit, so, as a result, you have a dead orthodoxy.

Calvary Chapel believes in teaching the Word of God through the power of the Spirit of God which changes the lives of the people of God. If you have just the Spirit-emphasis with no Word and no foundation in the Word, then you are leading the people into experiences only, which are shallow. If you have just the Word of God without the Spirit, then you are leading people into dead orthodoxy. It takes the power of the Spirit of God to make the changes, but it takes the Word of God to give the substance and to give the foundation. It is that blending of the Word of God and being taught through the power of the Spirit of God that brings the changes in the people.

Calvary Chapel recognizes the need for the power of the Spirit, but we also recognize the need for the solid foundation and teaching of the Word. To effectively teach the Word, however, it takes the anointing and the power of the Holy Spirit so that the person teaching the Word of God is usually exercising the gifts of the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge and prophecy, and these gifts are in operation in the pastor's life as he is teaching the Word of God. This is where Calvary Chapel fits into the church spectrum.

Since our society has changed drastically over the last twenty-five years, it is necessary to bisect the church spectrum with a perpendicular line labeled "High World View" at the top and "Low World View" at the bottom. The High World View consists of people who are highly structured, highly organized and have highly developed programs. Everything fits right within its little niche, fitting

together in this very carefully put-together package. The Low World View is the kick-back, casual, take-it-as-it-comes attitude.



On both sides of the High and Low World Views are those who are dependent and those who are independent. The people who are dependent need something or someone on which to lean. They need a church that emphasizes their dependency on the church, and the dependency of the church on them. You have those who are highly organized and dependent. You have those who are highly organized and yet independent. You have those who are casual and dependent, and you have those who are casual and independent. The majority of churches today would fit into the dependent, highly organized, structured, developed, everybody-on-a-committee and everybody-knows-what-their-duty-is category. That church says, "We depend upon you. We depend upon your giving, your being here. And you depend upon us for your spiritual life and salvation." When you miss a service, the designated person will call you the next day to see if you are alright and to find out why you missed the service. You dare not visit another church, for you will be accused of leaving the Lord. They don't always say it, but they believe that your salvation depends upon your remaining faithful to that church.

Calvary Chapel, on the other hand, fits into the casual, kick-back, independent mold. We appeal to people who are more casual and more independent; people who don't generally have to lean upon anyone, nor do they want to be leaned on. They can wear T-shirts, no ties, or three-piece suits if they want; no one cares about how you are dressed.

With the social structures in the United States today having changed quite a bit over the last few years, moving more and more toward a highly technical society, ninety percent of the people in our country would seem to fit into the rather independent and casual way of life, especially in Southern California, while the remaining ten percent are of the organized, dependent mold. As a result, you've got ninety percent of the churches fishing in a little pond of ten percent of the people and fighting over their share of that little pond. On the other side, you've got Calvary Chapel, and a few churches like it, fishing all by themselves in the ninety percent pond. The ninety percent churches come and look at us and say, "What are you doing?" They study our church; study what they think is our program, and say, "Well, it's because they let the kids go barefooted. That's the key." And they're finding all sorts of keys to explain why people are being attracted and packing out the Calvary Chapel churches.

What they fail to observe, however, is that it's the Spirit of God working through the Word of God in the lives of the people of God that is the key; not following or conforming to the traditional church. People do not feel threatened. They don't feel like they're going to be collared and be thrown a Sunday school book and told, "Oh, thank God, brother, you've been here three Sundays. We need you to teach Sunday school now." You're not going to be pressured; your service is going to be something that's going to come from within you as you respond to the Lord.

The philosophy of Calvary Chapel is giving and ministering rather than taking and being ministered to. You will find that a lot of ministries exist in order to be ministered to. They don't mind letting you know: "We need your support to keep this ministry going. This ministry depends upon you." I've concluded that any ministry that depends upon man for its existence and operation should die, and the best thing we could do is let it die. Calvary Chapel, then, exists to minister and our emphasis is on giving; giving to the people; ministering to the people.

We had a very wealthy man who was vice president of a tool company from Texas, as well as being in the oil business. He amended Calvary Chapel quite regularly, and we became very close to him and to his wife. All the while, though, he kept saying to his wife, "When are they going to hit us for the money?" He just kept waiting for our pitch for his money.

The Sunday before Thanksgiving I announced that we had so much to be thankful for and how God had been so good to us that year. "Unfortunately, though," I said, "there are some who are going through difficulties and they don't have much for which to be thankful." As I started talking about the problems that some people were having and the financial difficulties they were going through, the man nudged his wife and said, "At last, he's finally getting there. I knew the pitch had to come some time."

I concluded my statements, however, not the way he had been expecting. I said, "So, if you are in need this Thanksgiving and you are going through some real financial difficulties, just see our assistant pastor after the service and the church will be glad to give you a turkey and all that you need for your Thanksgiving dinner. We just pray that you'll have a glorious Thanksgiving." The man was absolutely dumbfounded. We were simply operating according to the truth of the Scriptures, as Jesus said it is more blessed to give than to receive. That is our philosophy: giving the Word of God freely to people; giving freely of ourselves in serving the people; going the second mile.

By the same token, the minister is to minister rather than be ministered to. Somewhere along the line there has been a tremendous flip-flop in terminology and ideas in ministry. The word "minister" really means "servant" and Joshua was Moses' minister. It meant that he was Moses' servant, that is, he ministered to the needs of Moses. He was Moses' errand boy. That's what the word "minister" means. Yet, I am amazed at how upset some ministers get when someone asks them to minister to the needs of the congregation. "Can you believe he called me up for a ride? Doesn't he know that I'm the minister here?" If you are the minister then he should have called you for a ride. Jesus said, "He that would be the chief among you, let him be the servant of all."

The minister is a servant. Remember, it was Jesus who took the towel and girded himself, and went around and began to wash the feet of His disciples. That was the job of the servant, not of the master. Dusty paths, open sandals, feet were always dirty. When someone would come to your home, the lowest servant in the house had the duty of coming up, taking off the guest's sandals at the door and washing his feet in a basin of water. That was the role that Jesus chose and illustrated for us by His example at the Last Supper. Jesus told the disciples, "Do you see what I have done to you? If I, being the Lord, have washed your feet, so ought you to wash one another's feet."

In other words, the idea is that we are to be servants, and we should think of ministry as servanthood. The book *The Jesus Style* written by Gayle Irwin would acquaint you with what real Christian service is all about and what ministry should be about. The entire church, from the pastor on down, is here to minister to the needs of others. We are not here to be ministered to. We do not look to the people to minister to us; we look for ways to minister to them.

The philosophy of Calvary Chapel is to see the whole body of Christ, and we are filling one little area of the spectrum that God has called us to fill, and we want to be faithful to that calling. We strive to see the whole body of Christ and the purpose of the whole body, and so the only place where we might be in conflict with others in the body of Christ is where they are not leading people to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. That may sound bizarre to some but unfortunately, there are churches that have gotten to the place where they are no longer leading people to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

We're not in competition with the churches that are leading people to Jesus Christ; we're not fighting them. We don't exist to fight them; we exist to fight the devil and to proclaim Jesus Christ. Jesus said to His disciples, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." Their witness for Christ was to begin in Jerusalem, and it was very effective in Jerusalem. A few months after the birth of the church, the disciples were brought to court and the charges against them were this: "You have filled the whole city with this man's [Jesus] doctrine." Now that was a successful church. Would to God that we could be brought to court and the charges against us are that we filled the whole city with the doctrine of Jesus Christ. I would say praise the Lord.

Persecution had scattered the church of Jesus Christ throughout all of Judea, and wherever they went, they preached Christ. We then read that Philip went to Samaria and preached Christ to the Samaritans, and many of the Samaritans believed and were baptized when they saw the miracles Philip was doing. Then we read that the Holy Spirit said, "Separate unto Me, Paul and Barnabas, for the ministry where I have called them." They fasted and prayed and laid hands on them and Paul and Barnabas headed for the island of Cyprus. Later, Paul took the gospel to Asia Minor, Rome, Greece and Macedonia. Thomas took the gospel to India. In just thirty years after the birth of the church, Paul wrote to the Colossian church, "The Word of the gospel has come to you as it is in all the world." In just thirty years the disciples had spread the message into all the world.

When we started at Calvary Chapel in 1965 with only 25 people, I was determined that I would make those 25 people the most knowledgeable people of God's Word in all the harbor area. I began teaching them five nights a week: two nights in the church; three nights in the home Bible studies. One night a week, Saturday night, I had a prayer meeting with the men. We took Acts, chapter two, as our pattern: "They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, in fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayer." We decided that these would be the essential elements of our worship and fellowship. The emphasis would be the teaching of the Word, the Apostles' doctrine. We would teach them solid doctrine; scriptural doctrine. We would teach them about God. We would teach them about Jesus Christ. We would teach them about the Holy Spirit. We would teach them about man. We would teach them about sin. We would teach them about salvation, and we would teach them about the coming again of Jesus Christ. Solid doctrine; the Apostles' doctrine.

We began to develop the fellowship, the koinonia, where we really became an integrated unit and began to minister to each other both in the physical and in the spiritual sense, praying for each other, binding our lives together in prayer, helping out each other in a physical sense. If one in the group was in need, we would all go together to help him, creating a strong fellowship. We would also gather together in these Bible studies and break bread.

In the book of Acts it says that as they did these things, the Lord added daily to the church such as should be saved. As we began to teach the people, this fellowship began to grow into a union, a oneness, a sharing in prayer and in love and in support, and as we began to break bread together,

worshipping the Lord together, remembering Jesus Who died for us, and as we started praying together, the group began to grow. My wife led a prayer meeting for the ladies in the neighborhood during the week and I led one for the men on Saturday nights. We also had a group of men we had designated as elders who would visit and pray for the sick. As we began to do these things faithfully, we found that the Lord began to add daily to the church such as should be saved.

In six months we had increased to fifty people. Within a year we had a hundred people. In eighteen months we were looking for another facility because we were packing out the little church in which we were meeting. We had the promise of getting a local Lutheran church whose congregation was building a new facility, but they were delayed in their plans, so, we started meeting Sunday afternoons in the Lutheran church and waiting patiently until the church could become ours. We waited for two years but continued growing until we were soon packing out the Lutheran Church as well, so, by the time we were able to move into the Lutheran church, we had already outgrown it. Instead, we built our own building and lasted there for two years until we were so packed and crowded that we had to move into a tent.

While we were building our new sanctuary, we changed the plans three different times for enlargement. We were growing so fast, the architect couldn't get the plans drawn quickly enough to accommodate our expansion. We had actually outgrown the church three times while it was still on the drawing board and when we opened our doors, we were at two Sunday morning services, and that only lasted two weeks before increasing to three.

As we grew and covered Jerusalem, we began to spread into Judea. My son, Chuck, Jr., Greg Laurie, Jeff Johnson, Mike MacIntosh, Raul Ries and Jon Courson began Bible studies and fellowships all throughout California. From Judea we spread into Samaria with other effective Calvary Chapels springing up in Washington, Oregon, Florida, Kansas, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, New Mexico and Washington, D.C. Now we are in the uttermost parts of the world England, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Switzerland, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Philippines, Thailand, India, Egypt, Uganda, Peru, Chile, San Salvador, Guatemala, and elsewhere.

If the Lord tarries, will we continue to see this exponential type of growth; this explosion? It can happen if we will just hang loose and let the Spirit lead; let the Spirit move. Don't try to get things too organized. Let God take care of that. Just teach the Word, bring the people into a loving relationship with Jesus Christ and each other, and celebrate communion with them. When God established the nation of Israel, the form of government was a theocracy, that is, they were to be a people ruled by God. They were not to be as other nations with a king over them. They were to be a nation that would be distinct in the fact that they would be ruled by God. It was a sad day in their history when they came to Samuel and said, "We want you to appoint a king over us like the other nations."

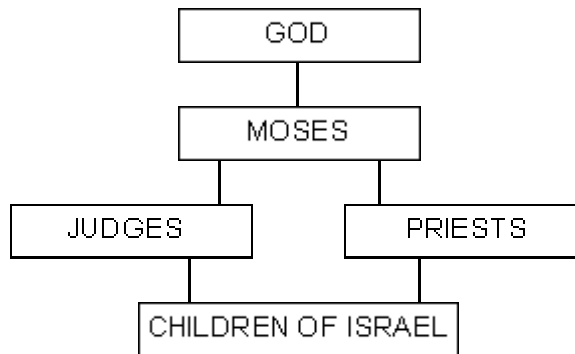
As a theocracy, God established the nation of Israel, but He called Moses to be the earthly leader over the nation, and God, through Moses, led the people. Moses was the recognized instrument of God in leading the people. When things became too heavy for Moses, the responsibilities too great, he gathered seventy of the elders of Israel, representatives from the twelve tribes, and the Spirit of God, Who was upon Moses, came upon them also. And they began to rule with Moses.

However, there were times when the people would bring an issue to one of the elders that they were not able to resolve. In that case the issue was then brought to Moses and Moses, in turn, went to God and God gave Moses the answer to the problem. Reversing the process, Moses would then pass the answer to the elders, who passed it to the people.

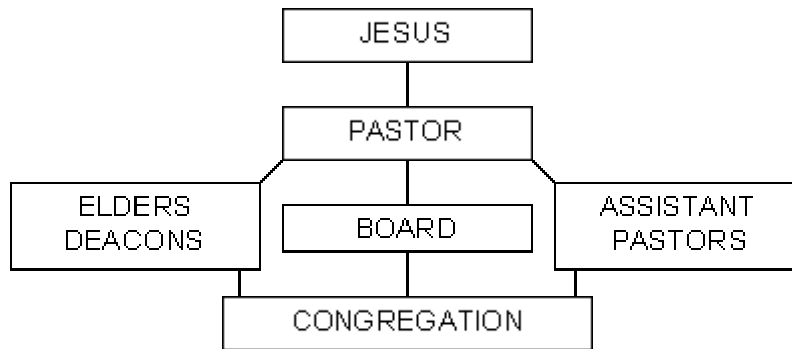
Also, under Moses' charge was Aaron and the priesthood from the tribe of Levi who oversaw the spiritual aspects of the nation. As the elders were overseeing the legal and business squabbles and differences of the people, the priests were overseeing the spiritual aspects of the people.

The following is a diagram of the type of government God established with His nation Israel, and a diagram of what Calvary Chapel understands as the New Testament counterpart as God's government for the church:

O.T. Theocratic Government



Church Government



We feel that this is the form of government God desires for His church: Jesus Christ is the head of the body, the church; He established the episkopos or bishop, who we call the pastor, who is responsible to Jesus and whom must recognize and bear the responsibility to guide and to direct the ministry of the local church, guided directly by Jesus Christ. Under the pastor, in some cases, you have the assistant pastors, equivalent to the priests under Moses' rule.

You also have a board of elders. The board of elders discuss and decide the business aspects of the church, the spending of the church funds, the requests for help that they have from various missionary groups, and ministries.

The board meetings should always begin with prayer. When a voting situation comes up, you should go to prayer before the vote. You should ask the Lord to show you what He would have you to do. The Lord's guidance and direction are needed in all matters. The assistant pastors oversee various aspects of the church in the spiritual sense: Jr. High, single adults, married couples, special interest

groups. When they come up against a problem that they don't know how to handle, they should seek the counsel of the senior pastor, who, like they, should be seeking counsel from the Lord.

If someone in the church comes to a board member about something they feel that the church ought to be doing, it is presented at the board meeting. The board will discuss it and pray about it together, and oftentimes the board will say, "Chuck, what do you feel that we should do?" The board recognizes that God has called me to be the pastor of the church, the shepherd. In Calvary Chapel the pastor is not a hireling. There are many churches in which the pastor is a hireling. He is hired by the board and can be fired by the board. He becomes a hireling and he's totally responsible to the wishes of the board as they govern the church. But these men are oftentimes businessmen and not the most spiritual men within the church. In that case, the church becomes governed by men rather than governed by Jesus Christ.

There are dangers, though, in a theocratic form of government, primarily because there are some pastors who disobey what the Lord said concerning the one who is chief becoming the servant of all. There are pastors who have abused their powers. They do not make a clear accounting to the board of the financial aspects of the church. They do not seek the advice and counsel of the board before they make important decisions that are relevant to the function of the church. They try to be a one-man show.

When issues come up at our board meeting, invariably before a decision is made, the board will ask how I feel about the particular issue because they respect the fact that God has called me and has raised our ministry, and has used me as His instrument in so doing. But many times I won't have an opinion: "Fellows, I really don't have an opinion; let's pray and seek the will of the Lord." And I let them go ahead and make the decisions without any input from me at all.

There are other times where I have very strong feelings and express them: "I feel this is what the Lord would have us to do. I've been praying about this and I really feel this is what God wants us to do." Invariably, because these men recognize God's anointing upon my life, the vote will go that way. I'm honest and above board with the men; I'm not trying to pull any shenanigans on them; I'm not trying to be a one-man show. We're open in our discussions and in the things that come up, and they respect the integrity and the leading that the Lord has placed upon my life. Without question, though, the Lord is definitely the head of the body of the church. I am only a servant to carry out His orders.

It is important to have a church board but not to assemble that board too quickly. In starting a new work, the Bible says to lay hands on no man suddenly. Know the men well. Whenever we are looking for new board members, I always look in the Saturday night prayer meeting for men who have prayed with me for years. I can trust them. I know that they are men of prayer; men who will seek the counsel and the guidance of God, even as I seek the counsel and guidance of God; men who were faithful in the Saturday night prayer meetings with me.

I mentioned that it is important not to appoint a board too quickly. A case in point illustrates one of the reasons why. The man who was in charge of the Korean fellowship at our church is a medical doctor. He did not get any salary for his ministry to the Koreans. He makes his living as a pediatrician and an allergist. The Korean fellowship was growing quite large, so they said, "We really need to get a board established for the Korean fellowship." So, the man appointed board members and asked me to come to the service that I might lay hands on these men that he had chosen for his board, and I did. The very same week that we laid hands on these men and prayed for them and appointed them as board members, they had a meeting and asked the pastor to resign. They said, "Either give up your medical practice or resign as the pastor. We feel that we need a full-time pastor and your medical

practice is taking you away from your ministry here." The man was devastated; he didn't know what to do. So he asked me what I thought. I said, "Fire the board. God has called you to pastor that fellowship; the board didn't call you to pastor it. Let them go." So, we ordained them one week, and defrocked them the next. That's just one of the problems you can run into if you haven't really prayed together and really know the men who are serving on the board with you.

On the other hand, you need a board of dependable men for your protection because there are decisions that must be made that are not going to be accepted by everybody, decisions that will create divisions among the body if you make them yourself. Several years ago I was pastoring in Tucson, Arizona, where every year we had an annual picnic on Mt. Lemon on the 4th of July. There was a beautiful public campground up there; it had a baseball diamond, football field, and so forth. We would always go up and play ball and have a potluck; it was great church fellowship.

We had a fellow who came to the church, sort of the hyper, super-spiritual type, and a group came in with him. He had an acre of ground atop Mt. Lemon and he felt that it would be great to have the church picnic on his acre of ground. However, he did not have restroom facilities or running water, but, he suggested, we could spend the whole day in prayer. Wouldn't it be better to spend the whole day in prayer and waiting upon God rather than doing such a frivolous thing as playing ball? This man talked some of the people into a spiritual 4th of July. We would all go up to his property and pray.

Other people, however, said, "If you go to his property, we're not going. We're not going to subject our kids to a place where they don't have any potties; if you go there, we're not going." The super-spiritual group replied, "If you go to the public campgrounds, we're not going. We're not going to expose our children to the riff-raff of the public this weekend." So, everybody came to me and said, "Okay, Chuck, what are we going to do?" It was a catch-22 situation. Either choice I made I was sure to have a group of enemies. I said, "Well, let's pray about it and at the board meeting we will decide where we are going to go."

We had the board meeting and the board said, "It's foolish to go to the place where we don't have facilities; we can't have 150 people out there without a restroom; we'll just go to the public campground." The board, then, decided that we would go to the public campground. I happened to think that was a wise decision, but the board technically decided it.

When I announced that the board had decided to go to the public campground, these super-spiritual types called me up, just as upset as they could be. I said, "You know, it would be exciting, wouldn't it, just to have a day of prayer? We should just plan that sometime. But the board made their decision." You see, I was still able to minister to them. They didn't polarize against me. They polarized against the board.

So, the board is there as a protection for the pastor, a buffer to stand between you and the people when difficult decisions are made that are not always acceptable or agreeable to the entire body. Your board can keep you from being cut off from your congregation and allow you to continue to minister to them. It has a very important function and every church, I believe, as soon as they have qualified men, need to appoint a board to oversee the operations and spending and to make the decisions that must be made.

In conclusion, I believe Calvary Chapel has a biblically sound and balanced understanding of the church, its function in the world and its total dependence upon the leading and guiding of the Holy

Spirit of God for its success as it faithfully proclaims the Good News of the cross of Jesus Christ and the hope of salvation through Him only.

"For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."

Isaiah 55:10-11
