

Why Christ's Church Is in Perpetual Need of Reform

"Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more." 1 Thessalonians 4:1 NASB

The battle cry of the great leaders of the Protestant Reformation in the early 16th century was *"Ecclesia semper reformanda est."* (The Church is always in need of reformation.) Great men like John Huss, John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, and many others understood that as long as Christ's bride-church had to walk the dusty roads of this fallen world there would be an on-going need to restore her to her original splendor by rinsing away that dust with "the water of the word."

Old and New Testament Scripture is "breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16) -- and God's Word never returns to Him void. It always accomplishes the purpose for which He sends it (Isaiah 55:10-11.) Since the Word of God is His gracious means of providing for the perpetual revival and reformation of His church, then every time we read it we will see new opportunities to change our ways back to what He told us at the beginning. Whenever the church becomes caked with the dust of decades of extra-biblical tradition and human innovation, we can expect Christ to lovingly pour out His Holy Spirit to revive His church with a deep concern for His will -- which we pray will turn to a renewed desire to reform.

Household of Faith Community Church began as a grand "experiment" in 1998, attempting to restore to the church a more biblical and fruitful approach to body life and ministry. Our goal was to do several things differently at the same time because many of our reforms related to one another in dynamic ways. To change one thing without changing another was to leave a gap in the fabric of church life.

In order to better communicate the message behind each reform we have found it helpful to assign them a simple title, followed by what Paul would call a "trustworthy saying" to summarize its meaning. We pray that you will find these useful.

The Essential Reforms of Household of Faith Community Church

1. Reformed in Doctrine: Embrace a High View of Scripture and Rejoice in the Sovereign Grace of God in Our Salvation

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him....” – John 6:44

“...no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.” – John 6:65

“[B]ut you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.” – John 10:26-28

2. Charismatic in Ministry: *Speak the Very Oracles of God and Serve Him in the Strength that He Provides Through the Gifts of His Holy Spirit*

“[W]hoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ....” – 1 Pet. 4:11

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ...To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good....the utterance of wisdom, ...the utterance of knowledge,...faith,...gifts of healing,...the working of miracles,...prophecy,...distinguish[ing] between spirits,...tongues,... interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills....For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body,...and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” – 1 Cor. 12:4-13

“What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.” – 1 Corinthians 14:26

3. Evangelical in Mission: *Live out the Great Commission as a Ministry Lifestyle Instead of an Organizational Program*

“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’” – Matt. 28:18-20

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” – Acts 1:8

“...I make it my ambition to preach..., not where Christ has already been named ...” – Romans 15:20

4. *Plurality in Eldership:* *Fulfill the Calling and Share the Shepherding Roles of Pastoral Ministry Through Multiple, Co-equal Eldership Within Each Local Church*

“And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord...” – Acts 14:23

“Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him...” – James 5:17

“So I exhort the elders among you,... shepherd the flock of God that is among you, ... willingly,... eagerly; ... not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.” – 1 Peter 5:1-4

5. *Spirit and Truth in Worship:* *Express Biblically Faithful Feelings of Spiritual Affection for God Through Biblically Sound Doctrinal Worship*

“But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” – John 4:23-24

“...I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also.” – I Corinthians 14:15

6. *Devoted to Hospitality:* *Manage Each Home as the Embassy of God's Kingdom Where Your Guests May Taste and See that the Lord Is Good*

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” – 2 Corinthians 5:17-20

“And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the

people....” — Acts 2:46-47

“For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable...” — Titus 1:7-8

7. Jurisdictional in Our Obligations: *Honor the Jurisdictions of God's Kingdom by Respecting the Authority of Each to Fulfill Its Own Responsibility*

“For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.” — Romans 13:6-7

[To Ananias] “While [the land] remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal?” — Acts 5:1-4

“...The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” — Mark 1:15

8. Responsible in Liberty: *Define Your Biblical Convictions and Live Them out Freely Before One Another Under the Lordship of Jesus Christ*

“For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” — Galatians 5:13

“Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.” — 1 Peter 2:16

“All things are lawful,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful,” but not all things build up.” — 1 Corinthians 10:23

“Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls....One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.” — Romans 14:4-5

9. In Full Accord as Christ's Body: *Respond as a Church Member to Fellow Members' Crises and Ministry Opportunities in Unity of the Spirit*

“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the

same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” – Phil. 2:1-4

“...for it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...” – Acts 15:28

10. Complementarian in Gender Roles: *Honor and Support the Distinct Responsibilities God Has Assigned to You as a Man or a Woman*

“But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.” – 1 Corinthians 11:3

“Therefore, an overseer must be ...the husband of one wife...” – 1 Tim. 3:2

“Older women...train the young women to love their husbands and children.” – Titus 2:3-4

11. Household-Like in Structure: *Manage the Local Church as the Age-Integrated Extended-Family Household that God Has Made It to Be*

“So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” – Galatians 6:10

“[I]f I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.” – 1 Timothy 3:15

“Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.” – Proverbs 13:20

12. Productive in Fellowship: *Develop More Loving Relationships by Engaging in One Another’s Good Works as Ministry Partnerships*

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13. Faithful in Finances: *Give Priority to the Biblically-Mandated Expenses of Minister Salaries, Member Charity, and Missionary Support*

“Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,’ and, ‘The laborer deserves his wages.’” – 1 Timothy 5:17-18

“Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. ...and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them...” – Acts 4:32-35

“Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers... You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. For they have gone out... accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.” – 3 John 1:5-8

14. Exemplary in Church Leadership: Lead Christ’s Church by Means of an Authoritative Example Rather than by an Authoritarian Office

“A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. And [Jesus] said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.’” – Luke 22:24-27

“So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder ... shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.” – 1 Pet 5:1-3

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15. Reproductive in Church Growth: Guide Numerical Growth into New Church Plants Rather than to the Expansion of Existing Churches

“In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) [in the upper room]...” – Acts 1:15

“[W]ith the church in their house, send you hearty greetings... and the church in her house. To Philemon ...and the church in your house.” – 1 Corinthians 16:19, Colossians 4:15, Philemon 1:1-2

“Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. ... [I was] teaching you in public and from house to house.” — Acts 20:17-20

16. Consociational as a Fellowship: Draw Together Reform-Minded Elders to Support One Another in Practical Relationships Rooted in Affection

“The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter.” — Acts 15:6

“For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.” — Phil. 1:8

“Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.” — Rom. 12:10

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