

THE CHURCH GOD USES, #6
God Uses a Habitually Serving Church
Dr. Greg Tyree

INTRODUCTION: The Church God uses is...

CHRIST CENTERED,
HEAVENLY-MINDED,
UNCOMPROMISINGLY BIBLICAL,
RELATIONALLY ORIENTED,
CONSISTENTLY EVANGELISTIC,

And...

HABITUALLY SERVING...

The following are actual responses from comment cards given to the staff members at Bridger Wilderness Area in 1996:

Trails need to be wider so people can walk while holding hands.

Trails need to be reconstructed. Please avoid building trails that go uphill.

Too many bugs and leeches and spiders and spider webs. Please spray the wilderness to rid the areas of these pests.

Please pave the trails so they can be snow-plowed during the winter.

Chair lifts need to be in some places so that we can get to wonderful views without having to hike to them.

The coyotes made too much noise last night and kept me awake. Please eradicate these annoying animals.

A small deer came into my camp and stole my jar of pickles. Is there a way I can get reimbursed? Please call . . .

Reflectors need to be placed on trees every 50 feet so people can hike at night with flashlights.

Escalators would help on steep uphill sections.

A McDonald's would be nice at the trailhead.

The places where trails do not exist are not well marked.

Too many rocks in the mountains.

Citation: Mike Neifert, *Light and Life* (February 1997), p. 27

Rev. 3:7-13:

⁷“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, “He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”’: ⁸“I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. ⁹“Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. ¹⁰“Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. ¹¹“Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. ¹²“He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. ¹³“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’

PROPOSITION: The Church God Uses serves three entities.

I. THE CHURCH GOD USES IS HABITUALLY SERVING ITS CHRIST.

A. It Serves Christ Because of Its Debt to Him. Luke 7:36-50.

³⁶Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to eat. ³⁷And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, ³⁸and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. ³⁹Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, “This man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner.” ⁴⁰And Jesus answered and said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” So he said, “Teacher, say it.” ⁴¹“There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴²“And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?” ⁴³Simon answered and said, “I suppose the one whom he forgave more.” And He said to him, “You have rightly judged.” ⁴⁴Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. ⁴⁵“You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. ⁴⁶“You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. ⁴⁷“Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.” ⁴⁸Then He said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” ⁴⁹And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?” ⁵⁰Then He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.”

B. It Serves Christ Because of Its Devotion to Him.

1. Devotion Means Affirmation.
2. Devotion Means Affection.
3. Devotion Means Attitude.
4. Devotion Means Action.

C. It Serves Christ Because of Its Desire for Him. Psalm 42:1.

As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God.

1. There is a Plea in Desire.
2. There is Pleasure in Desire.
3. There is Passion in Desire.
4. There is Power in Desire.

II. THE CHURCH GOD USES IS HABITUALLY SERVING ITS CONGREGATION.

A. It Offers Emotional Healing. 2. Cor. 1:3, 4.

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

B. It Offers Practical Help. Acts 4:32-37.

³²Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. ³³And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

³⁴Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, ³⁵and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. ³⁶And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, ³⁷having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

ILLUSTRATION:

Blessing Boomerang

I grew up in a rough Boston housing project called Columbia Point in a family of nine children. Although I'd been a hardworking student, paying for college seemed impossible. But my mother's

favorite expression was "Pray, and the Lord will make a way somehow." I viewed that as good advice for other people. But when I decided to go to college and seminary because I believed the Lord had a call on my life, I had no other choice!

I packed for college and even went to orientation, but still didn't have any money. I'd have to pack up my belongings and make the hundred-mile trip back home. But an heir to a corporate fortune heard about my plight and paid for my college and seminary education. After I graduated, I went to my benefactor's office to thank him for all he had done for me and asked him what I could do to pay him back.

Imagine my saying to a multimillionaire, "What can I do to repay you?" The man responded, "Help somebody." I've spent the last 20 years in the ministry with that goal in mind. I've pastored in the drug-ridden, crime-infested inner city as well as well-manicured suburbs. And I've learned that the blessing of God is like a boomerang. As I've tried to help somebody, the Lord has blessed me.

Citation: Vernal E. Simms, senior pastor of Morris Brown A.M.E. Church in Philadelphia, *From One Brother to Another*, edited by William J. Key and Robert Johnson-Smith II (Judson, 1996)

C. It Offers Spiritual **Hope**. Gal. 6:1-10.

¹Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. ²Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. ⁵For each one shall bear his own load. ⁶Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. ⁷Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. ⁸For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. ⁹And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. ¹⁰Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

III. THE CHURCH GOD USES IS HABITUALLY SERVING ITS COMMUNITY.

A. It Serves Its Community to **Demonstrate** God's Love. Matt. 5:13-16.

¹³"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. ¹⁴"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵"Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

ILLUSTRATION:

Kindness Evangelism

John Trent, co-author of *The Hidden Value of a Man*, writes:

When I led a Young Life group, I did my best to round up kids who really needed to hear the gospel when we went to summer camp. Mark was one of those kids.

Bob Mitchell, the main speaker that week, called most of the shots—including when meals would be served. So "Mitch" was always talking with the cook.

The cook loved her work, but it was exhausting. She always looked tired. Whenever she talked to Mitch, he got up and gave her his chair—and a moment's rest—while they discussed meal plans.

Nobody noticed Mitch doing this . . . except Mark. Mark hadn't come to hear about Jesus. But when he saw Jesus' love lived out in that simple act of kindness by the camp speaker, he began to listen to Mitchell's talks. Later that week, Mark asked Jesus to be his Savior.

It wasn't because of the messages, Mark said, but because of the love he saw in Mitch. "If that's what it means to be a Christian," Mark said, "I want to be one."

Citation: John Trent and Gary Smalley, *The Hidden Value of a Man* (Word Books, 1992)

B. It Serves Its Community to Dispense God's Love. Luke 10:30-37.

³⁰Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. ³¹Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

³²"Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.

³³"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴"So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵"On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' ³⁶"So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" ³⁷And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

ILLUSTRATION:

Kindness to Strangers

[My wife], Gail, and I were in an airplane flying to Boston. We were seated almost at the back of the airliner in the two aisle seats across from each other. As the plane loaded up, a woman with two small children came down the aisle to take the seat right in front of us. And behind her, another woman. The two women took the A and C seats, and one of the children sat in the middle seat, and the second child was on the lap of one of the women. I figured these were two mothers traveling together with their kids, and I hoped the kids wouldn't be noisy.

The flight started, and my prayer wasn't answered. The two children had a tough time. The air was turbulent, the children cried a lot—their ears hurt—and it was a miserable flight. I watched as these two women kept trying to help and comfort these children. The woman at the window played with the child in the middle seat, trying to make her feel good and paying lots of attention.

I thought, *These women get a medal for what they are doing.* But things went downhill from there. As we got towards the last part of the flight, the child in the middle seat got sick. The next thing I knew she was losing everything from every part of her body. The diaper wasn't on tight, and before long a stench began to rise through the cabin. It was unbearable!

I could see over the top of the seat that indescribable stuff was all over everything. It was on this woman's clothes. It was all over the seat. It was on the floor. It was one of the most repugnant things I had seen in a long time.

I watched as the woman next to the window patiently comforted the child and tried her best to clean up the mess and make something out of a bad situation. The plane landed, and when we pulled up to the gate all of us were ready to exit that plane as fast as we could. The flight attendant came up with paper towels and handed them to the woman in the window seat and said, "Here, Ma'am, these are for your little girl."

The woman said, "This isn't my little girl."

"Aren't you traveling together?"

"No, I've never met this woman and these children before in my life."

Suddenly I realized this woman had just been merciful. A lot of us would have just died in this circumstance. She had found the opportunity to give mercy. She was, in the words of Christ, "the person who was the neighbor."

Citation: Gordon MacDonald, from sermon "Pointing to Jesus: Generosity," preached at Grace Chapel, Lexington, Massachusetts (February 22, 1998)

C. It Serves Its Community to **Declare** God's Love. Acts 13:28-33a.

Paul, preaching in a Synagogue in Antioch...

²⁸"And though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate that He should be put to death.

²⁹"Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb. ³⁰"But God raised Him from the dead. ³¹"He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people. ³²"And we declare to you glad tidings—that promise which was made to the fathers. ³³"God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus.

APPLICATION: Filling Uncomfortable Positions...

Tuesday night I couldn't go to sleep. I clicked on the hotel TV and found my beloved Atlanta Braves playing the Colorado Rockies. It was the ninth inning, and the score was tied at 6-6.

The game continued. As the innings progressed, the Rockies used all of their relief pitchers. (Major league teams have 25 person rosters, 10 of which are usually pitchers. Of those, four or five are starters, and the rest are relievers.)

Without any relief pitchers left on the bench, the starting pitcher from the night before was sent out to pitch an inning. He had pitched numerous innings the night before but went out again and held the Braves.

In the 12th inning, the Rockies had a terrible choice. Should they send out one of their two remaining starting pitchers, who would have to play over the next two days, or a utility player? They chose to send an injured catcher, Brent Mayne, to the mound.

The manager asked him: "Can you pitch?"

"Sure" said Brent, even though he had never pitched at any level in his life.

A few pitches went over the catcher's head. One flew behind a batter's back, but Mayne managed to get the Braves to ground into two grounders and a fly ball out to get the Rockies out of the inning. In the bottom of that inning, Mayne's position came up to hit. With an injured batting hand, he couldn't. So the Rockies sent out a new player who had never had a hit in the major leagues. Of course he drove a run in to win the game.

Why tell this story? Because sometimes [Christian workers] have to fill uncomfortable positions. Sometimes you have to do it even when you are hurt. You have to go out there and take one for the team.

Citation: Dave Travis, *Church Champions Update* (August 25, 2000)

In order to be a Church God Uses, you must do the following:

1. Perpetuate Your *Affirmative* Qualities.

- *Keep doing what you're doing right!*

2. Eliminate Your *Adverse* Qualities.

- *Stop doing what you're doing wrong!*

3. Initiate Your *Absent* Qualities.

- *Start doing what you ought to be doing!*

If you are obedient and deliberate, you will be a...

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