

THE PURPOSE DRIVEN



...the New Testament Church was a community of men and women who were committed followers of Jesus Christ, who stood in contrast to those who were not His followers, and at times were persecuted by nonbelievers. The church on earth...is a visible expression of the Kingdom of God, composed of those who accept God's rule, enter fellowship with God through faith in Jesus' sacrifice for their sins, and yield their lives to God's service and purpose.

— Dale V. Salico

There is a plague that is grieving the heart of God because it is preventable and can be stopped. It has spread among all churches and is particularly rampant in society. Even God's ministers are not immune and many of them are infected with it.

What is this evil plague? You may be surprised as it appears rather harmless at first glance. It is now so commonplace that people are deceived into just accepting it as normal, instead of recognizing and resisting it. This epidemic is the practice of lying and dishonesty.

— Overcoming Life Digest

DIGGING DEEPER...

1. The author suggested that honesty was essential in cultivating a spirit of community in the church. In Acts 5:1-11 a man named Ananias and a woman named Saphira indulged in a bit of prevarication. What were the consequences of their actions? How was this situation turned for God's glory?
2. In 1 Thessalonians 4:11 and 12 the apostle Paul gave these instructions: "...aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk honestly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing." What consequences have you seen when Christians and the churches are dishonest?
3. The author states that humility is essential in cultivating the church as a community. James 4:6 and 7 state: "... 'God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.' Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." Based upon these verses appearing together, what connection can we point out when pride is a common characteristic in a church's fellowship? Without mentioning a specific congregation's negative example, can you provide examples of pride in a church body?
4. How does Acts 2:46 "So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart..." bolster the author's claim that cultivating community in a church requires frequency {p. 150}?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS...

1. The author stated that one of the ways community is cultivated in a church is through honesty {p. 147}. In contrast, Josh King in his book asserts that "lying is our favorite national pastime." King indicated that the majority of people in our country lie on a regular basis. In your opinion is being honest something that comes about in a believer's life automatically? What kind of crises can you foresee for a person who has been dishonest his whole life but decides to begin telling the truth? What benefits will he or she gain?
2. Rick Warren wrote that: "Self-importance, smugness, and stubborn pride destroy fellowship faster than anything else" {p. 148}. In all honesty, what impact can these character flaws have on the testimony of Christ? How can a church guard against having these traits become dominant?
3. The author suggested that it takes courtesy to cultivate a church ministry {p. 149}. He spoke of bearing one another's burdens, doubts and fears. But can you think of some other little acts of common courtesy that will build and strengthen a church?