

The EQUIPPER

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ASSESSING YOUR CHURCH- *By The Concerns of Jesus* By Dr. Gary R Becker

Recently I began a series of messages on the seven churches of the book of Revelation. One of my motivating factors was reading a book entitled *Discipleship on the Edge* by Darrel W. Johnson. The basic thrust of the messages is on how to live as disciples in difficult times and in light of the coming of Christ.

Studying the messages of Jesus Christ to the seven churches became an immediate connection with the ministry of making church assessments. What the Lord is doing is giving each of the churches an outside assessment. He, of course, has an advantage that He can see inside the heart.

The assessment of an outside observer is a healthy way to see what we usually overlook when we are on the inside. While we may not have the omniscience of our Lord there can be real value from an experienced and objective assessor.

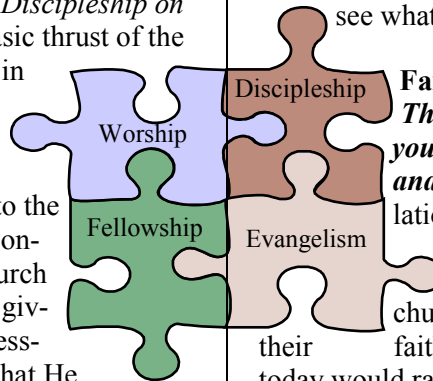
Using the example of the Lord, I would like to begin a short series of *Equipper* articles noting some of the points of affirmations, observations, and prescriptions. The church at Ephesus is one example to which many of our churches can relate.

The affirmations of this church are:

Ministry must be a priority – *I know your works, your labor, your patience . . .* Revelation 2:2

This is actually a common point of affirmation in churches. Many churches are very active in ministries. The ministries are often more focused on helping people in need than in evangelistic or discipleship ministries. Small groups are often more focused on social interaction than discipleship. Nevertheless, even if a church's ministry is focused on developing strong fellowship it is worthy of confirmation.

A good assessment of your church needs to evaluate the works of ministry. We need to look beyond the works to see what are the motives and results.



Faith must be biblically uncompromising - *That you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars.* Revelation 2:2b

In our day it is unfortunate that many church assessments would not be affirmed in their faith and defense of orthodoxy. Often churches today would rather be seen as having a *Generous Orthodoxy* (title of a book by Brian D. McLaren) rather than being seen as being strict in orthodoxy.

This affirmation of the church at Ephesus was that they stood firm in their faith. They even went so far as to identify the false teachers as liars. We need churches whose faith can be affirmed because they stand uncompromising on the truth.

Love must be passionate - *Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love* (Revelation 2:4). Unfortunately this can be said about many of our churches and disciples.

It is far easier to do the good works and teach sound doctrine than to keep your love on fire. It is even easier to show love for people rather than to **love the Lord your God with all . . .**” When we first come to Christ or when we are part of new church starting up we experience an excitement about the Lord and ministry. Time goes on and things become routine, the zeal or passion begins to calm down.

One of the greatest challenges in ministry, like marriage, is to keep love passionate. Some churches need to **repent** because they have replaced love for the Lord with love for success in ministry. Repentance requires a change or reversal. The Lord calls us to **remember** or think back and do the things we did when we first met the Lord. Our churches need look back at how the church began to do the things that the early church did. We need a renewed passion for the basics:

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1. Worship – Not the music and dynamics of a service but a deep expression of devotion.
2. Discipleship – Not the programs but the devotion to His Word.
3. Fellowship – Not the fun gatherings but the devotion to one another.
4. Evangelism – Not the rallies or exciting trips but a devotion to save the lost.

I was recently kind of amazed at how some very active members and leaders in our church responded to a message on the Church at Ephesus. Some of my elders and a number of other people really came under conviction. Weeks later

they are still talking about and looking for ways to renew their passion for Christ. Sometimes we don't need to use creative dynamic tools (of course all my messages are always creative and dynamic ☺). The most powerful influence in renewing our love is often preaching the Word and letting the Holy Spirit work.

If we remind our members to think back on when they first came to Christ it can work wonders. And, they may just ***do the first works***, renewing their first love. Biblical love is not simply feeling good about God. It is about loving God enough to ***do the first works***.

Renewing the First Love of BBM

A short time back I attended the *Effectiveness by The Numbers* conference with Mission Mid-Atlantic by Bill Hoyt. He made a statement that was disturbing to some "he is not interested in doing conflict resolution." He was not suggesting that there was never a need for conflict resolution. The content was that generally conflict resolution does not really lead to effectiveness in ministry. This was not to say that sin did not need to be dealt with.

I have said on several occasions the ministry of BBM is "not conflict resolution." The statement was followed up with an explanation that when a ministry has clear vision and a strategic plan, conflicts are often resolved. Our focus has not been on resolving conflict it has been on encouraging pastors and churches to establish a renewed vision.

Over the last two years I became involved in a consulting ministry that monopolized my time with conflict resolution. The result was our "first love" of encouraging vision and equipping leaders became sidetracked into focusing on conflicts. Do not misunderstand me, I am not saying we can avoid all conflict resolution or confrontation of sin.

Applying my own message to the ministry of BBM I am going to renew the focus. Actually I will be returning to the priority of developing balanced churches. The thrust for 2009 will be on helping churches grow healthier through discovering a vision and strategy. The priorities will be on offering to do church assessments, develop pastoral coaching ministries, and helping churches develop a balanced ministry locally and globally.

INCREASED AVAILABILITY: This year I have increased my availability to be involved with churches including availability for Sunday ministries. If you would like to consider allowing us to come alongside your ministry in developing a healthy balanced ministry feel free to contact me.



We are now scheduling seminars and workshops for Spring and Fall of 2009.

Can we help you encourage your leadership? Plan one of our primary workshops this year.

Design Your Impact – Helping your church to make an impact locally and globally.

PLACE – Helping your members discover their gifts and personality and where they fit in the ministry of your local church.

Or, one of custom designed Leadership Workshops to help develop your leadership and ministry potential.

Church Assessments are also available to help your church develop a strategic plan to renew and expand your ministry.

Call Dr. Gary Becker (#717-856-5423) or email today to schedule and/or discuss the possibility of our coming alongside your leadership.



Visit BBM at
www.balancedministries.org