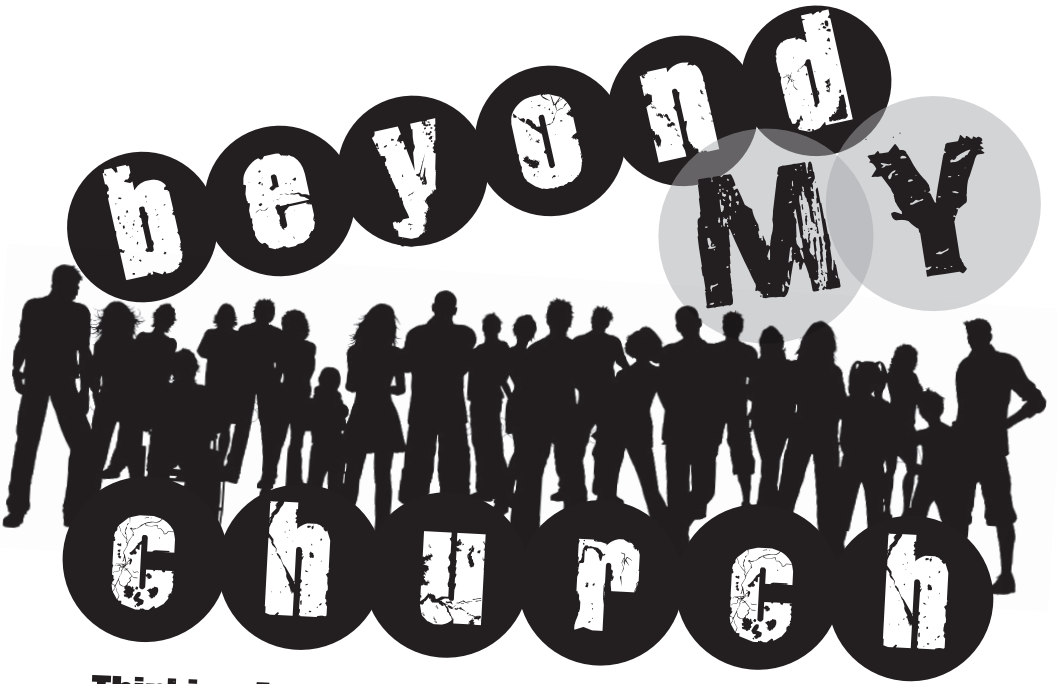


JASON C. DUKES



Thinking And Living So That The World Might Know



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N124150 • 1211 • 3M1

to
my
dad
and
my
brother
for
modeling
the
beyond
ME
life

Other New Hope books
by Jason C. Dukes

Live Sent: You Are a Letter

Cartas Vivas (Spanish-language *Live Sent*)



A Thank You Note

It was my friend
Erick Bauman who
challenged me over coffee
to have the courage to
think and live this way.

We were enjoying coffee
and friendship together.

We were conversing and
asking a lot of what ifs.
We had been somewhat
cultivating “beyond
MY church” in the city
where we live, but our
conversation and his
encouragement pushed
me to make unity among
local churches a significant
priority for our local
church expression and to
challenge other leaders in
our area to make it
a priority too.

Thank you, Erick, for
challenging me in that way.



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from here on out





Introduction

a silly intro about
a serious subject

think beyond “MY church” since it’s
not your church anyway

It's not about you—wait, that line was used already, to start a book about purpose and life and driving. But it worked, you know? I mean, a gazillion billion copies later and it's still a good line. And a good book. I know a lot of people who were driven to it and have driven better since (in their daily lives). But just your life, purpose, and how you drive is not the purpose of *this* book. Although, after reading this lame opening paragraph, you are probably wishing you had not driven to the bookstore to get it. Or to your local cafe to download and read it online for that matter. Or whatever method you chose to buy it and read it. If you still choose to. So let's start over.

It's not about YOUR church. And it's not about MY church either. In fact, just calling it “your church” or “my church” is a bit arrogant, don't you think? Even saying that phrase seems to steal a bit of the ownership from the One who started this movement of people we now call “church.” He is the Head of the church, after all. It's *His* church. Or better said, *we*, not it, are *His* church.

Do you think that? If so, can I ask a probing question? Then why do you think so much of church culture in America focuses on “their” own church's growth and success? Another question. Why do you think so few local church expressions include unity among the local churches in their city as a part of their overall strategy? One more question (at least for now). Do either of these last two questions describe the church family you call your own?

OK. Some more questions—this book asks a lot of them.

When is the last time:

you prayed for another local church in your community?

you heard the pastor or a leader highlight something another local church was up to?

that the local church expression you consider yourself to be a

part of asked for more money to be given or raised but it wasn't for the local church expression you consider yourself to be a part of; it was instead for someone else?

You might think, *But I am not the pastor or on the pastoral team. I can't really affect change for a focus on more unity with other followers in our city.* To use a very sophisticated phrase my dad used some when I was growing up—BOLOGNA. That's pronounced [bah-low-nee] for those of you who may have moved beyond and long forgotten the fried bologna sandwich years like I have. We will dedicate a whole chapter to that line of thinking.

You might say,

“But why does this thinking beyond MY church stuff matter? Isn't it enough to focus on our own issues? We have enough and don't really care what the other churches do in our city.”

To that I ask you, what if it matters to Jesus? What if He cares?

First, why does this matter—a.k.a. what's the purpose of this book? Here is the purpose, short and sweet:

To challenge you to think “beyond MY church” so that the work of God might happen in our cities and in our world.

I am coming at you with an acronym. You ready? TEST DRIVE A BMW. I know it's a long one. But don't you want to test drive a BMW? At least a convertible? It will help you remember the purpose of this book. It will help you and me remember that *your* church is not *your* church but *His* church. It will help you and me remember what Jesus wants us to remember about His work and His church. I would suggest that Jesus wants us to remember to:

Think beyond “MY church.”

Envision unity among His followers in our city.

Strategize for the actual work of God in our city.

Talk about in our own gatherings what other local expressions in our city are doing.

Decentralize the efforts of the church in our city beyond Sunday mornings.

Release the church as a whole rather than relying so much on the clergy.

Invest into our city where the people are rather than just inviting them to where we are.

Visit with city leaders and ask them how the church together could serve our city.

Evaluate our success as the church by how we send rather than how many gather.

A (this letter stands for the letter *a*)

Blossom into a together-generosity as we cultivate the gospel together daily.

Multiply into new expressions as we grow in our unity.

Witness on earth as it is in heaven.

There you go. Now, I am fully aware of the fact that you will not remember the sentences that go along with that acronym. But at least you will remember the acronym, which will remind you of this book, which will remind you to pick up the book, which will allow you to read it again, which will remind you of the purpose of this book, which will compel you to think and live beyond MY church. Sounds like the children’s book, *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*.

Oh yeah. One more acronym. We need to remember all this and act on it NOW!

No more acronyms

Or else I

Will quit reading this book and never, ever, ever read anything you write again. For real though, seriously, don't you want to:

~ be involved in the work of God?

~ see the work of God around you?

Don't you want it:

~ to happen in more than just your church family?

~ to happen beyond "MY church" and instead come alive throughout our city?

In John 6:29, Jesus declared what the work of God is.

Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

John 6:29 NASB

And in John 17, Jesus prayed for unity so that the world would believe in the One who was sent. We will unpack this more in the next chapter, but suffice it to say that it is not speculation to therefore conclude that unity among local church expressions is essential if we hope for the work of God to happen in our cities.

Thinking beyond MY church matters because the unity of the church is imperative in order for the work of God to happen in our city and in our world.

And I don't just mean unity in the one local church family that you call your own. I mean all followers of Jesus loving one another like Jesus loved us

~ so that the world will see us living His ways rather than our own

~ and believe that Jesus was sent as the Son of God because the kind of unity Jesus prayed for that should be lived out among His followers could only happen when God is the force holding us all together.

Please reread that last paragraph if you have to, because it is the point of this book. And please reread the BMW acronym if you have to, because whether you are labeled as clergy or laity (neither term am I fond of),

~ if you are a follower of Jesus,
~ then you matter as His church
~ as an integral part of His work
~ in our cities and in our world!

Thinking beyond MY church matters.

We asked another question at the beginning of this diatribe.

Does thinking beyond MY church matter to Jesus?

Yes. Simply put, it matters to Him because it's not your church, it's His. Read Matthew 16 and Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. You don't have a church. You have a church *family*, a *local expression* of His church—a people following Jesus together—with whom you are to love and unite and serve and make disciples and multiply, and with whom you are *not* to argue personal agendas or fight to preserve what you have or become isolated, caring nothing for other local expressions in the city.

Thinking beyond MY church also matters to Jesus because He does not see that one local expression you are so proud and protective of as the center of His kingdom. So you shouldn't either. In fact, He sees each local church expression as a sentence in the grander story that He is writing

about His near and accessible love. And if the world does not see those who call themselves His followers as near to one another and accessible to our city, then they will not read that amazing letter of His love that He wrote not on stone tablets but on the hearts of people who follow Him together—His church. (For more on that metaphor, I encourage you to read *Live Sent: You Are a Letter*.)

So, if Jesus cares so much about each of His local expressions of His church, then maybe each of us should too. Maybe we should

- ~ strive for unity,
- ~ pay attention to what each expression is up to,
- ~ celebrate it and support each other,
- ~ put the interests of other local church expressions above our own
- ~ consider ourselves as one church in our city with many expressions rather than remain isolated as many expressions of His church in one city.

{the bottom line}

If I remain isolated thinking only of MY church, then I will not be

- ~ loving like Jesus loves,
- ~ thinking of the church like Jesus thinks,
- ~ involved in the actual work of God, and
- ~ I will not see “on earth as it is in heaven” in our city.

Do you want to be involved in the work of God? Then beg Him to help you and me think “beyond MY church.”

CONSIDER and CONVERSE:

1. Think back on the last three to five comments or thoughts you have had about another local church expression in the city. Were those comments or thoughts laced with encouragement and love and unity or laced with criticism and jealousy and divisiveness ?
2. What might I need to repent of and seek forgiveness for in my own life in order to move beyond thinking only of MY church?
3. What might our local church family together need to repent of and seek forgiveness for in order to move beyond thinking only of MY church?
4. Is there any one follower of Jesus or even another entire local church expression that you need to go to and apologize and seek to be reconciled with in order for healing to begin and unity to happen? What could you do to make that happen?
5. What one thing—one next step—will you take to begin to think and live “beyond MY church”?



chapter 1

drop the “MY church” mentality
because Jesus’ intentions were
beyond that

{Imagine Caleb}

Caleb bags groceries. When people go through his line, he has become determined to make them smile, at the least, and to let them know they are loved, as an ideal. Why? Because he is understanding more and more that just “going to church” isn’t why Jesus died. He is understanding more that resurrection power in and through his life is not limited to inviting people to “attend church.” It’s beyond that.

Caleb heard a missionary talk about the importance of what the missionary labeled “church planting.” That missionary was speaking, of course, of the adventurous, poverty-stricken, far-off land where he served. The missionary told of the need for new churches where he was and shared story after story of how they were “cultivating the gospel” to see those new churches begin. Caleb was moved. No doubt he should, when he could, go and serve with this missionary. But Caleb had a thought. A Spirit-given thought. That there was not just a need internationally. There was a need right in the sleepy town where he lived and worked and played. He began to wonder, *How can I think and act like a missionary? Maybe new expressions of the church are needed right here. Besides, if I ever did move internationally or even if I stayed right here in the States my whole life, isn’t this what Jesus intended for me as His follower? Wouldn’t it help to be practicing now?* And he wasn’t just thinking about a new Sunday School class within the church family of which he was a part. He was thinking beyond that.

Caleb began dreaming about his family, the neighborhood, the place he worked, the city in which he lived, and the world for which he was burdened. The missionary had shared that over 4 billion people in the world are “lost.” He wasn’t exactly sure what the missionary classified as lost, but he knew two things for sure. Even if it was a fraction of that number, that was too many. And the sound of anyone not knowing their way in life was haunting to him. He began to imagine what life

might be like if he lived to give himself away to his family members, to his neighbors, at work, in the local community, and around the world. What if he not only gave himself away to the people who existed in those spheres of influence? What if he also invited them to join him in giving themselves away with him? That sounded more like “on earth as it is in heaven” to him. This wasn’t just a desire to be a more intellectually educated “Christian.” He was imagining spirituality beyond himself and his own development.

Reading the story of Jesus a bit differently now, Caleb views Jesus as a Sent One who is now sending him. Thus, he reads the stories with more than just an idea of how he can be a better Christian. He reads them wanting to think more like the Sent One, especially whenever he encounters a friend or a co-worker. He understands that each person he meets matters to Jesus just as much as he has come to understand that he himself matters to Jesus. He wants to follow this Sent One into the everyday of his life and “make disciples.” He wants to share His love while learning and living His ways, both with those who already follow Him as well as with those who don’t. He doesn’t know all that means, but he understands that making disciples is a mandate for him, not just for his pastor or student pastor. He’s thinking beyond them.

Caleb listens for the Sent One to prompt him. When he reads the Bible, it allows him to become more and more familiar with the promptings of the Spirit as seen in the Scriptures so that he can then better recognize those promptings in the everyday among the many temptations and desires he feels. Caleb listens for the Sent One to send him with a potentially transformational hug, glance, challenge, or encouragement. He builds friendship minus the agenda of needing to invite them “to church.” Rather, he builds friendship with the pure motive of wanting to give away the love that has been so freely given to him by the Sent One, in hopes that others will find their way in Jesus, no matter what church family they end up walking with and no matter who gets the credit.

Thinking and acting like a missionary isn't just some "church growth strategy." He's seeing beyond one expression of the church to the church coming fully alive in the city.

If he is able to make disciples, with the Spirit's help of course, then it is likely that this "church planting" thing might happen through Caleb. He could start new expressions of the church in his home, at work, in the community! He understands that if disciples of Jesus are made, then they will want to live like the Sent One too. They will learn and live His ways and begin to be the church daily too. What if a few of the folks he is learning and living the ways of Jesus with at work start wanting to do that same thing with some of their neighbors? What if he could help them do that? What if from those efforts a new local church expression starts in their neighborhood? He is not worried about the specific form it would take at this point—becoming a 501(c)(3) (whatever that is), calling a pastor, being an "official church" or just being a local ministry of the church in that neighborhood. Regardless, it is being the church.

Caleb is not worried about those silly measurables that he hears people argue over within the church family of which he is a part. He is beginning to believe that the people are the church, and we don't need to get in the way of what the Spirit might be doing in and through His people to see His kingdom come "on earth as it is in heaven." He is not worrying about who gets the credit at all. He sees beyond that to what he must simply be faithful to cultivate daily. For some reason, he believes that the Sent One wants to do something beyond what he could even imagine, and so the outcome (what is reaped) is not as important as the cultivation (what is sowed).

This "Caleb" isn't real, at least not yet. I am prayerful that my son Caleb will have this heart and mentality, but the story of Caleb that launched this chapter is what I imagine God imagines for His followers.

If he were real, then I would likely be telling you about what happened next.

That

- ~ his mom began to follow Jesus and began a book club for moms in their neighborhood so they could encourage one another.
- ~ his friend from school began to follow Jesus and started an “I don’t know the Bible either but let’s read it together” club after school.
- ~ his manager began to follow Jesus after this kid encouraged her with what Jesus taught about love, such that it changed the way she loved her husband and they came back from the brink of divorce.
- ~ his manager, Caleb and a few of their co-workers began to study the Scriptures together and serve weekly at a local soup kitchen.
- ~ some of them got a burden for orphans in the Dominican Republic and began to travel there once a year to love on them and even witnessed three orphans being adopted by families in the US.

All this in that sleepy little town all because Caleb began to think “beyond MY church.” And all of these which I described, if they were real, would be new expressions of the church. Not begun by a clergy member, but rather by a 20-something guy who followed Jesus and began to live like the Sent One daily in the city where he lives.

{Imagine what could be in our cities}

This may have been a parable of sorts, but it is happening. It is going on in America and in other parts of the world. It is happening in other parts of the world because there they are experiencing less bottlenecking from the so-called clergy/bureaucracy of denominationalism and more involvement from all followers of Jesus in this continuing movement of God that is seen through His church alive in the everyday.

In America today, there is a big push to start new churches. It’s even become a bit trendy and cool. You may have heard it described by the

phrase *church planting*. While I am not a fan of that particular descriptor (that's a writing project in the works) and while I do agree that we are seeing some drawn because of the hipness factor being sifted out into very committed leaders and while I do assert that we are seeing some traction when it comes to healthy cultivation for new expressions of His church here in our country, I want to offer one suggestion for the furtherance of this effort in America.

Don't go into the effort with the mindset of starting MY new church in a city thinking you have to have one guy trained in seminary being central to the effort.

Go into the effort with the mindset of involvement from every follower of Jesus and oneness among all the local church expressions in the city. Go into it asking, "How will we cultivate for one new expression while ultimately cultivating for oneness among the many expressions?"

If you don't include this question in the shaping of your dreams and vision for a new expression of the church, then I believe you will be going into the effort without the framework of thinking that Jesus has. Without the mind of Christ in the effort, why in the world would you think the result would honor Him, would be His work, or would even work?

I have been told that my suggestion is too idealistic, too optimistic. Someone even said to me, "Good luck with convincing any pastors with that one." So guess what? I prayed for what to do and this awesome publisher named New Hope Publishers gave me the opportunity to write a book that is intended to get into the hands of every follower of Jesus rather than only attempting to disseminate it through the hands of the clergy. And then maybe we can infect the clergy with security in Christ instead of insecurity as a leader and with the crazy notion of unity around Jesus' mission instead of centralization to one clergy guy's vision.

And with regard to how idealistic it is, I know of a church family that was started more than seven years ago that began with a vision of oneness among the local church expressions in the city. They chose as a logo a compass. This certainly was not original to them. It was a pretty popular logo choice over the last ten years. But they chose it with intentionality. They envisioned local church expressions in each of the five compass points of the city uniting together to be the church to their city and beyond. They dreamed instead of just starting one local church expression that maybe there could be more of a regional church expression. Why couldn't the followers of Jesus from the west, north, east, south, and center of the metro area one day unite to be a church of that region together made up of many local expressions but acting as one body to love and serve in the name of Jesus? This new church family believed it to be possible, continues to cultivate for it, and has seen the first fruits of sowing for that kind of unity.

{what Jesus Imagined}

I don't think it is far-fetched to say that Jesus doesn't see this idea as a pipe dream or as naive optimism. In fact, He prayed for it (at least in principle) in John 17.

In the same way that you gave me a mission in the world, I give them a mission in the world. I'm consecrating myself for their sakes so they'll be truth-consecrated in their mission. I'm praying not only for them but also for those who will believe in me because of them and their witness about me. The goal is for all of them to become one heart and mind—just as you, Father, are in me and I in you, so they might be one heart and mind with us. Then the world might believe that you, in fact, sent me. The same glory you gave me, I gave them, so they'll be as unified and together as we are—I in them and you in me. Then they'll be mature in this oneness, and give the godless world evidence that you've sent me and loved them in the same way you've loved me.
John 17:18–23 The Message

Jesus is praying in the garden of Gethsemane in this text. I went there in January 2011 with my dad and brother and a group of about 45 folks connected with the New Orleans Seminary. One of my three favorite highlights of the trip was the brief time we spent on the Mount of Olives where that garden is in which Jesus prayed this prayer.

In Jesus' prayer here, He declared that He was giving a mission to His followers just as He was given a mission. The Sent One now sends us.

As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.

John 20:21 NLT

Exactly what is this mission? Based upon Jesus' commands to His followers, the mission certainly involves loving God and loving one another and loving our neighbor. It is all in an effort to cultivate the gospel that a loving God came near to us and all in hopes that the world would experience "on earth as it is in heaven" together. God has chosen for some crazy reason to trust us, a people with a tendency to divide, instead to live united so that the demonstration of this diverse people unified around a loving God's mission will serve as a living letter of God's love and intention for the humanity He loved and for which Jesus was willing to die. Our mission is to love like He loves so that a people who don't believe they are loved might trust that they are loved and begin to give His love away too.

Short and sweet, as we unite to live sent, people will believe in the One who was sent.

Could it be that simple? Well, hold that thought.

In Jesus' prayer, He next declared that He was being set apart (consecrated) so that His followers could be set apart to be involved in this mission or movement of God. How did He consecrate us? Through His life and death and life again. What this is implying is that anything less than this ideal for which He prayed is less than what He intended through

these consecration efforts. So think about it. Do you want to look in His eyes one day and explain that we know He hoped for more but trying to deal with all the disunity and infighting of our one local church was all we could handle. We just couldn't get around to cultivating for "on earth as it is in heaven" in our entire city. Surely He was too optimistic in His consecration efforts.

Let's get blunt for a moment. Do you sincerely think that Jesus hung on a cross with the dream of a redeemed church in His mind that involved isolated, consumer-driven, nonprofit organizations that strategized for more events, hoped for more attendees, budgeted for more facilities, and ignored both the saved and the lost of their city because they had enough problems of their own? Me neither. He clearly hoped for more than that. Are you hoping for more? Do you have the faith and courage to cultivate for it even if it's hard and looked down upon and not received well? I hope so, because that sounds more like what our Savior went through to declare His love. Why wouldn't we go through at least some of that in our efforts to live out His love in our city?

Next, Jesus implied that this mission would result in new followers. He prayed for those who would believe in Him because of the witness of His first followers. Thus, our commitment to being an answer to His prayer would result in new followers and thus new expressions of His church (since His church is simply people following Jesus together).

Then Jesus declared the goal for His followers. He prayed for them "to become one heart and mind" as Jesus had lived in one heart and mind with the Father. In other words, we are to become unified with the Father with regard to the way that He sees the world and people and our life purpose, and then become unified with one another around this mission of declaring the desire of our loving God to be in intimate relationship or oneness with others.

We are to be one heart and mind with the Father as well as with each other if we are going to live as an answer to His prayer in the garden.

John went on to unpack this in First John when he declared throughout that letter that a shared life with God is evidenced by a shared life with others. Our oneness with God is seen in this world by our oneness with each other. And John specified that this is most evidenced by the way we lay our lives down for others (1 John 3:16) and walk in openness and intimacy with one another. Sounds like heaven.

Speaking of heaven, Jesus next prayed words that should grip us to the core. “The same glory you gave me, I gave them, so they’ll be as unified and together as we are—I in them and you in me.” Reread that, please. Do you think He was serious?

When the Scriptures refer to the glory of God, the implications are always about the revealed presence of God among us—God made known to us—usually only in as much of a manifestation as the people could handle at one time. God revealing His presence to us is something both to be feared as well as to be desired. It’s like how some (very strange people in my opinion) want to jump out of a plane. No one approaches that without the fear of what could happen. And yet everyone I have ever spoken to about it declared that it was the most thrilling experience, and they’d do it again.

When Jesus prayed that He was giving the same glory to His followers that was given to Him, He was declaring that in the same way that who God really is was revealed in Him so shall who He really is will be revealed in His followers.

But here’s the kicker. Jesus then specifies what that revealed presence would look like AND what the ultimate impact would be. Let’s read John 17:23 from *The Message* again:

Then they’ll be mature in this oneness, and give the godless world evidence that you’ve sent me and loved them in the same way you’ve loved me.

That revealed presence will be demonstrated in the unity of those who

call themselves followers of Jesus. And that ultimate impact would thus be the work of God happening in the world. And the implication is then that the work of God will not come alive among you without unity.

Wait a second! You might interrupt here and ask, “Where did He talk about the ‘work of God happening’ in this?” Well, before I answer your question, let me pose one.

Does the primary description given for your local church expression and for the local church expressions together in the city have anything to do with oneness or unity? If the answer is no, then may I be so bold as to say that the glory of God is not present among you (His revealed presence).

That should bother you. That should disturb you. That should wreck you. Because if His glory is not present, then whose is? If He is not being revealed, then what is?

So back to your presumed question about the work of God. Jesus prayed that we would be mature in unity and that when we were, “*then* the world might believe that you, in fact, sent me” (italics mine). The unity of the followers of Jesus is the validation of His being sent by God. And people believing that God sent Him is the work of God, according to the teaching of Jesus recorded in John 6:29 NASB:

Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.”

So, whether we like it or not, the conclusion is that the work of God comes alive among us through our Holy Spirit-enabled unity and not a second before that. His power to unite a selfish, divisive, my agenda-seeking people around a selfless, reconciling, restorative, His kingdom-seeking mission validates to the world the actual divinity and authenticity of the Messiah Jesus.

Now I say “whether we like it or not” because this conclusion should

interrupt our “MY church” ventures and scare us to the core that we may have been pursuing our own glory rather than His revealed presence and our own accomplishments rather than His work among us. And if you don’t think our unity would validate to the world the authenticity of the Messiah Jesus, then let me ask you this question.

Why then do so many people, from a neighbor on our street to world changers like Gandhi, make statements about their struggle to believe in Jesus because of the actions of His so-called followers?

When I was in Jerusalem, I became friends with Moshe. He is a Jewish learner and teacher who also owns a Jewish art and jewelry shop called A Biblical Shop (www.shorashim.com). If you go there, please tell Moshe I sent you. He told me that he and probably many Jews might consider Jesus to be Messiah if, among other things, His followers lived as one with the Father as Jesus did. We must take his comments and Jesus’ prayer seriously.

{the bottom line}

Here’s the problem. Not only does a MY church mentality exist among those who are trying to start new expressions of the church, but it also exists all too often among existing local church families. Why?

Is it competition? Pride? Insecurity? Or maybe just that it’s all we have known and we supposedly don’t know a better or even another way? Whatever is the reason, we must repent of it, beg God for mercy and seek the Spirit’s enabling for us as His followers to become the answer to His prayer.

Many expressions of His church are a good thing. Certainly, there are many types of people and many cultures represented in our very diverse humanity. But I would suggest (and I believe Jesus’ prayer in the Garden proves it) that Jesus wants His followers involved in those many varied expressions of His church to follow Him with a unity of

purpose and mission together. The diversity of humanity becomes beautifully unified when the gospel grips the hearts of people and reconciliation and restoration result.

No more of this MY church stuff. It's not my church. It's not your church. She (the bride) of Christ is His church. If I am using His bride to bring glory to anyone else besides the Groom, then I am most to be pitied.

May we repent and surrender our golden images that we call MY church and MY church vision and MY church building and MY church traditions and MY church programs and MY church growth and beg God for His revealed presence among us through our Spirit-enabled unity. May we unify around His mission in hopes of seeing "on earth as it is in heaven" in our city. May we drop the MY church mentality.

It is not what Jesus intended.

CONSIDER and CONVERSE:

1. Do you think that the ideal of a unified church as a whole in a city is even possible in American church culture? Why or why not?
2. Based on Jesus' prayer in John 17, do you think that unity is what Jesus intended for His followers? What in His prayer supports this belief?
3. Do you agree with this author's conclusion that the work of God will not happen among us in our city without the unity of the followers of Jesus in our city? Why or why not?
4. Do you agree with this author's assertion that the unity of followers of Jesus validates Him being sent as Messiah? Why or why not?
5. What might you and the local church family of which you are a part need to repent of with regard to hindrances to unity?
6. What is the local church family of which you are a part known for in

the community? What has been revealed among you? Pray for God's revealed presence among you.