

Your church is truly elder-run which is evidenced by the fact that no one man is in charge of everything or is indispensable and major decisions in the church are made by prayerful consensus of the elders. You understand that Jesus is in charge of the church through the leading of the Holy Spirit using the elders as his vessels and as checks and balances for one another and as agents for grooming future leaders.

When you are wronged by the world or by a brother, you turn the other cheek, go the extra mile, return love for hate, and pray for those who use you and persecute you. You cast all your cares on the Lord instead of keeping score of all the times something bad happened to you and you are careful to remove beams from your eyes before removing specks from others' eyes.

You *enjoy* being different from the world and you enjoy singing hymns and psalms and spiritual songs while the world is cursing, complaining and gossiping. Sarcasm, self-pity, put-downs and idle chatter are unheard of in your presence. You challenge each other continually, encouraging one another to live godly lives amongst a wicked and perverse generation. You are so busy about your Father's work that you don't have time to worry.

You don't look for excuses as to why the church is not growing. You ask the Lord what YOU need to do to draw men to Christ. You don't make up excuses for why you can't share the Gospel, but rather you pray to God that He would somehow use a lowly soul like you to deliver the glorious Gospel message to whom He wishes to proclaim it. You don't judge spirituality by the number of signs and wonders or by the number of people in your local church but by the extent of persecution you are undergoing for the preaching of the Gospel to a Christ-hating world.

You don't get tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine because the Bible is your measuring rod,

lighthouse, and compass. You don't get disappointed by the failures of men because you are trusting in Him who will never leave you nor forsake you and who is faithful even when we are unfaithful.

You wisely seek advice from godly counselors when dealing with difficult decisions and you accept advice that you know is of God even though it may be advice that is difficult for you to receive. When discipline and reproof are needed you do it prayerfully, lovingly, and consistently without showing favoritism. Likewise, you accept it graciously, humbly and thankfully when it needs to be applied to you.

With each day that goes by, you have a greater appreciation of the grace of God in your lives. You are continually awed by His mighty works, His answers to your prayers, His countless blessings, and His incomprehensible love for creatures as weak and sinful as yourselves.

You will not let anything on earth get in the way of your relationship to Jesus Christ. You are so preoccupied with the thought of the Lord's return that people can't help but notice. Your attention is so much focused on the kingdom to come that people around you are starting to look up at the clouds. You act and talk as if Jesus was right in your midst and as if you had just heard the sound of the last trump.

Ray Kane

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"Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

[Revelation 3:11-13]

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THE CHURCH THAT HAS NOT LOST ITS FIRST LOVE



"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."

[2 Corinthians 11:2]

Unto the angel of the church that has not lost its first love; You are noticeably preoccupied with Jesus Christ, His work, and His second coming. Your worship is unquestionably alive as you love to sing and worship with your whole heart. You aggressively get to know new people in love and with sensitivity, not just when it is convenient (like when there's a church service), but OUTSIDE of the church and primarily by inviting people into your lives and into your homes as the church of the first century did. You are anxious to fellowship before and after services as well as outside of scheduled times of worship. You meet in each other's homes regularly to enable the saints to form strong relationships.

You get your needs for fellowship met by helping each other with chores, by sharing meals together and by sharing time in ministry together. You make an effort to know and meet the needs of one another. This includes forfeiting time in front of a TV tube and substituting unfruitful activities with more godly pursuits such as evangelism, visiting the sick, ministering to the elderly, helping single mothers, or inviting people into your home for fellowship, Bible study and prayer. Your Bible studies have practical application in your own lives.

Your members are always looking for opportunities to reach out to a lost and dying world. You spend most of your time, money, and other resources on evangelism-related activities and ministering to the needs of the local body so that all men will know you are His disciples by your love for one another and for the lost. You do not wait for people to stumble into your church bleeding and dying. You go out into the highways and byways and compel them to come in where you tenderly nurse them back to spiritual health by your love and compassion and the saving power of the Gospel. When someone new does come knocking at your door, you treat them like the father treated his prodigal son in Luke 15. If someone should unexpectedly leave your fellowship, you already know them well enough to understand why they left, but even so, you treat them like the good shepherd in Matthew 18, who left his 99 sheep to go after one stray.

Your leadership is heavily evangelism minded and have a deep love for the lost which they show by being active role models for evangelism. They give regular praise reports with regards to recent evangelistic activities in their own lives and the lives of people they are discipling and they make sure that everyone in the church feels free to testify to the saving and sanctifying power of Jesus Christ in their lives.

You fully understand that your own lives need to be as holy and blameless before men as possible so that you will be the kind of salt and light for the Lord that the world so desperately needs to see. You take seriously the Word of God when it says 'offer up yourselves as living sacrifices to God'. The leadership sets the example for godliness, humility, servanthood, self-sacrifice, and modest living. From the leadership on down, you do not hesitate to warn lost sinners about the godless eternity in Hell that awaits those who die in their sins. You understand that the lost are not receiving the whole counsel of God if they hear only the Good News of salvation without fully grasping the serious-

ness and the terribleness of the wrath of God that will be poured out on all who neglect so great a salvation.

You are not afraid, and in fact you are even anxious, to take risks with your financial security, your reputation, your personal comfort, and your lives if need be, in reaching the lost. You are not afraid to take risks in developing future church leaders either.

You are prayer-oriented and you make a priority of praying individually and corporately. You pray as if people's eternal souls depended on God hearing and answering your prayers. You would rather pray than talk about your problems, hobbies, cars, sports, food, clothes, TV, movies and all the other vain things of this world.

You are hungry for the Word of God and for spiritual truth no matter what it exposes in your own lives. Your leadership does its best to develop and encourage this attitude in the church even if it means they must frequently admit their own shortcomings.

You make it easy for people to know what's going on, what's expected and so forth... there are visible signs of what the church is all about, in peoples' actions, in conversation, in the church newsletter or bulletin, in what's posted on bulletin boards, tract racks, etc. You make sure that your material possessions, your conversation and daily activities reflect that your priorities are eternal.

You maintain a proper balance between doctrines that are essential to salvation and those that are not. You are not afraid to discuss difficult issues in light of the Word of God, provided such discussion does not result in unfruitful arguments. You understand the meaning and importance of holiness and the fear of God. Unity exists without compromising the truth. Discipleship and the disciple-making process is understood and practiced by all members of the church.

You are more interested in being biblically correct than in being popular with anyone. You know what the fruits of the Spirit are by their presence in your lives. You know who is a Christian and who isn't and are able and willing to convey this information to other saints so they will know how to recognize false Christians including wolves in sheep's clothing.

Your leadership knows that the Catholic church is a cult, why it is a cult, why there was a Reformation and is not afraid to share this information with the flock. You prove that you believe Catholics and all other false Christians are trusting in false gospels by actively evangelizing them in your own town and surrounding areas even if they eventually run you out of town.

You understand the dangers of ecumenicalism and you carefully avoid it. There is no unequal yoking with the lost or with compromising churches in ministry activities. You are knowledgeable about Biblical and church history and you strive to avoid repeating the mistakes of Israel and mistakes of the churches mentioned in Revelation chapters 2 and 3.

Your preaching serves to remind people that there's not much time left to reach the lost for Christ. You are not afraid to be called legalistic for your uncompromising preaching that confronts sin in no uncertain terms and confronts worldliness without fuzzy generalizations and without fear of the opinions of men. You love to preach against any and all sin (divorce, adultery, fornication, drunkenness, smoking, worldliness, gluttony, gambling, gossip, pornography, abortion, bitterness, complacency, lukewarmness, selfishness, self-righteousness, pride, etc.) and you know how to preach against sin in a way that will convince people that you do this out of obedience to Christ and out of love and concern for the health and well being of the others and not as hypocrites.