



## **Church Health Profile**

### **Divine Enablement**

#### **Feature Article**

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***The healthy church recognizes God's sovereign role in building the Kingdom and joyfully seeks and expects His Holy Spirit's work in and through the Body of Christ.***

The sovereign role of God in the life of the church is often vague and hard to grasp. We find it difficult to pinpoint its impact on the life of the church. God's sovereign role is mystical. If questioned, most pastors would quickly identify the significance of prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit as key components of church health. However, few would be able to describe how the Holy Spirit and prayer work to bring health to the body of Christ.

#### **Defining Divine Enablement**

"Divine Enablement" is that process of the Holy Spirit's work with the body of Christ, to produce a supernatural power to do God's will. We might understand more of the process of "Divine Enablement" within the church if we understood more of the work of the Holy Spirit among us as His people. One of the primary roles of the Holy Spirit is to sanctify or make holy. This sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit works in the life of the believer to produce holiness. As His holiness is being reproduced within us, we are coming closer to seeing the original image of God restored within our lives. Holiness is easily understood as godliness and to be holy or godly is to be complete. As we are complete, we experience healthiness in the physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual areas of our lives. The more we resemble the image of God, the more we will see excellent health.

To understand the work of God through the church it is necessary that we accept certain premises about God's plan.

- 1) God's plan is to accomplish His will on earth through the church.
- 2) God desires to release His power and His blessing to the church.
- 3) God must intervene in the life of the church and divinely enable the church for this task.
- 4) Church health becomes a significant factor in facilitating His divine intervention and to releasing His power to the church.

These premises provoke a few questions. Since God desires to release His power and His blessing to His Church, why are so many churches not experiencing growth? Since God's plan is to accomplish His will on earth through the church, why are more churches in plateau or declining rather than growing? Since God must intervene in the life of the Church and divinely enable the Church for this task, what must the church do to facilitate

this process? It seems that for God's power to effectively flow through the church we need the church to be a healthy instrument for God's use.

### **Experiencing Divine Enablement**

The early church serves as a biblical model for church health. We read about it in the second chapter of Acts.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions, and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2: 42-47)

Although the communal living system appears to have broken down within a brief period of history, there existed certain foundational beliefs that continued and created healthy dynamics within the church. The divine enablement of God was present within the early church for a number of reasons. Each of these factors becomes a significant aspect of God's work. There are at least three dynamics that facilitate God's intervention in the life of the church.

**A biblical focus for the church produces unity of purpose.** God's plan for the Church is outlined for us in His Word. All Christ-centered churches are included in His overarching purpose. Yet, each church is unique in its individual focus and each church must have a definite sense of its God-given purpose, as revealed through His Word, to accomplish His work. This focus will determine the vision and mission of that particular church. Every church leader must establish a biblical focus for ministry and discover that purpose through personal pursuit of God.

God desires to communicate to His people and it is only necessary that we build the opportunities into our lives for that to happen. The spiritual disciplines of the Christian life must be taught, modeled, and encouraged for the church to discover its full purpose. There is no replacement for corporate and individual opportunities for prayer and fasting. When a church seeks the heart of God through these disciplines, a clear focus and purpose begins to develop within the church and God brings unity to the body. Unity within the body creates an atmosphere of safety and security, thus allowing individuals to express and experience the powerful working of God.

**An environment of vital relationships within the church produces joy-filled worshippers.** The church is built on relationships. First, we are all a part of the church because of our relationship to Jesus Christ. Second, we are all a part of the local church because we share relationships with one another. Church health, like family health, is measured by the health of our relationships. When healthy dynamics are in place, the Spirit of God is free to bless that church because it is capable of providing the loving environment that will foster growth.

To understand the healthy dynamics of the church, we must understand healthy dynamics within all relationships. Churches are only as healthy as the individuals and their relationships within that fellowship. There are certain people in our lives with whom we find a sense of comfort and belonging. These people are healthy people who have made us feel welcome, desired and valued. Healthy churches do the same. Healthy churches do not create exclusive clubs. They create an atmosphere of comfort that is very inclusive. This becomes the breeding ground for growth and multiplication. A natural sense of joy is the by-product of a healthy environment.

**The church's balanced ministry produces healthy dynamics.** Maintaining balance in our personal lives, as well as in the life of the church, is one of our most difficult tasks. We struggle to do it, let alone doing it well. Balancing the demands of our lives is a challenge for all of us. We are called to balance walking by faith and planning for the future; reaching the lost and teaching for maturity; creating a loving environment and demanding accountability; expecting ministry involvement while keeping our families' needs in mind; maintaining a culture of unconditional love and holding to our boundaries. Each of these scenarios requires balance and will produce great health when achieved.

Understanding the balance of my investment of labor and the supernatural working of the Divine Enabler is always challenging. The Apostle Paul described it in Colossians 1:29, when he said, "To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me." In other words, I invest as much energy as I am able in deepening my relationship with Christ, and as much energy as I am able in fulfilling the task before me. God's enablement is free to be released when healthy, balanced dynamics are in place.

The need for balance can be illustrated with rocks, stones, and sand. It is a familiar illustration that clearly shows the significance of keeping priorities in the right order so they all "fit in" our lives. The three substances could illustrate life's big issues (rocks), smaller issues (stones), and life's every day demands (sand) that consume us. When the sand is placed in the container first and the stones second, the large rocks can never be placed in the container. However, when the large rocks are placed in the container first, with the small stones second, and the sand last, there is always enough room for all of the items to fill the container. As it is with life, so it is in local church ministry. Whether these items represent the personal needs of our lives or the ministries of the church, the results are the same if our priorities are placed incorrectly. If we allow ministry to chart its own course, our church will never be balanced and all of the needed ministries will not find expression. Planning and priorities are absolutely necessary to present a balanced ministry.

There is always a bit of the mystical when we try to understand the sovereignty of God and discern His working within the church. However, God desires to equip His church with His power to do His will. The degree of growth for each church rests in the sovereign hand of God. The environment for the divine enablement of growth exists when the body of Christ establishes a climate of health and an attitude of expectancy. Church health provides the environment for God to work, and expectancy provides the faith for God's power to be released. The challenge for every Christ-centered church is to understand and experience the balance between God's role – divine enablement – and human responsibility.