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Church's Mission

- God's or Human's

Someone said, 'prosperity is the promise of the Old Testament, adversity is of the new.' In apostolic times, ministry was a matter of toil, sweat, blood, tears and many prayers as they navigated through adversity, opposition, physical torture, mental agony and persecution.

Suffering on account of one's faith was found inevitable. In these days, faith appears to be a ready mix of philosophy, new age thought, contemporary culture, national polity and power equations, enterprise, and socio-economic projects! Ministry today has many faces: orthodox, evangelical, conventional, rural, urban, digital, contemporary, liberal, radical, social and even business! Power-mongering, nepotism, factions, dissensions, lawsuits, disunity and violence are diabolic manifestations in majority of Christian institutions and denominations today.

Faith is played up to the gallery to demonstrate one-upmanship by getting hyped, branded, specialized, commercialised and sophisticated.

Mission strategists have come to believe in repackaging the gospel with a touch of corporate culture, futuristic vision, innovation and fashion as soul-winning mantras.

Christian TV soaps, web evangelism, cyber churches, e-tube, online Christian singles dating, cyber hymns, e-books, online library etc mark the undercurrents of ministry in this new millennium. Cyber-bishops are just a click away to christen, baptize, solemnize a wedding, confirm, ordain or consecrate you. You can date online, fellowship online, pray online, give online, send flowers online, marry online, argue online, commit adultery online and divorce online! Cults and heretics thrive on the internet with their "products and services" to proselytise the 'Netizens' of the Internet kingdom.

It is quite sadistic to pen a scathing article denouncing all that is done under the banner of Christian ministry! I think there are more capable people than me for that. Nevertheless, as we observe how

today's ministries are rattling down a decadent path, dependant on mundane know-how, sowing in wind and reaping whirlwind, it is high time to take stock of the situation and seek biblical solutions.

Titles or Testimonies?

Cyber Chancellors are ready to trade a divinity doctoral degrees or a fanciful ministry title for you - via net for a net price. 'Upmarket' preachers and Christian leaders cherish crisscrossing the globe by super jets to attend global conferences and present "strategy" papers weaved with esoteric mumbo jumbo of theological, sociological, philosophical, economical, missiological domains, indiscriminately meddling on every thing under the sun, from homosexuality to global warming, nuclear holocaust to local politics, contraceptives to genetically modified foods, water crises to water baptism, ignorant of their calling and thrust areas. While they engage with the whole wide world around, their personal world crashes all of a sudden with financial scams and scandalous sexual affairs. Let us remind ourselves: Pharaoh had a mighty title, but Moses a miraculous testimony! Naaman had a title as a military general, but his poor servant girl, an orphan had a testimony! The high priests had a lofty titles backed by a Sanhedrin, but the wandering

disciples of Christ who were illiterate fishermen had a testimony of turning the world upside down! Nebuchadnezzar had a title as a grand emperor, but Daniel and his associates had a zealous testimony of overcoming trials, temptations and death.

Workaholics or Witnesses?

Christian organizations revel in introducing mundane "management principles" leading to squandering away of time in exhaustive discussions at luxury hotels and resorts and periodical production of a mountain of paper work, powerpoints and documentaries highlighting 'activities undertaken', 'problems encountered', 'facts and figures,' 'churches planted', 'projects managed,' 'annexure of maps,' 'curriculum developed,' 'training conducted', 'events chronicled', 'population covered', 'literature sold,' 'targets achieved', 'letters answered,' 'trends projected,' 'testimonies profiled' and budgets ... program-wise, strategy wise, activity wise, region-wise, gender-wise, item-wise, line-wise etc., in an attempt to establish a niche for themselves and impress the donors.

In order to ensure steady inflow of funds, the above workaholic frenzy spirals non-stop till people are afflicted by a 'burnout' and quit organisations! While many Christian

leaders earn international standard salaries and perks and enjoy living in ivory towers with three rings of security, their subordinates down the human pyramid are kept as hungry, sickly, burdened, lean cows, leave alone the deadline pressures, petty politics, fear psychosis, job insecurity and threat of transfers and 'use and throw' personnel policy!

Martha of Bethany was a workaholic to the core, even ignoring God-in-flesh in front of her own eyes! Do we value life and the welfare of the human soul? If we ignore our high calling to preach, teach, heal, disciple and serve the hurting world, we would only turn as Judases with eyeing the money bag. That would amount to betrayal of Christ and the end of being witnesses for His saving grace. A ministry sans human touch and spiritual sensitivity would fall out of grace, die a natural death in a matter of years, and sink into oblivion.

Professionalism or God's Power?

While the value of professionalism is upheld through constant innovation in systems, work culture, technology, production processes, distribution logistics and administration of services, some argue that ministry cannot be left behind in the shadows of antiquity. Was Jesus a professional in the modern sense of the word — (selling His gospel)?

Did His disciples exhibit any brand of reckonable homiletic expertise in their preaching, tested pedagogy in their teaching or any media-savvy formula in their healing? The corporate world works 24X7 marked by a work-till-you-drop approach! Is it professionalism? Input of expertise in work that redeems time would be a beneficial approach.

At a decisive point of time, early apostles prudently prioritised their work, so that they did not waste a moment majoring on minor issues! Luke records, "Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "it is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables ... but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." (Acts 6:2, 4) How well the apostles reorganised themselves that they all lived sharing their faith and resources and faithfully preached Christ and not themselves and then saw their words were indeed confirmed by signs and wonders from above!

Anand David works as a Program Officer for a diplomatic mission in Delhi and spends his free volunteering in churches for preaching, Christian writing and counseling. He and his wife Sharmilee attend Centenary Methodist Church.