

Flirting With the World

READING

Revelation 3

John 17

2 Corinthians 6

Where is that strong sense of community that jumps out at you when you read the early part of Acts? Where is the devotion to teaching/learning/discipleship, and to prayer? Where is the loving one another? The kind that is real, and deep, and sacrificial?

This article is the introduction to the book “To Be, Not to Be”, downloadable for free from [Smashwords](#).

Back in the ‘80s John White wrote a challenging little book called “Flirting with the World” in which he called out the church of the day for taking on some of the World’s ways and methods. The church is the bride of Christ. Effectively we’re his fiancé. So when the church does things the way the World does, instead of the way Yeshua does... we’re kind of flirting with someone while we’re engaged to someone else!

It’s a bit slutty, and pretty disappointing for a girl of our standing.

To be honest. These days I feel like the church has moved way beyond flirting, and she’s actually having an affair. Full on, sleeping with the World.

We run our churches like businesses, we use marketing and advertising techniques, we focus way way too much on money and on how many people are attending. We charge people for things which should be free. We focus on what non-believers want, and on being accepted by them, (or at least acceptable to them), by not mentioning those things which might offend non-Christians, like abortion, homosexuality, men and women’s roles in a family - things we should be standing up for, not sweeping under the carpet.

We seem to be all about affluence and our image. We’re more about Facebook than about the Bible. More about image than spirit.

John White passed away in 2002. For his sake, I’m kinda glad for him - he would have been devastated. He warned us, but we didn’t listen.

When I was a young Christian we used to hear sermons about wolves in sheep’s clothing, sneaking into the flock and harming young Christians. These days the message needs to be about sheep in wolves’ clothing. Christians who look so much like non-Christians that you would be hard pressed to find any evidence that they’re Christian at all.

What can we do? How can we fix this?

One of the books I read recently, (Who Stole My Church, by MacDonald), made an interesting statement. “I’m beginning understand why the younger guys prefer to start churches. I sometimes think that changing one is impossible.” I’ve personally been trying to change the church for 35 years. I don’t think it’s impossible but it sure seems to be a slow process. I’ve been doing it one person at a time, (by discipling those who I think will be future leaders), and assuming that the change will come in the next generation. Starting a new church is tough work, and honestly, not my gift. But sometimes like MacDonald, I also think that it would be way easier to just start again.

The (Western) church just seems so entrenched in its ways. So unwilling to do any kind of self examination or re-evaluation. So totally confident that its application of good business practices is working. You’re almost a heretic for suggesting that something might be wrong.

If we were sending missionaries to another culture we would certainly expect them to “do church” in culturally relevant ways. And we should expect some aspects of the surrounding culture to be seen in a particular church. But if someone sent new missionaries to the West, then I would be very surprised if their solution ended up looking much like how we “do church” here now.

We seem to have lost the fundamentals of the church being a body, working together as each part does its particular role. Do we even know what it means any more to look after the poor, or have we happily handed that over to our governments? Where is that strong sense of community that jumps out at you when you read the early part of Acts? Where is the devotion to teaching/learning/discipleship, and to prayer? Where is the loving one another? The kind that is real, and deep, and sacrificial?

“Innocent” flirting that started with adopting worldly music and trying to improve our marketing and relevance to non-believers, has led us down a path to where we are barely recognisable from what we used to be. I agree, the church was kind of lost already by the ‘80s, but in a different way. It was a bit cold and lifeless, it had lost its passion for loving God, and loving each other. But instead of fixing the error we have just moved to the opposite error.

We swapped the organ for a keyboard, and we introduced drums to become more “relevant”. But we missed the point of who we are really meant to be. It has nothing to do with music. It has everything to do with being faithful, relentlessly faithful to our fiancé. And being proud to show off the ring, and to declare to anyone that will listen, “That’s my future husband! I’m totally in love with him.”

Let me say this bluntly. Entertainment might well be what they want. But it is not what they need. What they need, is to hear from God. To receive his spirit and to build a strong relationship with him as his born again children. Then, whether they are entertained or not, their eternal future will be secure. And I suspect that they will also be much more content with the here and now, entertained or not.

By all means our music should be in a style relevant to our audience. But that is a very different focus to “entertaining”.

How are you going to make this happen?

Are you going to change the church you’re in? Or are you just going to start again?

However you do it... do something. It’s too important to just give up.