God used us in several ways to “Build His Church” in Boulder City. But why did it need building?

I want to tell you what we found in this ‘storefront church’ of Boulder City. I don’t have carefully planned out statements to make. I do have something churning within me that I feel must be said. I pray that Father brings forth any words within me that Glorify Him, and that will represent his heart for His Church worldwide.

I believe what we found is typical of the American Church, probably the Western Church. This ‘storefront church’ is merely a cross section of it. I restrict my thinking to the American and Western Church because Maureen and I have seen other cultures where these things aren’t so prominent. Maybe a closer inspection would reveal more.

Found, were offenses given, and offenses taken. It’s my opinion that, an offense cannot be given, it must be taken. But, although one cannot be given, we can present the opportunity for one to be taken. I think our responsibility as Christian is to weigh carefully each word we intend to use. Even each word we have spoken. If we see a word coming that ‘may’ offend, don’t use it. If we see a word that ‘did’ offend, then be quick to be the peace maker, and apologize. We can cause another saint to stumble with our words, or even with a lack of them when we should speak, and don’t.

I believe most often, though, that we are too quick to pick up the offense when none was intended. The Word of God says in 1 Peter 5:8, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” We, as Christians, fail miserably in this command. Instead, we ourselves, ‘walketh about, as a wounded Christian, seeking what offense we can pick up.’

I believe there are signs of the coming ‘offense to be taken.’ I saw repeatedly, dear saints viewing others with a critical eye, thinking they are not living up to God’s expectation of them. More than one standing up during the Sunday morning worship and rebuking the ‘Body of Christ’ for not attending the evening service, or the Wednesday night service, or some other church event. And then, that same saint, picking up offense because few responded to the ‘rebuke,’ and actually leaving the church, likely in search of another congregation, sadly where a similar situation may happen again.

We found sarcasm. According to the dictionary I looked in, ‘sarcasm’ spoken is a, ‘taunt.’
And, ‘taunt,’ is: “to jeer at, to try to provoke with scornful remarks or criticism.” Sarcasm abounds in this ‘storefront church,’ both in the congregation and from the pulpit.

It is right to ‘provoke’ the Body of Christ. I have felt recently the Lord exhorting me to be a ‘provoker.’ He wants me to exhort, even rebuke, in order to ‘provoke’ saints to acts that will glorify God. Acts that will sharpen integrity, honesty, and remove compromise from their lives. But, we have a choice in how we ‘provoke’ and what we ‘provoke’ them to do. Hebrews 10:24 “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.”

We found a ‘wounded and lame’ church. I have often whispered, “Where’s the victory, Lord?” I’ve listened to saints pour out their woes, and inability to deal with them. For many, the task is not to ‘reach the lost for Jesus,’ but it is to, ‘survive.’ I see them as soldiers in a war, wounded, scared, and staying in their foxholes where it appears to be safe. Many need to simply shed the ‘fear,’ stand up, (risk being hit by enemy fire), and put themselves in the hands of the Healer and begin walking in Victory. It’s time to become a ‘vibrant and living’ church. It’s a choice away, as is everything we do in Christian life.

We found willing hearts. As part of the Advisory Committee, I had opportunity to see the decision making process at work in this ‘storefront church.’ The committee is made up mostly of men of short standing with Christ. That is to say, new Christians, or even returning backsliders. They are a wonderful group of men, and I love them. In many of our meetings we moved into debate over the right thing to do. The ‘lessor way’ was sometimes considered. The best part is, the ‘higher way’ was most often taken. Compromise was considered, but seldom made. Good choices are being made by this ‘storefront church’ leadership.

I saw God answer specific prayer for church direction in the committee meetings. We had been spoken to by God on an issue. But then, in the course of time, there was tremendous pressure to compromise and take another route. I pray these men will continue to ask Father’s advice and then determine to stick to what he says.

An ‘echo’ was found in the church, but echo of what? God is looking for a ‘Voice’ in His Church, an echo of His Voice. Many times we heard ‘an echo,’ not of God’s Voice, but of man. A message given based upon something read in a book or newspaper, heard on the radio, seen on TV, or words from a passerby during the week. All of these are echoes’ of men. Where is the ‘Voice’ that is from Father Himself? Where is the Word that comes from days on the floor before the Creator of the Universe, seeking His Voice to present to the people? One message I heard was actually based upon a secular dieting book.

Don’t get me wrong, ideas can come from any source, even the world. But, what voice is being presented to the Body of Christ. What voice is being presented to the lost soul that wanders in off the street. Isn’t there an anointing to give utterance from the very throne of God itself? Man is hungry for this utterance, when it’s not present, the church door is a revolving one.

Maybe least attractive of all, we found ‘secret’ salvation. Salvation is one of the most amazing, spectacular events in our lives. Every Christian will confess that to be true. In this ‘storefront church,’ like so many churches, salvation almost seems a thing of shame. Everyone is required to lower their head. Their eyes must be closed. The one wanting this salvation must only ‘slip’ his/her hand up, so as not to be noticed, accept by the Pastor. And then we must all pray aloud to cover the voice of the one which is receiving the most precious gift, eternal life. Once the conversion is made, then, and only then, can we open our eyes and lift our heads. We leave the church without a clue who accepted Jesus that day. We believe someone did, because of the ‘Thank You’ uttered by the pastor at each hand that goes up. We have no opportunity to know, or rejoice
with the new saint.

One day later, or possibly a week later, the new convert can slip back into the world just like they slipped their hand up for prayer. No one will notice, and there is no one to exhort them to carry on, no one to encourage and train them in the faith. I believe for the most part, it would be best to have no altar call at all, rather than create ‘secret Christians.’ Why not a bold declaration before God, and the saints, what we have done, one that will set our face like flint upon him?

We also found desire in the heart of our Pastor, the desire to seek after God, to know him more, to see revival, a desire to ‘provoke’ saints in a closer walk with him. Also a desire to see every Christian say, ‘Yes, Lord,’ once for all. We love the heart of our Pastor, a heart filled with worship for our King.

We found perseverance, six years of persistence and determination to do what God has said to do keeps the lights of this desert lighthouse burning. Many times it would have been easy for Pastor to throw in the towel, as still another picked up offense and moved to greener pastures. But he had heard God, and like so many other men of God who persevered, he stays and presses on toward the goal.

We found a Pastor who is a friend of the poor that passes along this broad road. One who will step away from his desk to give a ride, give lodging or meal, and do so repeatedly. Many of the less fortunate on the road that passes this ‘storefront church’ are on a first name basis with our Pastor. They see Jesus in him. He is a Pastor who will listen and hear, and pray for change. God is using him, and this ‘storefront church.’

As stated earlier, this ‘storefront church’ is a ‘cross section’ of the Body of Christ. Disorder exists in varying degrees throughout the Body. While in Jerusalem, we noticed that many western believers felt they were in such a battle that every day’s task was to just survive, just like here in Boulder City. The excuse was that Jerusalem has the most powerful evil forces over it, more so than anywhere else in the world. I’ve heard the same thing said about Las Vegas. Come to think of it, I’ve heard the same thing said over Haiti . . . It’s true, we’re all in a battle zone, it’s just some have learned to appropriate the victory provided by Jesus Christ at the cross.

I believe there are different levels of power in the spiritual realm. Maybe some evil princes have more power than others, but the ‘truth’ is, none can compare with our Lord and Savior. I repeat, ‘Lord’ and ‘Savior.’

I am saved from that defeated life that I used to live and now walk in Victory. Why don’t all Christians? Is it because there is a great deceiver at work in the world to convince believers they cannot have the victory? Yes, there is a deceiver who ‘walks about, seeking whom he can devour.’ He’s seeking because not every Christian is available to him. Don’t let it be you. Stand your ground, in Victory. Victory is yours, take it, hold it.

There is so much more God wants His Bride to be. Much of the Western Church is in disorder, just as our individual lives and families are. Both must be put in order, I believe the individual first, then the family, and only then can the church be in order.

When ‘victory’ evades us, fasting and praying is a good weapon. Our ‘storefront church’ undertook a Monday night fast and prayer time that began with a leadership’s choice to start it. The fast brought much fruit. God saw, heard, and opened his heavenly windows and poured out upon this church plant. An Intercessory Prayer Team was formed during this same period. He will swing the window open wider as this ‘storefront church’ continues to fast and pray.

I’m encouraged that my intermittent participation in this ‘storefront church’ over the years has allowed me to see how God is changing hearts of men. Men that want to do his will, who want to
‘Build His Church.’ I believe our ‘storefront church’ will survive and flourish. There is a calling for people to be raised that will send many into the nations from this desert spot. There is a spring in this desert, bringing refreshment to a dying world, and a wounded Church. One day there will be a vibrant Church, full of life and bringing life to many around the world.

Let’s pray that as it does, it will continue to be a Cross Section of the Worldwide Body of Christ in these last days.