

Francis Chan *LETTERS TO THE CHURCH*

Summary of Chapter 1 “The Departure”

Introduction

What if the only information you had about “Church” was the Bible, would your concept of what a church is and how it should function be different than what you see in modern churches?

Some Background

Francis Chan preached for a mega church, started a college, sold bestselling books and had a huge podcast following; and he left it all to move to Asia. Why? The church he had started back in 1994, the Cornerstone Church in Simi Valley, began on 3 basic goals:

1. All really sing directly to God.
2. All hear the Word of God.
3. All live holy lives and push each other toward action.

People were attracted to it and it continued to grow. But over the years he had the sense that something was missing. Together with his Elders they studied the Scripture to make sure their definition of church was God’s definition of church. They questioned the following:

1. Did they have a supernatural level of love for one another (John 13:35)?
2. Had they grown too dependent on one person?

Changing the Rules

The desire for change was frustrating for leaders and members, especially when they could not clearly define the change they had in mind. Chan found himself not being at peace with his ministry and it was beginning to show to the church.

1. He was also losing his humility as his popularity grew.
2. He had trouble with praise and criticism of social media.
3. He struggled with the fact that there were so many churches in the city where so many places in the world had none.
4. It was comfortable to be faithful by American standards, but there was not a sense of living by faith.

He and his wife began to talk about it and found that they were both feeling the same thing and were interested in going to another country. Within 15 minutes a friend confirmed this by telling him that God wanted him to tell Chan that he should “Just go. Don’t worry about the church. There are others to take care of the church.” They took their family of six to India, Thailand and China. They saw the Church growing like wildfire with such great joy while under great persecution. All the while they were praying for God to show them where they should stay to minister, and they were ready to stay in Hong Kong – and then they strangely felt God was leading them back to the States to plant churches.

The Journey Home

They ended up in San Francisco in his brother's one-bedroom apartment with their only plan to try to live Biblically like Jesus and share the Gospel with people in the city. They began by serving people in the most need where they were, and they were very uncomfortable and had to depend the power of God and prayer. When he asked his kids about how they felt about it they said, "they felt like they had jumped out of the Bible." He began to feel he was really doing ministry by faith. Yet they felt the need to grow their ministry in an elder-led church, so they started a church. 20 years after starting Cornerstone, he had come full circle. They called it "We Are Church." He found himself for the first time in his ministry to be closer to God in the presence of brothers and sisters praying together than he felt praying alone.

Big Problems

Many are complaining about their churches and don't see it fostering the encouragement of Heb. 10:24-25. They are rebellious of the church and would rather go it alone, or completely give up on church (1 Thes. 5:14). We need to pray that God gives us the grace to repent and that we don't become like most of the churches of Rev. 2-3. We must realize that God is not happy with churches where it is enough to just show up (Amos 5:21-24; Isa. 58:1-5; Malc. 1:6-14; 1 Cor. 11:17-30; Rev. 2:5; 3:15-16). God is displeased with most churches in America.

A Humble Warning

We must be eager to maintain unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). God is not happy with division, and social media has multiplied the problem. David refused to harm God's King, no matter how much felt he was wrong (1 Sam. 24:6). We must have humility, respect and practice forgiveness.

Just Open the Door

Being like the majority of Christians in America is not good enough. God wants a change. He will empower us to change Rev. 3:19-21.

The Clock is Ticking

Eph. 5:15-17. We are getting older, and this is no time to be worrying about what we want in a church, we will soon be standing face to face with God. It is time for us to be concerned about what God wants for His Church and for us to allow God to use us to change it!