

Dave Rolph, Calvary Chapel Pacific Hills CA | December 5, 2016

I have resisted making public comments about the recent CCA/CCCM split, partly because I've been trying to think it through thoroughly and partly because I don't think my opinion is all that significant in the overall scheme of things. I have talked with people on both sides of the issue, including those who are on the CCA council, and I have addressed some of my personal concerns in private letters to some of them. Ultimately I decided to just publish some general comments and perspectives so that I can stop the avalanche of questions I am getting about this matter.

First of all, the split was a tragedy. Perhaps it was a necessary tragedy, but it was a tragedy just the same. There are men on both sides who are very special to me and I hate this public division.

There has been a lot of talk about unity but for me unity is only impressive when it contains diversity. A unity that comes through division and exclusion isn't really unity at all. In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, in chapter 12, he makes it clear that God intended His Church to be a unity with a lot of interesting diversity. And that is what impressed anyone who came to Calvary Chapel in the 70's, when I first started to minister there. It wasn't just a tent full of hippies. It was "long hairs, short hairs, some coats and ties." It was police officers like Hal Fischer, firefighters like Ken Mitchell, business executives like Chuck Missler, and crazy hippies like Lonnie Frisbee. And it was led by a middle aged bald guy. The Calvary Chapel movement was always the same. As other churches started we had Mike MacIntosh who had a huge vision for missions, Greg Laurie who was an evangelist and heir apparent to Billy Graham, Tom Stipe who had a passion for worship, Don McClure who called us to holiness as he was influenced by Alan Redpath. Later there were guys who were more drawn to apologetics or creation or eschatology or politics. But within this diversity, we were all held more or less together by our love and respect for Chuck Smith. The reason Chuck was able to hold this motley crew together is because he didn't let diversity trip him up. Frankly, the Calvary Chapel fellowship of churches hung together largely because of Chuck's capacity to put up with extremists, radicals, and a various assortment of crazy people. If we purge all the crazies from Calvary Chapel, and organize and structure the whole thing, it will no longer be Calvary Chapel. Unity without diversity will suffocate what once was a powerful work of the Spirit, where the lunatics like us had been allowed to run the asylum.

I hesitate to even use the words "Calvary Chapel Movement." In the 60's and 70's there was a Jesus Movement. It sprung up almost simultaneously all over the country and several places around the world. Calvary Chapel was a church that participated in the Jesus Movement. I'm not sure when people transitioned from talking about the Jesus Movement and instead talking about the Calvary Chapel Movement but there was a sad day in there somewhere. In the early days it was never about Calvary Chapel as opposed to the rest of the church. Chuck worked with people from various different denominations. Calvary loaned money to missions groups like Wycliffe Bible Translators and Missionary Aviation Fellowship. He was friends with Bill Bright and supported Campus Crusade. He was also friends with Chuck Swindoll, John MacArthur, Billy Graham, Francis Schaefer and others. He even had Corrie Ten Boom, a Dutch Reformed Calvinist woman preach from the pulpit of Calvary Chapel several times. The point is, during the times when God blessed Calvary Chapel in the greatest way, Calvary Chapel was a part of the larger Church of Jesus Christ. It wasn't a self-contained "Movement." History will show that

the more exclusive our church (and churches) became, there was a pronounced decline in the influences of our ministries. So in my opinion, a move toward exclusivity will be a move toward obscurity.

I understand that some people within CCA see the Calvary Chapel Association as being the successors, chosen by Chuck Smith, to all that is Calvary Chapel in the future. I understand that because Chuck allowed a letter to be published that seemed to endorse that concept, and he made certain statements to that effect. However, Pastor Chuck also made numerous private statements concerning his lack of respect for CCA, to me and many others, and on several occasions he told me that he was going to pull out of CCA and "we will start our own thing." Chuck never saw the group of CC churches as the big deal that others seem to think. He told me many times, "Dave, we have one church! Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa!" And maybe it sounds strange, since I am the Senior Pastor of Calvary Chapel Pacific Hills, but I still consider Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa to be my home church. I consider CCPH to be a part of, and an outreach of, Costa Mesa. I'm sure it is different for pastors who have never been personally associated with CCCM but I worked as a pastor there for 25 years, taught there for 30 years, and remained in regular personal contact with Chuck Smith for the greater part of 40 years. His church will always be my church, no matter what.

For me, the idea of there being a Calvary Chapel Association that doesn't include the original Calvary Chapel is ludicrous. CCCM even owns the name that CCA uses, as well as the dove. Some of the CCA guys feel that Brian is starting an association that is a subset of CCA. In my view, every church that calls itself "Calvary Chapel" is a subset of Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa. For CCA to attempt to get CCCM to submit to CCA the tail is wagging the dog.

I understand why many of the Calvary Chapel churches don't want to submit to Brian. While Chuck ultimately handed CCCM off to Brian's leadership, he did send conflicting messages concerning whether or not he really wanted that to happen. Conflicting messages were a constant thing with Chuck, and anyone who knew him knows that. But you have to ultimately go by what he did in the end, which was turn the church and all of its assets over to Brian's stewardship. But the thing is, no one has to submit to Brian. Brian isn't even asking anyone to submit to him. He is simply unwilling to submit to others, as was his father-in-law.

All of this illustrates why independence is so important as we move into the future. The Lord works in mysterious ways. As Jesus said to Nicodemus, "The Holy Spirit is like the wind. You never know where He's coming from or where He's going but you'll hear Him as He moves." Calvary Chapel experienced an incredible move of the Holy Spirit, as a small group of people, led by one man, allowed the rules to be broken, and submitted to no one but the Holy Spirit. At the time Chuck was accused of arrogance, and of not being a team player. The team players and rule keepers missed the revival, and they always do. If you were going to come up with a revised list of Calvary Distinctives, I'd put independence somewhere near the top of the list. To see a Calvary Chapel pastor be criticized for having an independent spirit is incredibly ironic.

The messages that have gone out from CCA have stated that the role of CCA is to maintain the affiliation process, have a helpful webpage, put on conferences and publish various teachings. So far, after 3+

years, not much of that has happened. The CCA webpage and affiliation process is a confusing mess. They haven't conducted a single conference. And the only things they've published, to my recollection, are the recent succession of emails about Brian, and a few short notices concerning how to help with some natural disasters. On the other hand, Brian has an amazing website at calvarychapel.com, with a great church database and lots of articles written by Calvary Chapel pastors, including many written by CCA board members. He has a constant presence on social media, which is so critical nowadays. And he has put on a large pastor's conference every year, in addition to missions conferences, youth worker conferences, worship leader conferences, and scores of other conferences all over the world. And Brian was doing all this long before there even was a CCA. If CCA really wants to lead they might want to start by doing all the stuff that he is doing, at least as well as he does.

When Brian put out his announcement about Calvary Chapel Global Network he made it clear that he'd be happy for pastors to be associated with CC Global and with CCA. I thought he was very gracious toward CCA. On the other hand, CCA made a series of attacking statements directed toward Brian, and made it pretty clear that they don't want their affiliates associating with CC Global. That says a lot to me.

Throughout my years with Calvary Chapel I saw Pastor Chuck say and do some dumb stuff. But I remained associated with him. And I said and did a lot of dumb stuff, and he remained associated with me. (We could be furious with each other at different times, but we remained connected.) I think CCA has said and done some dumb stuff recently. But they are still my family. And I've also seen Brian say and do some dumb stuff. But he is still my brother. I wish that Calvary Chapel Association could've avoided this split. I wish they hadn't been offended by Brian's independence and I wish he wouldn't have left and I wish they wouldn't have attacked him after he left. But what's done is done, and we need to move forward.

I had the privilege of growing up in a church environment that was crazy, independent and radical. It was messy and disruptive. It was anti-establishment and always walking a fine edge, and falling off regularly. That was Calvary Chapel. And the Spirit blew everywhere, and an old man let it happen. Brian and Cheryl Brodersen's oldest daughter, when she was probably 3 years old, used to say to Pastor Chuck, "Grandpa, you are a non-conformist!" (She couldn't pronounce "non-conformist, although she knew what it meant" so "non-conformist" was the best she could do. And Chuck was so proud that his granddaughter saw him as a non-conformist. He was one to his very soul. And that's what he taught us, if we were listening. I am an old man now but I pray that I never lose that radical, messy, independent, non-conformist spirit I got from Chuck and Calvary Chapel. There is an old saying in history that the first thing revolutionaries do when they come into power is kill all the revolutionaries. If we aren't careful we may snuff the flame of the next revolution of the Spirit before it happens. Let's never lose our radical spirit.

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