

Church Growth

There are many Biblical understandings to consider when striving to grow the local congregation and thus the church universal. So many have devised their own ways by offering physical allurements to attract potential members that conflict with solid growth and true discipleship. We need to be careful that we not compare ourselves to the larger churches or denominational understandings about church growth. Our/any small group can make a big difference, so we are not to be considered less important in the fight for the souls of the lost. Remember Gideon?

Jdg 6:14 And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? 15 And he said unto Him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I *am* the least in my father's house. 16 And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

If God is on our side, who can resist His power?

Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *His* purpose (*Gk.4286- intention*) (*God intended for all of mankind to be saved- 2 Pet 3:9.*) 29 For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn **among many brethren** (*As God's "only begotten Son" [Jn 3:16] He also became the "firstborn" with the hopes of there being "many brethren" through His death, burial and resurrection. This all shows our purpose for evangelizing.*) 30 Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified. 31 What shall we then say to these things? **If God be for us, who can be against us?** 32 He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up **for us all**, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? 33 Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth. 34 Who is he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us (*Jesus is in a constant mode of intercession to God on the behalf of those who love Him.*) 35 **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?** *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword (*or **rejection**, if someone isn't interested in understanding truth, that will not separate the one who tried to introduce them from Christ.*)? 36 As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, **in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.** 38 For I am persuaded, **that neither** death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, **shall be able to separate us from the love of God**, which is **in** Christ Jesus our Lord. (*Emp. added*)

But in order to remain "in" Christ we are to...

2Pe 3:18 ... **grow in grace**, and *in* the **knowledge** of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him *be* glory both now and forever. Amen. (*Emp. added*)

The war between good and evil was won at Calvary but there are many small battles yet taking place because Satan, even though we understand he has lost, through pride won't give in until he's taken as many souls to Hell with him that he can. Our growth depends on how much we love God and are willing to **give of ourselves**. But before we do anything we need to be "soul conscience". Do we really look at those outside the protection of Christ's blood as being lost? It

would take many class hours with numerous materials to come to a better understanding to accomplish such an overwhelming task as church growth. Today we will deal with just three basic but necessary works that any body of Christ can easily do in teaching the lost, adding to the saved, strengthening what has been added, taking care of the weak, teaching and continuing to do the same.

"Flying in the face of contemporary denominational religions is that the Lord wants the work of the local church to be limited and focused on just three things. The apostle Paul set out to inform the congregations of God's people what the mission or work of the Lord's church was to be. The Mission of the Church is:"

[Marc Smith, Apr 7, 2011- Watchman Magazine]

1. Preach the Gospel – Ephesians 3:10-12

Eph 3:10 To the intent that now unto the principalities (*Gk.746- rule*) and powers (*Gk.1849- authority*) in heavenly ("*spiritual world*"- CEV) places might **be known by the church** the manifold wisdom of God, 11 According to the **eternal purpose** (*Gk.4286- intention*) which He purposed **in** (*Gk.1722- denoting [fixed] position: -through*) *Christ Jesus our Lord: 12 In (*Gk.1722*) Whom (*Jesus*) we have boldness and access with confidence by (*Gk.1223*) the faith of Him (*the Gospel*). (*Emp. added*)

*Joh 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by (*Gk.1223- through*) Me.

It was purposed by God that the heavenly authorities understand the mysteries that were held from them since they were created. And He accomplished that using the church when she came into existence (*1 Pet 1:12*). Like Naaman had expected something great needed to be done to cure his leprosy (*2 Kings 5:10-14*), the wisdom of God was revealed simply in a manger in Bethlehem "*when the fullness of the time was come*" (*Gal 4:4*).

1Co 1:19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent (*Gk.4908- mentally put together [keenly perceptive; shrewd]*). 20 Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God **by the foolishness** (*Gk.3472- absurdity*) **of preaching** to save them that believe. (*Emp. added*)

God has always intended that all people everywhere should be saved (*Col 1:25-27*). He made this possible through His plan which is revealed in the Gospel. And relying on Him through prayer is an important part of our outreach efforts.

Mat 9:37 Then saith He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; 38 **Pray** ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest. (*Emp. added*)

All the glory from whatever is accomplished is to go to God Who saves, all the credit is to be given to Him and **nothing** we can do **without** His influence can convince the lost of their condition. (*Rev 21:24, 26*)

1Ch 29:11 Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all *that is* in the heaven and in the earth is *Thine*; Thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and Thou art exalted as Head above all. 12 Both riches and honour come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all; and in Thine hand is power and might; and in

Thine hand *it is* to make great, and to give strength unto all. 13 Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee, and praise Thy glorious Name.

Luk 19:10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. *(Every Christian should emulate the reason Jesus came. We don't have to be a great public speaker to do this either. Many think Paul had such skills but not according to him.)*

1Co 2:1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. 3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in **much trembling** *(Was he speaking here of public speaking since according to statistics that is the one thing that people fear most?).* 4 And my speech and my preaching *was* not with enticing words **of man's wisdom**, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: 5 That your faith should **not** stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God (*"the gospel"- Rom 1:16*). *(Emp. added)*

Rom 16:18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by **good words** and **fair speeches** deceive the hearts of the simple. *(Emp. added)*

Preaching is the act of proclaiming the simple message of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. No one needs a college degree or even a high school diploma to do so. All a Christian needs is a Bible and the **desire** to teach the lost. Period! Yes Jesus was speaking then to His disciples when He gave this commission but they were not expected to live forever either. We, as His disciples today, are to continue carrying out that commission. Teach, baptize, teach!

Mat 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

2. Perfecting the Saints – Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 10

Eph 4:11 And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 **For** (*"with a view to"- GRB Interlinear [purpose]*) **the perfecting** (*Gk.2677- complete furnishing**) **of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:** 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the **knowledge** of the Son of God, unto a perfect (*Gk.5046- complete*) man, unto the measure of the stature (*Gk.2244- maturity*) of the fulness (*Gk.4138- completion***) of Christ: 14 That we *henceforth (through our knowledge in His word)* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, *even* Christ: 16 From Whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which **every joint supplieth**, according to the **effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body** unto (*for the purpose of*) the edifying of itself in love. *(Emp. added)*

Having the knowledge of His word embedded in our minds we will be able to decipher any and all false doctrines of men. The reason for every member being involved in growing the church is for the purpose of building each other up in love. As the congregation grows, there will be more of that same love to go around.

*Heb 13:20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 Make you **perfect** in every good work **to do His will**, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to Whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen. (*Emp. added*)

Col 2:10 And ye are complete **in Him, which is the Head of **all** principality and power: 11 In Whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: 12 Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *Him* through the faith of the operation (*Gk.1753- working*) of God, Who hath raised Him from the dead. (*God did His part in saving souls, now we need to do our part in bringing them to Him.*) (*Emp. added*)

Heb 10:23 Let us **hold fast** the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised;) 24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. (*Emp. added*)

In order to “perfect” the saints the saints need to be together in the first place for the “perfecting” to take place. Better worship attendance and more home Bible studies need to take place. We often have “fellowship meals” but when do we get together in the **same number** for real down to earth fellowship (*Gk. 2842- partnership, that is, [literally] participation*) in discussions on those difficult Biblical topics that many of us have? Fellowshiping is very important and so is building each other up and equipping each other for the work of evangelizing the lost.

3. Caring for the Needy – 2 Corinthians 8:4

2Co 8:4 Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and *take upon us* the fellowship (*Gk.2842- partnership, that is, [literally] participation*) of the ministering (*Gk.1248- attendance [as a servant, etc.]; aid, service*) to the saints.

We, every Christian, are all in this together. It truly is a partnership in attending to the needs of those among us. Not only to the physical but also to the spiritual needs of each member.

“We cannot forget about the less noteworthy of our number—the shut-in, the infirm, the discouraged—or those who are succumbing in their struggle as weak, sick, broken, driven away or lost (First Thessalonians 5:14, James 1:27). It is God’s will that someone go out and find them, even if they ultimately refuse to return to the fold because they prefer the danger or have already been destroyed.”
[Jeff Smith, Nov 8, 2011-Watchman Magazine]

1Th 5:14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly (*Gk.813- insubordinate*), comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all *men*.

Jas 1:27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit (*Gk.1980- inspect, relieve*) the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world.

"When it comes to rebuke, it surely feels more blessed to give than receive, but even giving rebuke is not easy. It is usually accompanied by fears that the receiver will respond defensively or even aggressively and that relationships will be destroyed. For that reason, the temptation is to remain silent, withhold correction, and hope God won't mind."

[Jeff Smith, Nov 8, 2011- Watchman Magazine]

"...be ready to respond with humility and possibly even contrition and gratitude that someone cared enough to speak up."

[Jeff Smith, Nov 8, 2011- Watchman Magazine]

"While some defend themselves by claiming innocence falsely, others choose the tactic of lashing out at the friend who reproves them, calling attention to his shortcomings to prevail in some presumed competition for chief sinner, but that is not the time to change the subject when your soul is at stake."

[Jeff Smith, Nov 8, 2011- Watchman Magazine]

Gal 6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. 2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ (...*love thy neighbor*).

Jas 5:19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; 20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

Each time we convert someone who is lost, whether a member of the church or not, Jesus' blood covers their sins which can save them from suffering the "second death" (*Rev 20:6, 14*)

Pro 24:11 If thou forbear (*Heb.2820- refuse*) to deliver *them that are* drawn unto death, and *those that are* ready to be slain; 12 If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not He that ponders the heart consider *it*? and He that keepeth thy soul, doth *not* He know *it*? and shall *not* He render to *every* man according to his works?

This is the work of every able minded Christian and not just of those who are considered "good" at it as an excuse to leave it up to others. God already knows our thoughts.

Eze 3:18 When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. 19 Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. 20 Again, When a righteous *man* doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. 21 Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous *man*, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul.

Jas 4:17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin.

How many of us ever thought "*I sure wish my -----could make it to Heaven even though they are not a [faithful] Christian*"? Remember, a Christian is one who is **in** Christ. To be **in** Christ means we are buried with Him in baptism as part of sharing in the death burial and resurrection process to have our sins remitted.

Rom 6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that **like as Christ was raised** up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so **we also should walk in newness of life** (*our first resurrection*). 5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death (*baptism*), we shall be also *in the likeness of His resurrection: (Emp. added)*

1Co 15:54 So when this corruptible (Gk.5349- perishable) shall have put on incorruption (Gk.861- unending existence), and this mortal (Gk.2349- liable to die) shall have put on immortality (Gk.110- deathlessness), then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

Rom 6:9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him.

Just as Jesus rose from the dead to die no more, we, who have been faithful until death to be resurrected on the day of judgment, will not face the second death since it will have no hold on us. But what if Jesus never shed His blood and died, was never buried and was never resurrected in the first place? Did He really look forward to suffering and eventually dying on the cross for something He didn't even do?

Mat 26:39 And He went a little further, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.

Heb 9:22 ... and without shedding of blood is no remission.

Growth requires the spreading the message of the Gospel, the continual building up and encouragement of those who are saved and caring for the needy, physically and spiritually, in any congregation of the Lord's people to keep us all saved. But the first work is that work of evangelism. People need first to...

Hear: Romans 10:14 ... "how shall they believe in Him Whom they have not heard?"

Believe: Heb 11:6 ... "for he that commeth to God must believe that He is"...

Repent: Act 3:19 ... "Repent ... be converted, that your sins may be blotted out..."

Confess: Rom 10:9 ... "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Be baptized: 1 Pet 3:21 "...baptism doth also now save us..."

Remain faithful: 1 Cor 6:20 ... "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

Mat 28:20 ... and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

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