

EVANGELISM & THE GREAT COMMISSION

When our Lord Commissioned his disciples to carry out their task the mission of the Church was at the heart of His Command. Going into all the world,, you are to make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things which I have commanded you. (Matthew 28: 19-20)

There are a number of things for us to observe about this great imperative.

1. EVANGELISM, PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS, INVOLVES INCORPORATING THE INDIVIDUAL INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD

A. The Proclamation of the Gospel centered around who Jesus Christ is and What Jesus Christ did.

B. The embracing of this trust was not sufficient to accomplish incorporation

1. Baptism was REQUIRED as the rite of initiation into the Kingdom and union with Christ.

a. Baptism provides assurance of Salvation

1Peter 2: 211”Baptism which now saves us (not the removal of the the filth of the flesh) but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ

b. Assurance of Union with Christ is directly tied to Baptism

Galatians 3:27 “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ”

Ananias to Saul - Acts 22:16 “Arise now and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord”

2. Baptism was only the beginning of the process. (hence the term Regeneration).

a. (Matt 28:19) It always resulted in Discipleship.

b. Having been baptized they are made disciples Matt. 28: 20
“Teaching them to observe all things Jesus commanded”

2. EVANGELISM BROUGHT A NEW WORLD ORDER INTO EXISTENCE.

A. The Kingdom of God is that new World Order -Mar 1:15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

B. Jesus is the Lord, the “Kurios” of the Kingdom. Allegiance to Caesar or any other earthly kingdom is to be rejected and verbal affirmation of allegiance to Jesus is required. - Romans 10:9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (Rom 10:9 KJV)

C. The Church is the visible expression of the Kingdom on Earth -Acts 2: 41&42
“Those who gladly receive his word were baptized.....and they continued steadfastly in the:

1.Apostles’ Doctrine”- Things taught

2. Fellowship- personal interaction
3. Breaking of Bread – Eucharist
4. The Prayers – Worship- calling on the Name of the Lord

3. WHAT IS SIGNIFICANT TO US IS THAT FROM THE VERY BEGINNING A CLEAR, ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE EMERGES AMONG THE JERUSALEM COMMUNITY WITH ALL THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A RESPONSIBLE CHURCH.

- A. GROUP INCORPORATION - They were baptized and added to the Church. Verse 41**
- B. BIBLICAL INDOCTRINATION - Instructed in the Apostles' doctrine... Verse 42**
- C. SOCIAL ADAPTATION - They sold their possessions to take care of material needs. Verse 45**
- D. CULTURAL IDENTIFICATION - They gained favor of family, friends and associates in their particular cultural sphere. Verse 47**
- E. CONTINUOUS PROPAGATION - They never stopped teaching and evangelizing, and the Lord added new members daily. Verse 47**

The power of the Holy Spirit released on the day of Pentecost was for the purpose of establishing Churches.... Acts 1:8.

This new spiritual dynamic empowered the Church with a supernatural quality enabling her to fulfill her God-given mission of evangelism/Church growth. It is this **QUALITATIVE** dimension coupled to the **QUANTITATIVE** growth recorded in the New Testament which gives breadth and depth to the evangelistic mandate.

4.WHAT ABOUT NUMBERS?

The New Testament gives us a thorough, well-documented report on the origins and growth of the first century churches... Sometimes it is easier to "spiritualize" such a report rather than to document the conclusion with hard statistics, but the New Testament writers give a carefully documented report of precise numerical figures.

A. EXAMPLES:

1. Acts 1:15 – The first Church in Jerusalem began in an upper room with a small band of 120 Disciples.
2. Acts 2:42 – The day of Pentecost, 3000 were baptized, instructed in the word and added to the Jerusalem Church
3. Acts 4:4- With careful detail St. Luke records the growth pattern from the day of Pentecost to the imprisonment and questioning of the early disciples. The membership of the Church is about 5000.
4. Acts 5:14 – The emphasis is upon the fact that multitudes of men and women were added.
5. Acts 6:1, 7 – The number of Disciples were multiplied. From this point on the Book of Acts speaks about the multiplication of parishes. In less than 4

decades congregations were planted in every pagan center of the then known world.

6. Acts 9:31 - Church multiplication is not in terms of a single church but in the collective sense of the geographical multiplication of all believers in all Judea, Galilee and Samaria. Here is a transition that takes place from Mother Church Jerusalem to Congregations elsewhere.
7. Acts 16:5- Here again is the change from church (singular) to churches (plural). Churches were planted. Churches increased in number daily. The Great Commission cannot be divorced from VISIBLE, STRUCTURED, ORGANIZED CHURCHES.
8. Acts 21:20 – St. Paul uses the word, "myriads," in his report. A myriad is a measurement of 10,000 so he is reporting tens of thousands of Jews who turn to Christ and become identified with the Church.

5. THE ULTIMATE EVANGELISTIC GOAL

- A. EVANGELISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT DOES NOT MERELY PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL TO PEOPLE.**
- B. IT DOES NOT STOP WITH PUBLIC PROFESSIONS OF FAITH IN THE GOSPEL.**
- C. IT EVEN DOES NOT STOP WHEN THE CONVERTS ARE BAPTIZED AND TAUGHT.**
- D. THE COMPLETE MISSION OF THE CHURCH IS NOT ACHIEVED UNTIL CONVERTS ARE BAPTIZED, TAUGHT, PARTICIPATE IN FELLOWSHIP, AND ARE REGULARLY WORSHIPPING WITH THE VISIBLE BODY OF CHRIST AND THEN BECOME REPRODUCING CHRISTIANS THEMSELVES.**

OBSERVATION:

Three types of Church growth:

1. Church growth because of transfers. –
2. Church growth because of physical birth. –
3. Church growth that is evangelistic.

GROWING THE CHURCH TO MATURITY

The Lord of the Church has given through His Apostle Paul clear instruction as to how His Church is to increase. This instruction, although scattered throughout the New Testament, finds full exposition in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians, Chapter 4, verses 1 - 16. Actually, the entire epistle must be considered in order to understand the fullest explanation of the Biblical dynamic for Church growth. But we are led to those other sections of the Epistle by the logic of 4:1 - 16.

A careful study of Ephesians 4:1 - 16 reveals that there is an intentional interaction between each of the nine factors set forth. **IT IS VITAL TO REALIZE THIS FORMATIVE OBSERVATION.** The Biblical dynamic for church growth is the interaction of factors. In fact, all nine factors must be understood and practiced for the Church to become what her Lord intends for her. **THERE IS NO OTHER WAY FOR THE CHURCH TO GROW TO MATURITY.** It may be true that there are many methods and programs which are being used by churches across the country with much numerical success; but this does not necessarily mean that a particular church has or is growing *to* maturity. Only as the Church of Jesus Christ applies the Biblical dynamic for church growth can she expect the kind of growth with which God is pleased.

NOTICE THE INTERACTION OF THE NINE FACTORS IN EPHESIANS 4:1 - 16.

1. The eternal purpose of GOD is for comprehensive church growth. - Ephesians 4:1, 1 : 10

Numbers are not the only interest which God has. His eternal purpose is expressed in 1:10 and that includes bringing forth a reconciled, united people through the work of Christ. In order for people to be really united and of one heart and mind in Christ, they must be :

- a. nourished with the food of God, (Word and Sacraments)
- b. encouraged by the other people of God (Fellowship),
- c. motivated to participate actively in the Church of Jesus Christ.(Worship and Work)

Too often, church growth is reduced and simplified to the "program" level. It simply will not accomplish all that God wants done.. A seemingly responsible church cannot grow on a diet of two or three or even five factors!

ALL NINE FACTORS MUST BE PRESENT IN THE LIFE OF OUR CHURCH IF WE WANT OUR CHURCH TO BE A HEALTHY, ROBUST, WELL-NOURISHED BODY. Church growth is comprehensive in nature; this comprehensive growth is begun and continued in.....

2. The accomplishment, application and communication of the redemption wrought by Jesus Christ - Ephesians 4:1; Chapters 1 – 3

All that St. Paul writes concerning reconciliation in Ephesians 1 - 3 is made possible by the work of Christ. His work produces unity in the Church. The other activities of the Church can only be accomplished because we are united by our baptism to Christ, and this is our motivation for what we do. Indeed, Paul elaborates on this in Ephesians 4:7 - 11 by showing that the victorious Christ is the one who gives gifts to men

This redemption must be communicated through men to men. Communication here is the key word. The message must be understood, practically applied and given in such a manner that people will listen. This may require different approaches to different people.

3. Jesus Christ gives to His Church gifted Men - Ephesians 4:7 – 11

- a. It must first be recognized that the gifts given by Christ are suited to church growth.
- b. Christ makes growth possible because He gives men the ability to produce growth in the Church.
- c. We can grow because we have men able to bring **about maturity--a maturity that** is judged by Ephesians 4:1 - 6, 24. The Church is able to become what God intends because her officers and people are enabled to become what God desires.
- d. Notice also that 4:17 through 6:24 deals with interpersonal relations. The Church must be concerned with them as well. The gifts given to the **Pastor-Teacher** are suited to his twin role.
- e. As a matter of fact, both sides of the Pastor must be present if he is to be effective in his assigned purpose, namely, **equipping the saints**.
- f. The work of the ministry begins with him. He may not stand back and say, "The Church must do," for he is responsible for beginning the growth in the local church.
- g. How this is to be done is also described in this passage, by equipping the saints to do the work of the ministry.

The Pastor must **train** the members of the church to do their work. If a church is not growing, the responsibility lies with both the Pastor and the people. Yet, as a shepherd of Christ's flock, the Pastor must answer to God for what goes on in the church.

What was begun in eternity past by the predestinating purpose of the Father is realized on earth through the accomplishment and application of redemption by the Son in coordination with giving gifts suited to the Church's growth.

4. And the giving of the resources necessary to develop their skills, and those of other saints - Ephesians 4:1 - 6; II Timothy 3:16, 17

- a. The first resource given by God is His holy written word. The purpose of the scripture is to teach, rebuke, convince and train men for every good work.
- b. Since the scriptures were given by God through the work of the Holy Spirit, and the presence of the Spirit is always in relationship to God's written word, we can be assured that as the Word of God is taught faithfully, the power of the Holy Spirit will uniquely move individuals to do every good work.

This and all that has preceded must happen in order.....

5. To maintain the incipient unity of the Spirit - Ephesians 4:1 – 3.

- a. The maintaining of unity in Christ is to be the all-consuming goal of the Church. The word, "incipient," is used to express the fact that when people are first brought together by the power of God's Spirit working in the gospel and in their hearts, there is a beginning of unity.
- b. However, this unity must not only be maintained but matured. Notice how Christ speaks of this unity in John 17.
- c. This maintaining of unity **MUST** find practical expression. Notice the emphasis in scripture on "one anothering." (John 13:14; 15:12; Romans 12:5; Romans 13; Galatians 6:1, 2 and others) The church must have a sense of **practical** "community."

6. The unity maintained must then be developed (made greater) for a specific purpose: Building up the body of Christ - Ephesians 4:12 - 16

A deeper harmony of purpose, commitment and community must occur. It is not enough to have an outward show of unity; it must be ever growing in harmony with one another. This occurs by having growth in all the other factors. All of this is accomplished further by.....

7. By skilled Pastor/teachers equipping the saints - Ephesians 4:12.

There is a problem of interpretation that must be given at this point. The KJV does not give the proper emphasis to the text. We do not have 3 functions of the Pastor/Teacher; (Equipping Saints, work of ministry, edifying of the body) rather, we have a subordination or progressive coordination of functions.

a. The Pastor/Teacher is not a super star, but he is a facilitator. His responsibility to God is to see that the job gets done. He is to give the people the tools to do the job. Namely passing on the Apostle's Doctrine and administering the sacramental means of grace.

b. The responsibility of the congregation is to recognize his responsibility to the Lord and cooperate in the development of that unity by **doing the work of ministry**.

c. When this occurs, **the Body of Christ is then edified**.

This is further demonstrated by the next factor. As a result of Number 7.....

8. The saints minister to ONE ANOTHER, to their near neighbors, to their cities, and to the rest of the world - Ephesians 4:12

The service of the saints builds up the already existing Body of Christ. It is brought into existence by the will of the Father. Sinners enter the Kingdom and Body of Christ, not because the saints have served, but because the Father has eternally willed each one to so enter. Once the sinner has become a saint, he is to walk in the good works prepared beforehand. ~Ephesians 1:4; 2:8 - 10)

a. The work or the ministry of the saints includes counselling, works of mercy, general help, as well as the particular individual contributions made by the **individual gifts** of believers.

1. Counselling is spoken of in Galatians 6:1, Colossians 3:16. The counselling ministry has in view the whole church in Hebrews 10:25; older women to younger in Titus 2:3 - 5; and mature Christians are to encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, admonish the unruly. (See Romans 15:14, I Thessalonians 5:14.)

2. Deeds of compassion (I John 3:17) and general service (help) as well as contributions according to gifts is also to be done. (Romans 12:3 - 7; I Corinthians 12)

b. Notice the kinds of gifts given in Romans 12 and I Corinthians 12. These should be read and understood. Each person is responsible to the Body of Christ for the exercise of his or her gift. Each person is given a gift to exercise. There are no exceptions. If the gifts are exercised properly, the church, the neighbourhood, the city, and the world will be influenced for the cause of God because.....

9. Evangelism and Church growth are the work of the Holy Spirit.

a. Numerical addition and multiplication can never be substituted for the spiritual reproduction of new life through the Holy Spirit.

1. He is the life of the believer, and consequently, the life of the Church.

2. There is no evangelism and no Church growth apart from Him.

3. He is the spiritual dynamic producing both quality and quantity in true New Testament evangelism and Church growth.