

The Bulletin

Meeks St. Church of Christ

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“Building Up The Church, How?”

By Brian Meade

There are a lot of church growth schemes that promise great results, but in the end, do not deliver real, lasting growth for the right reasons. As many are abandoning Bible methods of church growth to use any means necessary to get people to the building!

Many churches are making worldly, carnal appeals to men’s appetites, rather than appealing to the spiritual. Some are offering free food, fun, and games all in the name of the work of the church. Everything is offered from church sponsored Aerobics, baseball and basketball leagues, cake decorating, debt relief or money management classes, ice cream socials, pizza parties, puppet shows, inflatables, paintball teams, church gymnasiums, and even “jumping jacks for Jesus.”



Why is it these methods are used? They offer fast and simple shortcuts to church growth by giving people what they want. A true test of whether these gimmicks bring about real growth would be to take away what draws them and see if they stay with the Lord! And a better question to ask: what would Jesus do? Jesus never used these tactics to draw disciples to Him (John 6:26-27).

But what does cause real growth in the church? It is when we follow the Bible way of building up the church, and Not the superficial tactics of men!

The bottom line is— you can’t build up a spiritual house by carnal means! (Psalm 127:1; Matthew 21:13; 1 Peter 2:5)

The church is built up when....

I. When Every Member Has A Deep Respect For God.

Even from the beginning of the early church, in Acts 2:41-43, *“So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.”* We see the great respect and sense of awe at what God was doing in the lives of the disciples. God was clearly at work and they knew it!

And even when Ananias and Sapphira tried to deceive the disciples by keeping back part of the price of the land they sold (Acts 5:1-10), their deaths by God Himself only made that respect greater! *“And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things. At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon’s portico. But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem. And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number;”* (Acts 5:11-14). The same results happened from the death of Herod in Acts 12:21-24.

What we are talking about is a godly fear and respect for the Almighty God of all the heavens and the earth! His authority and power is to be greatly awed by all the earth today as well. And when men do not have that sense of respect for Him, they will be tempted to think they can get away with deceit and mischief here on the earth. (see Acts 5:1-10 again).

Hence, there is a sense that a healthy fear or respect for God is appropriate to keep our place in His presence. In Proverbs 1:7, *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.”*

Notice also in Ecclesiastes 5:1-2, *“Guard your steps as you go to the house of God and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know they are doing evil. Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few.”*

A great respect for God is needed in worship (Psalm 89:7; Leviticus 10:1-3; Hebrews 12:28-29). In doing our work and service to God, like Noah did in Hebrews 11:7, *“...Moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household...”* And is needed to keep ourselves morally pure (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Imagine if every member of the church had that deep a level of respect for God in every local church— what growth could be seen in the lives of men and women today! Preachers all across the land would never have to preach on church attendance ever again!

II. When We Rely Solely On God’s Power To Draw Men.

Paul shows us God’s drawing power in Romans 1:16-17, *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”*

We are to be people of faith, NOT faithlessness! When men lose faith in the power of the gospel, they choose to “prop up” or use crutches to attempt to help the gospel convert people to Christ.

But the gospel is powerful because it is the message of the cross (1 Corinthians 1:18). Jesus said in John 12:32, *“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.”* It is the message of *how much* God loves us and was willing to sacrifice His One and Only Son to save us! (John 3:16; Romans 5:8-9) That message can pierce the hearts of men (2 Corinthians 5:14-18).

This is precisely why all the schemes to attract and hold men by the power of what churches offer them (the enticements) will always fail to bring about true growth! Because, dear friends, if the gospel of God’s love for them cannot be effective enough to convert them— then what are they actually converted to?

But it is only when churches choose to have real growth and abandon the reliance on gags and gimmicks to convert the lost, that is when God will bless our efforts in church growth.

IV. When Every Member Is Unified In The Work Of God.

Jesus prayed for unity of believers in John 17:20-21, *“I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.”*

When we all work together to do God’s will— we show Bible unity (Eph. 4:1-6;) The Israelites in Nehemiah’s day were unified in their aims and purpose— and great things were accomplished! *“So we built the wall and the whole wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.”* (Nehemiah 4:6)



And despite great difficulties and threats made against them, he Bible tells us that they completed the wall of Jerusalem with great zeal, *“So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of the month Elul, in fifty-two days.”* (Nehemiah 6:15) May we emulate their unity and zeal today! That is when real growth can occur!

But as we know, Satan does NOT want us to be unified and will do anything (much like Sanballat and Tobiah) to hinder and halt the work of God today!

V. When Every Member Shows Genuine Love To All.

Love for one another in the church is a key ingredient to church growth. *“This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another; just as He commanded us.”* (1 John 3:23)

This may very well be a reference to what Jesus told His disciples in John 13:34-35, *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

But even though the Bible stresses the importance of love among believers to win the unconverted, why is it that many in the church forget that in selfishly fighting and bickering (Galatians 5:15; 3 John 9-11; James 3:14-16; 4:1-4).

Nothing is more repelling to honest truth seekers than to see people who know they are to be loving, kind, compassionate, and gentle— yet act in unloving ways among themselves! If we want to convert the lost and truly grow in number and in spirituality— let us strive to be genuinely loving to all.

News and Notes: Sick and recovering: Tim Harris Sr, Tim Harris Jr, Chad Harris, Martha Norvell (Mississippi Care), June Lawson (Lisa Busby's Mom), Debbie Keplinger, Janis Johnson, Daniel Holloway, Tammy Kilgore (Jerry's niece), Betty Hurst, Peggy Harville (cancer), Linda Harris, Hazel Corner, Clay Ford, Clois Wright, and Dan & Linda Hunt, Mollie Harris, and Danny Cottrell (Dan's Dad).

Those Who Serve:

Sunday Morning 9:00 A.M. Service:

Opening Prayer: Nathan Meade
Preaching: Brian Meade
Sermon #1: "Who Is On The Lord's Side?"

Auditorium Bible Class: 9:35am:

Sunday Morning 10:30 A.M. Service: Jerry Kennemur
The Book of Romans (Kyle Pope)
Page #68, Question #1

Announcements: Jerry Kennemur

Opening Prayer & Scripture Reading: Fred Johnson
Matthew 22:36-40

Song Leader: Paul Busby

Lord's Supper: Sam Johnson

Assisting: Dan Cottrell & Russell Briggs

Preaching: Adam Harris

Sermon #2: "Bad Company Corrupts Good Morals"

Closing Prayer: Paul Johnson

Wednesday Evening: 7:00 P.M.

January 22nd:

Auditorium Bible Class: Paul Johnson
The Book of Psalms (Randy Blackaby)
Page #38, Question #3

Invitation: Dan Cottrell

Song Leader: Paul Busby

Closing Prayer: Tim Harris Sr.