

Churches that Grow

How an evangelistic church culture is built starts with several scriptures:

- 1) Psalms 127:1 ESV - *Unless the Lord builds the house those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.*
- 2) Matthew 28:19-20 CEV - *Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to do everything I have told you. I will be with you always, even until the end of the world.*
- 3) Mark 16:15 ESV - *And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.*
- 4) Luke 14:23 ESV - *And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.*

In Short, if we want our church to grow and be able to help more hurting souls in the community we need to take some specific steps, which may sound familiar:

- Step One: Pray and seek God's will in your life. This is essential for each of us to do.
- Step Two: Recognize that we are ALL called to the great commission and we are individually uniquely qualified to this task. It is not going to look the same for everyone.
- Step Three: We are called to make disciples, not converts. It is enough for people to accept Jesus as their personal savior, but we are called to care for and feed his people.
- Step Four: More in depth teaching and spiritual training.
- Step Five: Put on the whole Armor of God and prepare
- Step Six: Develop a sincere care for people. See individuals who are hurting through Jesus eyes. Have understanding and compassion, but most of all listen to what they have to say.
- Step Seven: God will create opportunities for you to share the Gospel, be aware, be instant in season and out of season and watch for those opportunities to invite into fellowship.

Robert Burns once said: “The best laid plans of mice and men gang aft agley” which means go awry. I would say that when it comes to evangelism, when we invite God and follow his plans for his church; when we walk in his presence and according to his will he will build his church.

So if only God can build his church why are we told to compel people to come in? Why are we told to make disciples?

The answer is simple, if we try to do it on our own we may fail, but when God is on board we cannot fail. He wants to co-labor with us. He has given us certain tasks. We have a choice, we can obey him or we can ignore him. I wouldn't recommend the latter.

Now I have preached on this many times, but the church is not the building it is the people. I think that we all have specific areas of our lives where we would like to see growth and change. Many times that change is difficult for people because they try to do it themselves instead of allowing God to be their strength. Each one of us is aware of our weaknesses; often unfortunately we overlook our strengths. I have found when dealing with life changing spiritual issues that trying to make the changes on my own is frustrating and prone to failure. In fact, occasionally people get the head knowledge on what God wants them to change in their lives and instead of changing themselves which is difficult, they look for the problem in others and are judgmental and lacking in grace.

Everyone is on a journey and God speaks to his children individually and corporately as he wills. If God wants his son or daughter corrected he has put wise infrastructure in place for this. We cannot change anyone, they can choose to change themselves, they can be convicted by the Holy Spirit or they can be healed of this judgmental need.

What does God say?

He says to Love your neighbor and to Love him.
10 commandments – 5 are about your relationship with him and 5 are with our relationships with each other.

To be effective in any kind of ministry there is a little secret that I am going to share with you. It doesn't matter what our strengths or weaknesses are or at what stage of our Christian walk we are at; the truth is as plain as the nose on your face, we need God all the time, whether we feel like we do or not. In 2 Corinthians 12:9 Paul writes of the Lord. He says: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” The secret is that we can simply give God everything we are not and his strength to accomplish his will is made perfect in us.

Ever wonder why I say if God's not going neither am I? It's because I want to succeed. I tried things my way for a long time and have come to realize his ways are

way above mine. I want his presence with me. It gives life to all of us who seek him. He promised that if we seek him with our whole heart we will find him (cf. Jer. 29:12,13)

Evangelism is about putting legalism in the back pocket and simply building relationship and loving people.

- The Holy Spirit draws people to Christ
- We witness his love for them in words and in actions
- We bring people in to truly belong as part of our family
- We celebrate the goodness of Jesus with them
- We equip them with scripture and solid spiritual and biblical foundation
- We empower them in ministry. It doesn't have to be formal ministry, It can be as simple as letting your light shine in the workplace and answering co workers question when they ask you what is different about you

In short:

- We worship our God
- We love all people
- We embrace our community

People will listen far more readily to the good news of Jesus when the following conditions are in place.

- Friendship and trust are established first
- Genuine care for the persons well being is evident
- Actively listening to the persons needs and helping to meet them if you can.
 - (Enabling vs. Help)
- The Love of God is shining through you
- The Holy Spirit is empowering your words
- You are obedient to what God is telling you to do

It's not up to us to decide if a person will come to Jesus or not. That is up to God. It is up to us to be obedient when the opportunity arises to speak about him. God constantly creates opportunities for me to speak to people. This is not unnatural. If the Holy Spirit is working in their lives, drawing them to Christ, then they will be receptive. Even if not initially the seed is planted.

Here is a good question... Why do we care? Is it about more numbers in church? Is it about prestige or some other worldly motivator, or are we overjoyed with our freedom and promise of eternal life and want to spare that person from missing out?

I often hear or see the attitude: "But what if I am not good enough? I don't know what to say." and so on...

My dearest friends this morning I have a scripture that may help:

2 Cor. 5:17-19 NIV - *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! **All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:** that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.*

Okay so we have discussed some of the fundamental theory and so on, but practically how do we do this?

- Come to the church events when you can and talk with the visitors. Build relationship with them, establish trust. Turn or Burn is not the answer here, God is not a God of Fear but of Love. (Yes, I know it says that the beginning of wisdom is to fear God, yet that actual word in the original language means to reverence God)
- If you are willing you will have "God appointments" in your day when a person will ask about God or about why you seem so happy or other things. In my ministry, before people even know me, I have had people come up and share their problems, issues and personal struggles. At first this took me off guard as not many people typically do that, but I came to realize that they were speaking to the Holy Spirit within me and they were connecting with the Father, I was just the messenger in the middle. Just to give you an example: I have had people discuss marriage issue, child issues, legal issues, moral issues, self worth issues, identity issues... and the list goes on. Evangelism is easy for the willing of heart.

So I promised some detail, well here you go...

Evangelistic churches give priority resources (money and advertising) to evangelistic events. I am not talking about foreign missions here. I am speaking of events and things that occur at or within a 5 mile radius of the church.

At present we are engaged in:

- CAFÉ movie nights
- CAFÉ games nights
- Empty Canvas Painting nights
- Potluck Fellowship
- Church in the Park event Aug 12

And we want to do more for youth, next gen and seniors.

What else do evangelistic churches do?

When someone comes in we don't know, we want them to feel loved and

wanted in our fellowship. It never hurts to introduce yourself and maybe get some details for a visit or to send info on the next events. Some churches send out printed invitations to the community, even personalizing when possible.

Preaching has a redemptive message and a pursuit of the great commission with a clear call for people to respond.

Testimonies that you share will create a connection between you and the person you are caring for. A lot of people simply don't know that Jesus loves them.

I find it astonishing, If you walk down the street how many people will claim to already be Christian and yet still believe that they are saved by their works. These people need to understand that Jesus is the way to salvation. If somebody says they are Christian, it is okay to show interest in their beliefs.

Paul said: "I know nothing else but Jesus Christ and him crucified."
Evangelistic churches look at what we can agree upon not our secondary doctrinal differences are. Do you know that churches has split simply because one group believes that God predestined them to be save and the other group believes that Christ died for all who would receive him. Obviously, I am in the latter group, but I need to ask myself what are the requirements of being a brother or sister in Christ?

John 3:16 ESV

For God so loved the world; that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 14:6 ESV

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

2 Timothy 2:14 KJV

Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.

2 Timothy 2:14 AMP

Remind the people of these facts, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God to avoid petty controversy over words, which does no good, and [upsets and undermines and] ruins [the faith of] those who listen.

I don't see anything that says that other than the primary doctrines of Jesus and how we are saved that excludes a person from being brother or sister on the basis of a predestination belief.

So why church splits? In many cases it is simply pride. It can also be a Jezebelic spirit but that topic is a whole sermon or two on its own.

But I digress...

Hebrews 10:24-25 ESV

*And let us **consider how to stir up one another to love and good works**, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

Talking with others about what God is doing or has done in your life is powerful. Stories of God's workings in your life or the events around your salvation remind the church of their experiences and motivate the church. If you share your testimony, so will others. Look at brother Hanson last week, I learned some pretty amazing things listening to this man's journey. It was awesome! How much more encouraging would it be to have a long term Christian share their testimony at the same time as a new excited Christian.

To head off the "I don't know what to say..." I just want to give you all a heads up that I will be leading a class in evangelism this year. It is the vision that by equipping people with the tools they need beforehand they will be more confident. More knowledge on a topic will always build confidence. People don't want to be embarrassed by not knowing what to say or being ill prepared. We want people to be comfortable sharing the good news of Jesus. Nobody wants to say something wrong or get embarrassed, so part of these lessons will be on recognizing the Holy Spirit at work in a person's life. Since it is the Holy Spirit that draws men to Christ, it is very important to understand how the Holy Spirit equips God's children with inspired speech for effective ministry.

I hope you are as excited as I am. Pastors can't do it all themselves, but we can lead the way, teach and release...

To that end our training in this area will include:

- A biblical understanding of Evangelism
- A biblical foundation in essential scriptures (they are all essential, but for evangelism)
- The role of the Holy Spirit.

- How a culture of Honor fosters evangelism
- How love and unity fosters evangelism
- Evangelism in our contemporary culture

Here is the challenge... Will you commit to learning about evangelism.

Prayer

I pray an evangelistic heart over every Christian here this morning. I pray that God's will has its way in your life and that you will respond in obedience when presented with opportunity to share the Good news of Jesus.