

Growth of the Church in the 1st Century

Last month we looked at some Kingdom Principles that Jesus discussed in Matthew 13, and also looked at the growth of the church in Jerusalem and compared it to the place where you attend worship. This month I want to continue to look at the first century church and how they continued to grow. It is my prayer that we look seriously at ourselves and continue to restore New Testament Christianity, especially in the way they grew.

We all understand that growth is a part of life. Our children grow and we consider them to be normal. If they didn't grow we would do everything in our power to see why they weren't growing. Even in the "plant world" it is not only natural for them to grow, but it is also expected for them to.

In 1 Corinthians 3:6-15, Paul makes it clear that church growth is very intentional. We understand in this passage that Paul gives God the credit for the growth of the church. But, that did not excuse him from using unproductive methods in the planting and building of the church in the first century. We, just like them, have to be careful that we build on the right foundation. Too many times it seems like members have their faith in their minister, so when they leave the members fall away. We have to intentionally build only on Jesus Christ.

In Ephesians 4:11-16, Paul indicates that church growth has to be well-planned (training and equipping produces results)! In this passage Paul now focuses on the leadership of the church. He shows that they are to play a major part in the growth of the church. God here shows us why it is important for leaders to equip and train members of the church.

1. For the building up of the body
2. For the unity of the body
3. For the body to mature to the measure of the stature, which belongs to the fulness of Christ.
4. So the body will not be tossed by every wind of doctrine (that comes their way)
5. So the body can grow up in all aspects in to Him who is Head (Christ)

I believe that when the leadership starts equipping and training the members of the church then growth happens. Is that not what Paul did as he went about preaching and teaching?

Let me give you a little side note about the evangelist. Paul states in 2 Timothy 2:2—"The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." Paul's instruction to Timothy was not for him to do all the teaching. God wants the evangelist to train faithful men who could teach others. If you are an evangelist, please don't have the attitude that you are the only one who should do all the teaching. If you are a member, please don't have the attitude that "we hired" someone to do the teaching. We are a body and when "the proper working of

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1. To help our subscribers grow in their Bible knowledge through articles from various writers.
2. To offer our subscribers Biblical weekend seminars to encourage the faithful.
3. To assist our subscribers in evangelizing their own communities.

For more information, please call Danny @ 719-980-0587 or Tom @ 719-964-8493. You can also send an email to info@theunveiledgospel.org. You can also go to our website www.theunveiledgospel.org for more information.

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each individual part, causes the growth of the body..." (Ephesians 4:16).

All of these things will help the church grow today. However, we have to have effective growth. That means we want it to continue to grow and have an eternal effect on the souls we come into contact with. So how do we have that kind of effective growth? In a word it—RELATIONSHIPS!! In Acts 2:42-47, the church grew effectively in part because of the relationships they had with each other. Their relationship grew because they met daily in the temple and in their homes (Acts 5:42). Paul used this same approach to church growth in Ephesus (Acts 20:20). Publicly and from house to house is the Biblical way to effective church growth. See also Romans 16:3-5; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2. I believe these people understood that strong, effective church growth occurred when they built effective relationships within the church body.

Look around at the relationships you have within the body where you attend. Have we not become a private society and private individuals that we truly don't know who we may be sitting next to in worship? Much less know their needs! Church growth needs to be intentional, well-planned and effective. That's how they did it in the 1st century and that's how we should do it in the 21st century.

"The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things..."
(Acts 17:24-25)



~ Danny Aragon, church of Christ, Kim CO

The Staff of *The Unveiled Gospel* is happy to offer:

1. Gospel Meetings—designed to encourage the brethren
2. Weekend Seminars—designed to teach/encourage participants to be involved in evangelism.
3. Door-knocking Campaigns—designed to canvas the local area in order to look for people who are looking for Christ
4. Fill-in preaching/teaching—designed to help congregations during times of preacher absence.

To set-up one of these offers, please call Danny Aragon @ 719-980-0587 or Tom Wright @ 719-964-8493.

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Beware of Religious Counterfeits

The Bible Speaks of False:

- GODS** { Exodus 20:3, Acts 17:23, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, 1 Corinthians 8:4-6
- CHRISTS** { Matthew 24:24, John 5:42, Ephesians 4:5
- SPIRITS** { 1 Timothy 4:1-3, 1 John 4:1, 1 John 4:6
- APOSTLES** { 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, Revelation 2:2, Acts 1:22, 2 Cor. 12:12
- PROPHETS** { Matthew 7:15-20, 2 Peter 2:1, 1 Peter 4:11, Deuteronomy 18:22
- DOCTRINES** { Hebrews 13:9, 2 John 9-11, 1 Timothy 1:3, Galatians 1:6-9
- BRETHREN** { 2 Corinthians 11:26, Galatians 2:3-5, 1 Peter 1:22

"Buy the truth, and sell it not." Proverbs 23:23

EVANGELISM—MINISTRY ACTIVITIES OF The Unveiled Gospel

October:

The Unveiled Gospel will be hosting a door knocking campaign in Sioux City, IA. Eight (8) students from the Bear Valley Bible Institute International from Denver, CO will be helping us in this campaign.

The Unveiled Gospel will be holding a campaign in Sioux City IA on October 13-15 to encourage the brethren to stand fast in God's word.

Danny Aragon will be speaking at the Pikes Peak church of Christ in Colorado Springs, CO on October 29, 2017. The subject for his talks will be "The Walk of Faith." If you are in the Colorado Springs area, you are invited to come and join them in this time of Bible study and worship.

November:

The Unveiled Gospel will be continuing their work in Sioux City IA. We will also be working with the Freemont church of Christ in Freemont NE.

SPECIAL SUPPORT NEEDED FOR CHILDREN'S SCHOOL IN UGANDA

For the specific information on what they need, the contact information is shown below.

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EXPLAINING THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

Dear readers, pardon me while I break from my articles titled ***THIRTY SUGGESTIONS FOR BIBLE STUDY*** as I try to fully explain the gospel of Christ for all of you. In fact, the best definition of the gospel of Christ comes from the Scriptures (see below).

1 Cor. 15.3 *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,*
1 Cor. 15.4 *and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,...*(NASU).

So, the gospel of Christ is to humanity what archery is to any sport. In archery, even with careful aim and finely crafted arrows, the archer often embeds his arrows anywhere and everywhere on the target except in the center. Likewise, God carefully aims and shoots forth from their mothers' wombs the divinely crafted lives of newborn infants headed towards His mark of eternal life for them (Rom. 5.15-16; 6.22-23). Infants as with all children already reside in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18.3-4; 19.14; Mark 10.14-15; Luke 18.16-17). Yet, all of those like King David (2 Sam. 11-12) who reach an age of accountability miss that mark when they commit sins. David committed his share of sins.

Therefore, all persons of accountability via freedom of choice temporarily or permanently forfeit eternal life when Satan's flaming missiles of scheming wickedness (Eph. 6.11-12, 16) penetrate their beings as sin (Eph. 2.1-3). Still, anyone's repentance and obedience to the gospel of Christ averts a temporary forfeiture from becoming a permanent one (Mark 8.34-38). Thus, whenever one's arrow of life flies off course from imputing sins to one's own spiritual bank account, it: (1) always inserts itself into the round target of human life anywhere and everywhere except into the bull's eye of eternal life, and (2) can only be brought back onto God's divine course by way of the gospel of Christ removing the sins.

In its loftiest Biblical context, the gospel message of Christ announces the good news that Christ died, was buried, and then raised from the dead the third day for forgiveness of our sins according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15.1-4). As outcome to all of those who submit, the gospel proclaims the good tidings that obedience to Jesus brings: (1) an eradication of the spiritual enemy of sin, and (2) the free gift of eternal life. The endless life that Jesus' resurrection brought triumphs over the eternal death which Satan and sin brought (Heb. 2.14-15). Hence, the gospel of Christ can redirect the lives of all repentant individuals of accountability back towards eternal life. All they have to do is obey the gospel of Christ.

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich"

(2 Corinthians 8:9)



Tom Wright , church of Christ, Domestic Missionary

What Now?

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20).

To many people of the world the outcome of the election last year turned out to be a great shock and it is unclear how the people of this country will react to four years under this kind of authority. It is also unclear how they will let their feelings be revealed. But, what is clear in this situation is that God has given a clear picture of how He wants the people of His kingdom to react. In this trying time for a great country, a light from the church shining the confidence of Christ will be a welcomed sight. God has promised success for His people no matter what the result of the election was to be. This assured promise gives the church motivation to be the light of faith in the darkness of the world’s doubt. Our reaction will be of a godly nature because of our faith in God and not man and our love for God will help us to overcome the temptation to sin.

Although many in this world reacts to the results of last years election with grumbling and complaining, the church will hold its tongue because we are to “do all things without grumbling or disputing” (Philippians 2:14). Grumbling and disputing comes from minds that do not get their way. The church will show respect knowing that whoever is in the authoritative position is there because God has established this to be so: “Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God” (Romans 13:1). The church has faith that holds the tongue and hushes the mouth because we know God is much wiser than any man and He has promised to “work all things for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). There is no doubt in the minds of God’s children that He is in complete control of this situation.

Also, the church will pray for the governing authorities: “First of all, then, I urge that entreaties *and* prayers, petitions *and* thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity” (1 Timothy 2:1-2). If anyone needs prayers right now it is those who have been elected to lead this country. It has been said by a leading figure of our government that the United States is no longer a “Christian Nation” and the proof of this statement has never been so clear than what it is today. We have elected leaders that are leading us into immorality, mocking the Lord’s institution of marriage, legalizing drugs and even the murdering of helpless children. Like the old song says, we are “slip sliding away.” Our leaders need God’s love to fill their hearts and minds so we can get back to being a God-fearing nation that is not afraid to get on their knees and seek God.

Many times in the Bible God has used some discouraging situations to bring encouragement to His nation. And even then God’s chosen people were faced with circumstances that would cause them to return to the Lord for His power, protection and presence. God will use the situation the United States is in now to accomplish His will for all mankind. Maybe He is trying to get us to stop lifting man up and remember that He is our Creator: “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5). If God is trying to humble us as a nation, then this nation must be the light to His truth. We must remain humble with faith that God will lift us up at the proper time. Let the church be encouraged to be humble enough to not act like fools: “So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:17). Know that God has a plan that is in motion and it will be executed out of perfect love for mankind.

~ Cub Orcutt, church of Christ, Azle TX

Where is Your Treasure?

Matthew 6:19 -24 presents us with a most difficult and critical decision. Compared with many nations today and Jewish society of the first century, we live in a land of affluence, creating an even more materialistic tendency. Yet the fact remains that what Jesus teaches in these verses still holds true. It does not matter how many material goods any of us is able to accumulate, they are temporary. Moths can destroy fabric and corroded old cars litter the landscape. Likewise, grains stored too long will rot, and be of no value to anyone. Additionally, goods not prone to moth and rust might very well be stolen by thieves.

Jesus said that if you store up for yourselves treasures on earth, then we are placing our priorities in the wrong realm. And in the end, we cannot take one single item with us. As Paul wrote in 1Timothy 6:7, “*For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either.*” Jesus is not teaching that it is evil to have earthly possessions, but it is evil for the earthly possessions to have us. Once again Paul said in 1Timothy 6:10, “*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.*” We should never fix our hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy (1 Timothy 6:17).

Even in the land of plenty, we should be content with necessities of life that God provides, and desire treasures that are permanent. These treasures are not susceptible to any destruction or theft. They truly are beyond our wildest imagination, and they will never go away. Faithful followers of Jesus are laying up these heavenly treasures by the lives we live. We, as followers, even with the trials we face, have the best of lives. When we are faithful to Him and love Him there are no greater treasures and they will never fade away.

In Verse 21 Jesus continues “*for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*” As is often the case in Scripture, the heart stands for our total being and this is nowhere truer than when it comes to our heart’s desires. It is what we value most that rules our lives. When we set our ultimate goals on things of this material world rather than things above, then Christ is diminished and possibly eliminated from our lives. In order to faithfully follow Jesus, we must set our mind upon Him instead of things of the world (Colossians 3:2).

When our eye is focused clearly on Christ, then our entire body is full of light (Verse 22), and in contrast when our eye is bad the whole body will be full of darkness (Verse 23). It is a question of where our ultimate loyalty lies. Are we committed to Christ, or to our own personal selfish ambition? It comes down to the choice of whom or what we are going to serve, God or wealth. Jesus says we must choose, because it is not possible to serve both. This is the most important decision any of us will ever make.

~ Terry Smalling, church of Christ, La Junta CO