

Back to Basics

By Rodney Nulph

The blood-bought church of our dear Savior is the greatest community, purchased at the greatest cost (Jesus' blood, cf. Acts 20:28), directed by the greatest Commander (cf. Ephesians 1:22-23), promised the greatest compensation (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:24; 1 Peter 1:3-5) and given the greatest purpose (cf. Ephesians 3:21). The great purpose and mission of the church sometimes becomes unclear to an entertainment-orientated society. "Before the accomplishment of any great task, the mission must be clear and the resolves deep" (Layton 15). What is the mission and purpose of the church here below? The concise purpose of the church can be summed up in a few words – "to glorify God in Christ Jesus" (cf. Ephesians 3:21; Hebrews 13:21; Revelation 1:6; et al.). Since it is God who gives the increase of growth to the church (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:6; Acts 2:47), it is God who dictates the methods used to promote that growth. Like the first century church, growth will result when we come back to the basics!

In addition to a ***Clear Proclamation***, the church of the first century grew by using ***Commanded Programs***. Sadly, far too often, brethren believe that any method we use to promote growth is acceptable to the Lord. We see this erroneous attitude often expressed in the form of "church soft ball teams," "church gymnasiums" and "church trips" to ball games, fairs and other recreational activities. However, the Lord **never** authorized such programs for His church! "Clearly God's purpose is for his people to glorify him in the church ... through the work [i.e. commanded programs, R.N.] of the church" (Wharton, 117).

The first commanded program of the church is ***Preaching the Gospel***. In fact, the last "marching orders" Christ gave before His Ascension was to teach the Gospel to all nations (Matthew 28:19; cf. Mark 16:15). These marching orders were clearly carried out by the early church (cf. Mark 16:20; Acts 2:46; 3:12ff; 6:4; 8:4; 11:19; et al.), which resulted in continued growth (cf. Acts 2:47; 4:4; 5:14; 11:21, 24). No gimmicks, no games, just back to the basics with the wonderful, old Jerusalem Gospel!

The second commanded program of the church is ***Promoting Spiritual Growth***. After baptism, the Lord's disciples were to continue to teach those who were converted (cf. Matthew 28:20a). This continued teaching is necessary because the things that Christ commands (i.e. His Word) (1) builds (Romans 10:17; Acts 20:32), (2) guards (Psalm 37:31; 119:11), (3) sanctifies (John 17:17), (4) strengthens (Psalm 119:28), (5) saves (1 Timothy 4:16), (6) blesses (James 1:25), and (7) enlightens (Psalm 119:104, 130). No gimmicks, no games, just back to the basics by "steadfastly" promoting spiritual growth (cf. Acts 2:42, 46; 14:22).

The third commanded program of the church is ***Providing for the Needy***. The early church was benevolent to those who **truly** needed help. In fact, some members even sold possessions so that they may be able to give to those in need (cf. Acts 2:45; 4:34-37). This benevolent, generous attitude was part of what caused others to be added to the church (cf. Acts 2:47; 5:13-14). Back to the basics of true Christian generosity is a place where we need to return (cf. Galatians 6:10; James 1:27).

There are no gimmicks, no games, and no secret formulas for church growth. God has given us a proven plan that **will** work (cf. Isaiah 55:1); we just have to implement it diligently. As a sign on a church building once read, "Find out what God wants done and get on board!" Back to the Basics; are you on board?

Works Cited

Layton, Mac. *How to Build a Great Church*. Henderson: Hester, 1987.

Wharton Edward. *The Church of Christ*. Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1997.