

Upcoming Events...

Galatians Class: Every Thursday at 1:00 p.m.

Business Meeting: today at 4:30 p.m.

Ladies Bible Class: next Sunday, August 19

Barnabas Group Meeting: August 28

Personal Responsibility

“But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. For each one will bear his own load.”
Galatians 6:4-5

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”
2 Corinthians 5:10

“Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.” James 4:17

August Birthdays

4 Noah Perales 6 Gigi Zamarripa 12 Debbie Hoffman
12 Lee McKnight 16 Nick Hoffman 19 Keith Lovelady
25 Pat Limburg

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Graying instead of Growing, Part 1

By Doug Dingley

It is no secret to any of us that the Lord’s church is shrinking; that we are graying instead of growing. If we are ‘growing’ at all, it is only in the area of ‘growing older’ and getting smaller. The 2018 edition of “Churches of Christ in the United States” (© 2018 by 21stCentury Christians, Inc.) reveals that as recently as 2000-2018, a whopping 1,047 congregations of the Lord’s church in America have simply ceased to exist. That is a staggering loss of some 59 congregations per year, on average. During that same time period, they also report the loss of nearly 200,000 adherents (pg. 22). This devastating decline is occurring despite the countless millions of dollars and hour’s worth of effort being poured into radio, T.V., D.V.D. and internet ministries, as well as V.B.S., gospel meetings, “bring a friend to church” events, and a vast variety of other well-supported and conducted outreach projects annually. How is that even possible?

Conversely, when we look into our Bibles however, we see that the first century church of Christ grew like wildfire! Despite massive governmental persecution, deadly opposition from other zealous religious groups, and without the benefit of any of the modern-day technological advances which we now enjoy and utilize for evangelistic purposes, within about three decades after the death of Christ and the establishment of His one, New Testament church, that generation had so successfully taken the gospel into the whole world (Colossians 1:23), that they were accused by their adversaries of having “*turned the world upside down*” (Acts 17:6). How on earth did they do it?

Regular Meeting Times

Sunday.....9:45 a.m.
Sunday.....10:45 a.m.
Sunday.....6:00 p.m.
Wednesday.....7:00 p.m.

Preacher:
Mike McKnight

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We today, in the churches of Christ, claim to be the same church as we see in the Scriptures. We profess to “Call Bible things by Bible names, and do Bible things in Bible ways” – and rightly so and well we should. But if that is truly the case, then we must be about doing what they did, in order to see what they saw. But alas, we apparently are not. And so, we must look deeply into the word, uncover the ‘secret’ to their vast evangelistic success, and then follow that divinely-documented pattern if we are to see that same incredible congregational and kingdom growth today.

One of the first and most obvious things which we discover when we look deeply into the pattern of that first-century, explosively church-growing generation, is that they never once ‘invited someone to church’ in order to convert them! No, not once. If so, where so? Where, in the Book of Acts, did anyone, ever, under any circumstances, invite a lost sinner to church, in order that the preacher might perhaps then convert him/her? They didn’t. We won’t find that phrase – ‘invited them to church’ – alluded to anywhere in the New Testament. It is no more biblical than the so-called ‘Sinner’s Prayer.’ The ‘Sinner’s Prayer’ which, by the way, we rightly reject due to the fact that it is never once seen taught as the way to be saved anywhere in the New Testament. However, we have to understand that ‘inviting people to church’ so that the preacher might possibly convert them falls into the same exact category. So how did our first century brethren manage to carry out such successful evangelism then? Let’s look and see.

Once the miracle of Acts 3:1-11 had gotten the crowd’s attention and made them curious, what did Peter do? Did he then invite them all to church on Sunday so they could have explained to them all that had just happened? No. He took advantage of the opportunity right then and there to tell them about Jesus (Vss. 12-26)! No waiting or inviting whatsoever! (Therefore, they also did not enjoy the luxury of having several days’ worth of time to come up with a convenient excuse as to why they were sorry but could not go to church with him the next Lord’s Day either.) And what was the result? Church growth exploded (Acts 4:1-4).

In Acts 5:42, we see that people were being taught “*daily, in the temple, and in every house*” about Jesus – not just on Sundays, and not just in their assemblies. What happened as a result? Folks weren’t just simply reported as being ‘added’ to the church; disciples were rapidly “multiplying” (Acts 6:1).

After the martyrdom of Stephen, the persecution of the brethren, and the scattering of the church, what did those normal, everyday saints (and not the apostles as Scripture clearly notes) abandoning their homes and ‘running for their lives’ do everywhere they went (Acts 7:54-8:4)? Did they invite those they came in contact with to go to church with them in their new towns on Sunday? No. They themselves – the everyday members – preached the word everywhere they went (8:4). What happened when Phillip did that down in Samaria? Both men and women were being baptized (Acts 8:12). In other words, the number of souls converted continued to climb rapidly.

In Acts 8:26-34, we read of Phillip’s encountering the pious, religious, and inquisitive (but as of that point still unconverted) Ethiopian eunuch as he was reading from the scroll of Isaiah. When the eunuch posed a religious question to him, what did Phillip automatically do? Did he hesitantly invite the eunuch to join him for church on Sunday so as to possibly get his scriptural question answered by another such as the preacher? No; not hardly! Instead, “*Phillip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him*” (Acts 8:35). What happened as a result? Another baptism and another new brother in Christ (Vss. 36-39).

To be continued next week...

Graying instead of Growing, Part 2