I Want the Church to Grow–But Do I Want Any More People? #9

How Can I Help the Church Grow and Evangelize More People?

Matthew 28:16-20

Introduction:

1. Have you been in touch with mixed feelings about this congregation growing?
2. What does God want His church to be and do?
3. How can I submit my will to God’s will?
4. Previous principles.
   1. Be honest with your feelings.
   2. Recognize that feelings are normal–good people have felt like this before.
   3. Talk about the issue.
5. Additional principles.
6. FOLLOW JESUS – NOT YOUR FEELINGS.
   1. Jesus didn’t always do what felt good.

Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me” (Matthew 26:38).

And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground (Luke 22:44).

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46).

* 1. He did what was right.

For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

*“Who committed no sin,*

*Nor was deceit found in His mouth”;*

who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed (1 Peter 2:21-24).

* 1. I am pulled to what feels right.

O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself;

It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.

O Lord, correct me, but with justice;

Not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing (Jeremiah 10:23, 24).

* 1. I have the choice.

For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ (Galatians 1:10).

1. REFLECT ON WHAT BEING A DISCIPLE OF JESUS MEANS.
   1. Count the cost. Luke 14:25-33
   2. Carry the cross.

Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me (Luke 9:23).

* 1. Commit to crucifixion.

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world (Galatians 6:14).

* 1. Consider the applications.
     1. Freely sharing, surrendering your seat.
     2. Those who are able, parking away from the building, leaving the best and closest places for visitors and older people.

One day, a man went to visit a church. He arrived early, parked his car, and got out. Another car pulled up near him, and the driver told him, “I always park there. You took my place.

The visitor went inside for Sunday school, found an empty seat, and sat down. A young lady from the church approached him and stated, “That’s my seat! You took my Place!” The visitor was somewhat distressed by this rude welcome, but said nothing.

After Sunday school, the visitor went into the church auditorium and sat down. Another member walked up to him and said, “That’s were I always sit. You took my place!” The visitor was even more troubled by this treatment, but still said nothing.

Later, as the congregation was praying for Christ to dwell among them, the visitor stood, and his appearance began to change. Horrible scars became visible on his hands and on his sandaled feet. Someone from the congregation noticed him and called out, “What happened to you?”

The visitor replied, “I took your place.”

“Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me’” (Matthew 25:45).

* + 1. Arriving at least twenty minutes before services in order that visitors will not arrive to a locked building and children arrive in an empty classroom. (“On time is late for leaders.”)
    2. Speaking to someone you thought was a visitor, but who was a member and was offended and angry because you did not recognize them – you are embarrassed.
    3. Not staying offended and expressing anger when someone thinks you are a visitor even though you have been here twenty-five years.
    4. Studying when I don’t think I am learning, praying when I doubt if God hears, serving when I see no indication of appreciation, talking to others about Jesus when my friend seems to ignore me.

1. GROW UP, REACH FOR MATURITY, DEEPEN MY FAITH EVEN WHEN I DON’T SEE THE RESULTS AND WHEN SERVING ISN’T FUN–BUT IT’S RIGHT.
   1. Serving God when everything does not go my way.

Though the fig tree may not blossom,

Nor fruit be on the vines;

Though the labor of the olive may fail,

And the fields yield no food;

Though the flock may be cut off from the fold,

And there be no herd in the stalls—

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,

I will joy in the God of my salvation (Habakkuk 3:17, 18).

* 1. Application.

Though my pantry is bare,

And the grocery shelves are empty;

Though I am downsized

And my unemployment runs out;

Though my emergency fund is depleted,

And my retirement plan never gets funded–

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,

I will joy in the God of my salvation.

Conclusion:

1. Church growth does not come without individual growth.
2. Individual growth involves pain.

Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it (Luke 9:23,24).

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us (Romans 5:1-5).

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him (James 1:2-5).

1. Growth involves reward and rejoicing.
   1. Individual.

“His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord’” (Matthew 25:21).

* 1. Heaven.

“I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

“Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

“But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ And they began to be merry” (Luke 15:7, 10, 22-24).

1. Word growth, church growth means more people.

Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith (Acts 6:7).

1. What will we do?
   1. Serve, teach, grow, provide worship space, class rooms, parking space.
   2. Serve, teach, grow, use our facilities differently, more.
      1. 9:00 – 12:00.
      2. 1:30 – 4:30.
      3. 5:30 – 8:30.
   3. Tell people we don’t want to grow over 400.
      1. No Vacancy.
      2. Ask people to go to another congregation.
      3. Have a waiting list.
      4. Call people when someone dies or moves.
      5. In 1988, a church had grown with several new people coming and working in the congregation. A leader said, “This church is getting too big. Those who are not family are going to have to leave.”
      6. A church is growing beyond it’s capacity. Another congregation is declining and has ample room. One suggestion, “Send them down the road.”
2. Have the mission of Jesus.

“For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me” (John 6:38).

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely (Revelation 22:17).