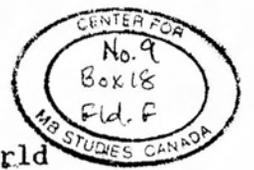




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Effective Themes and Speakers

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Seminar Paper: EFFECTIVE CHURCH GROWTH STRATEGIES

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Introduction

This subject is effective church growth strategies. We affirm that the central purpose of Jesus' coming to earth was to die on the cross for the redemption of humankind. Jesus Himself said, "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Who are the lost? They are obviously the people in the world who have yet to hear and accept the good news that Jesus, on the cross, died for their sins. How is the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ to be communicated to the lost? The apostle Paul knows: "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase" (I Cor. 3:6). But while God ripens the harvest, He does not reap the harvest. He expects us to be His agents in reaping. This is an awesome responsibility.

What God expects of us in fulfilling the Great Commission is more clearly detailed in the closing words of Matthew, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). Evangelism is not only reaching people with the gospel message and bringing them to a decision for Christ, it is making them disciples. God's will is clear. He does not desire that "any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). He wants men and women everywhere to come to Him and into the church of Jesus Christ.

The Jerusalem church is a model one in the New Testament. They added 3,000 new members on the day of Pentecost. They were baptized, they grew in their understanding of Christian doctrine, they worshipped together regularly, they developed fellowship groups, they shared their material goods with one another, they exercised their spiritual gifts. As a result the church continued to grow and "the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). This was a healthy church. And one characteristic of healthy churches is that they grow. In short, it is God's will that churches grow.

listed the seven vital signs of a healthy church in a book called Your Church Can Grow. Those signs have held up and have been found helpful for many church leaders who are involved in planning for growth in their churches. They are:

1. A pastor who is a possibility thinker and whose dynamic leadership has been used to catalyze the entire church into action for growth.
2. A well-mobilized laity which has discovered, has developed, and is using all the spiritual gifts for growth.
3. A church big enough to provide the range of services that meet the needs and expectations of its members.
4. The proper balance of the dynamic relationship between celebration, congregation, and cell.
5. A membership drawn primarily from one homogeneous unit.
6. Evangelistic methods that have proved to make disciples.
7. Priorities arranged in biblical order.

I. THE VISION AND STRATEGY

A. Idea: Why should the church be here?

It believes that missions of soul winning and disciple making are a primary and continuing task of each congregation. The church is a living organism, the Body of Christ; and it should grow in size, in effectiveness, in faithfulness, and in outreach.

B. Objective: What kind of church would we like to be five years, ten years, and twenty years from now?

Objectives are ultimate ends toward which a church aims its activities, stated in practical terms that give direction to its programs.

Goals state a definite result to be accomplished by a certain date. Objectives define a congregation's purpose. Goals grow out of objectives.

Objectives define the congregation's conviction, guide its work and provide direction and motivation. Goals prevent means from becoming ends. By watching objectives, inconsistent activities can be eliminated.

An overall objective of the church is to sustain a vital relationship to God in Jesus Christ and to be used by God to bring all possible prospects into this worshipping, ministering, and witnessing community.

C. Plan: What should the church do?

The church growth approach is a concentrated effort to effectively use the member's time and resources to provide proper motivation for stimulating growth, to provide criteria for analyzing the church programs, and test the soil for potential harvest.

1. "Come and Go"

The congregation should be so structured that it encourages mobilization of the people to be a gathered people, a group called out from the world to worship God and to edify one another, and to be the scattered people, a group going out into the world to confess Christ. This is the divine rhythm of the church's life: Come and go, gather and scatter.

2. The function of the church

In order to fulfill God's plan, the church should be a proclaiming church (I Cor. 1:23-24), a teaching and learning church (Acts 2:42; Eph. 3:17-19), a worshipping church (Rom. 10:8-10), a witnessing church (Luke 19:10; II Cor. 5:20), a celebrating church (Acts 2:46-47; Rom. 15:6), a fellowshiping church (Acts 2:42), a ministering church (Rom. 12:5; Gal. 6:1-2, Col. 3:16-17), and a serving church (Acts 2:45; 5:16; I Cor. 10:33; Phil. 2:4).

We may distinguish eight functions of the church from the book of Acts. The congregation is to do the following:

- a) Cultivate worship (personal, family, congregational)
- b) Undertake and promote Christian education (children, youth, adults)
- c) Equip its members for service (training of kingdom workers)
- d) Promote evangelism and mission work (at home and abroad)
- e) Shepherd souls (membership conservation)
- f) Practice Christian charity (social ministry and welfare)
- g) Cultivate Christian fellowship and edify each other (mutual exhortation and love)
- h) Administer the affairs of the church (organization, structure)

II. THE STRATEGY FOR GROWTH

The steps of the strategy in church growth involve everything done from the beginning to the end: analysis (where the church is now, understanding statistics), goals (what the church should do), program (how the church moves ahead), and evaluation (making sure the church moves ahead).

A planning instrument is supplied to assist the congregation to take the necessary steps: state the purpose, get information needed to state the goals, determine how to know when the goal is accomplished (set measurement), decide how it will be known that the process is on schedule.

The development of a strategy gives a deep sense of meaning and purpose to the daily activities of the church. It enables leaders to evaluate the thrust of their work periodically and determine the quality of their efforts.

Dr. George W. Peters offers the following eight elements in "A Missions Program That Succeeds," Action (Summer 1975), as necessary for an effective strategy of evangelism:

1. The setting of clearly defined long-range and short-range goals.
2. Preparation of a realistic timetable to achieve these goals.
3. The discovery of all possible resources to realize the goals.
4. The mobilization of personnel and means to actualize the work towards the goals.
5. The designing of an appropriate training program of all mobilized personnel to assure the unity, the effectiveness, and coordination of the work and the accomplishing of the goal.
6. The adoption of the most efficient methods to effect the goals.
7. The setting up of an appropriate organizational structure in keeping with the dynamic function of the Holy Spirit to carry through the program and consummate the goals.
8. The gracious operation of the Holy Spirit in all personnel and in all methods and means employed.

Making disciples is the chief objective in church growth. Going, baptizing, and teaching are means to accomplish that end. Making disciples involves accepting Christ, showing evidence of regeneration, and serving members. Christ's "make disciples" is a command, not a request.

III. THE SCHEDULE FOR CHURCH GROWTH PLANNING PROCESS

Where do you start the church growth process? When do you start?
What preparations are to be made? What resources are available?

- A. A year before target time
- B. Six months before target time
- C. Three months before
- D. One year later

IV. IN THE CASE OF JAPANESE CHURCHES

All human behavior occurs within particular cultures, within socially defined contexts. I can tell you some important factors of a healthy church in Japan.

- A. Vision, 10-20-year plan, tightly scheduled and goal-directed activities, well arranged meetings and worships

Most Japanese will begin to experience tension when others are five minutes late and trains are two minutes late; most North Americans will have tension fifteen minutes late; most Latin Americans more than one hour late, whereas Indonesians in kalimantan will not experience tension until the expected worship is about three hours late.

Japanese express great concern about punctuality, the length of time expended, utilization of time to its maximum potential. We have specific objectives and want to accomplish them within a given period. Most Japanese see time as money and use each unit to earn a particular reward or accomplish a particular objective. We have a sense of urgency about time. We feel that time is valuable and that it is running out. We have a sense of urgency about getting a job done and about what we are planning to do next. We focus our attention to the next event.

We also have difficulty doing more than one thing at the same time. Many of us prefer to focus our energies on a single activity.

- B. Focuses on persons and relationship, finds satisfaction in interaction, sacrifices personal achievements for group interaction, LOVE

Japanese generally find satisfaction in reaching their objectives and completing their projects. Our lives are motivated and directed by an unending succession of objectives. Many become workaholics, allowing tasks to so dominate their lives that other people are viewed as merely a part of their work schedule. The social life of Japanese is often merely an

solitude of working alone and uninterrupted. To achieve is more important than to build social relationships, and they are willing to endure social deprivation to reach their goals.

C. Leadership and Administration. Sharing the ministry with laity.
Using all spiritual gifts for growth.

One characteristic of Japan's private enterprises is collective decision making. The person responsible presents his original plan in writing and obtains the approval of his superiors in ascending order. A final executive decision is obtained after those in charge of related sections have given their approval. This process of circulating draft plan is called the Ringi system. The reason why it continues to be used in Japanese government offices and businesses is that it does have certain advantages. For example, written approval of a plan clearly shows where the responsibilities lie. Also, after all individuals concerned have given their approval, the plan can be carried out very efficiently. Small group activities or Zero Defect groups are a characteristic of Japanese business and efficiency. There are many small voluntary groups formed to tackle all kinds of problems.

V. REFERENCE INFORMATION

A. Characteristics

1. Congregational church polity
2. Strong Bible emphasis
3. Promoting evangelism and mission work at home and abroad
4. Brotherhood
5. Peace

B. Plans

1. New ten-year home mission project
2. Ten-year Biblical Seminary project
3. Promotion of Christian Education