

Keeping the Church Alive #11
“Bringing the New Testament Church Back”
By Russell Earl

As we close out this series of lessons this question remains: what can we do to keep the Lord’s church growing today? We must first look at what does not help in church growth.

Elaborate and spacious buildings do not help the church grow. The building size may attract some but those who come because of the size or design of the building will not stay long if the Bible is truly being taught. For this reason we shouldn’t strive for a large and elaborate building. Instead, we should emphasize the importance of the message and not the meeting place.

Some congregations pride themselves when they have a minister who has several degrees and is well known in the brotherhood. While being well educated and being recognized for your efforts is not wrong, using this as a way to attract people is wrong. The Apostles of Christ were not well educated or well known. It was the message they brought that attracted people to them. This also should be the case for us today.

In some locations the wealth of the members is what attracts others to attend a certain congregation. When this happens the church building is no longer a place where you come to fellowship with the brethren and to be spiritually fed. Instead it then becomes a social “meet and greet”. The church becomes a place where you go to be “seen” by who you deem to be important in your own mind. If we desire to be seen by men then you should go to a country club or a popular restaurant and not a worship service.

If the church is to grow in such a way that pleases God then it must remain loyal to the Bible as the verbally inspired and authoritative Word of God. If we firmly believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God and God has all authority then we will not go beyond or stop short of the commands found in His Word. Dr. Jeff D. Ray a well known Baptist and a former professor in the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, said this in a column regarding the churches of Christ: “*while I think many of their interpretations of scripture are hurtfully fallacious, they, both preachers and people, do stick to the Bible; they definitely believe something and know what they believe*”. There is no doubt in my mind that many people today believe the churches of Christ follow the Bible. What we should ask them is “why would you attend somewhere that does not”?

Furthermore, we must hang on to the plea that is unique to the church of Christ. Our plea of course is no creed, only Christ, no book but the Bible, no church but Christ’s, no name but Christ’s, worship as described in the New Testament, and no organization but that as described in the New Testament. Our plea is for Christ’s church today to operate as it did in first century by following only the commands and examples given to us in God’s Word.

We must also be evangelistic. We must do all we can to spread the message of Christ. When we do nothing to spread the message of Christ then we forsake the command He gave to the Apostles and to us. His command was and still is very simple: “**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; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age Amen**”

(Matt 28:19-20). We find four commands in these two verses: (1) Go, (2) make disciples, (3), baptize them, and (4) teach them to observe all the commands of Christ. If we do these things we do what Christ intended for us to do. If we do these things the church of Christ will not only keep its members but it will also grow. Let us do all we can to keep His church alive!

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