

EVANGELISTIC CHURCHES – INSIDE AND OUT

Aaron Beard
Trussville
Aug 24, 2008

Introduction: (From a lesson given by Phil Robertson at a preacher's study)

A. Have you ever stopped to question why some churches are growing and some churches are not?

1. How many conservative churches can you think of that are making significant numerical growth?
2. Why aren't more churches growing? Why aren't we seeing the numerical growth we want to see?
 - a. We take great pride in being "a sound church" right? But we're sound in what? Can we really say we are sound if we aren't actively seeking to bring lost souls to Christ?
 - b. Yes, we may be sound alright, but are we sound asleep? Truly NT churches seek to grow!
3. There are many reasons for a lack of numerical growth at this church and churches we may be associated with because of a like precious faith – Some seem legitimate, some are just excuses:
 - a. Maybe we see evangelism solely from as a collective responsibility and not an individual responsibility. Yes, we know it's everybody's responsibility, but we don't act like it
 - b. Maybe it's an attitude problem – We see lost people more like suspects and our enemies
 - c. Maybe it's because we're actually very comfortable – We know everyone we worship with and we become satisfied with status quo. We want to be bigger, but this is fine too!
 - d. Maybe it's because we're not out there setting a clear enough example of "Christ in you"
 - e. There's the excuses: Our society is church-ed out, we don't have enough kids, our building is less than ideal, we have bigger churches to compete with, and the list goes on!

B. When it comes to reaching the lost, God has given us the tools & opportunities we need.

1. He has equipped us to be His ministers unto them. What does it mean when it says that we are equipped for the work of ministry? It is talking about being servants! **(Eph 4:11-12)**
2. Our being servants in this case has a very specific goal in mind – The building up of the body of Christ! But this isn't something we're born with, ministering is something we have to learn

BEING AN EVANGELISTIC CHURCH INSIDE AND OUT:

A. For successful evangelism to take place, there needs to be a strong internal focus:

1. When Paul was giving regulations concerning the use of spiritual gifts in the assemblies, he emphasized the concern we ought to have for visitors **(1 Cor 14:16)**
 - a. The term "outsiders" may simply refer to one who is ungifted but the point stands → They should give thought to how the services go for both the ungifted & the unbelieving
 - b. When we assemble we must make sure we are both visitor conscious & visitor friendly!
 - c. Visitors are fish jumping into the boat! They're showing interest, going out of their way to get to a church service, & making contact with us! What impression do we leave?
 - d. There's a saying in golf: "Leave yourself another shot" – The same is true with evangelism!
2. We need to provide an atmosphere internally where visitors feel comfortable: **(1 Cor 14:22-25)**
 - a. When someone visits with us for the first time it can be an awkward, scary, and intimidating experience. They don't know what to expect, they may not know any of our members, & our services may be quite different from what they're used to
 - b. This starts in the parking lot when you see them walking up and continues throughout the service → Greet them with kindness, show your interest, & explain things to them
 - c. If you see a visitor come in make a place for them! Make sure they know they're welcome to sit with you... Visitors need to be treated like the honored guest they are
3. We need to provide an atmosphere internally where visitors are edified: **(Heb 10:24-25)**

- a. What's the point of our assemblies: Our focus is to glorify & worship the Lord, but as we do that our focus is also to edify, encourage, teach and stir up one another
- b. The Corinthians were to conduct themselves in such a way that not only the gifted believers would be built up, but that everyone would be built up! **(1 Cor 14:17, 24)**
- c. We go make sure everything will be done decently and in order, and this is good, but what's the reason? So that all will be built up by the service! **(1 Cor 14:26, 40)**
- d. Want to be an evangelistic church? Make sure the services are edifying! How?
 - 1) Are we singing with zeal? Active in our Bible study? Do we pray passionately?
 - 2) Remember, visitors are coming from churches with instrumental music & million dollar lighting and theatrics... As we worship in a scriptural manner do we worship in such a way that they can be built up by it? Can they see its value?
4. We need to make sure as people do visit that take the time to really get to know them:
 - a. Christians are called to be hospitable, not only to themselves but also to strangers. In fact, the term "hospitality" itself means to entertain strangers **(1 Pet 4:8-10; Heb 13:2)**
 - b. We may get hurried & barely take time to get to know the visitors – We want to catch up with one another, talk about the rumblings in the sports world, or complain about politics. We may shake hands with the visitor, but were we truly hospitable to them?
 - c. Welcome visitors into the church building as you'd welcome them into your home! Make them feel comfortable & at home with you... Then after services, invite them home!
 - d. Before we can be hospitable to our visitors, we must be hospitable with one another
5. We need to create an atmosphere where those who visit with us are our honored guests! As we do this remember that we too were once strangers in the land ourselves! **(Lev 19:33-34)**

B. For successful evangelism to take place, there needs to be a strong external focus:

1. A church that is effective at reaching lost has members who take advantage of their relationships:
 - a. We all have friends, family, or other associates who have not obeyed the gospel or are caught up in religious error. In fact this applies to most of the people we know, right?
 - b. **Illustration:** A couple of years ago we saw a good flow of visitors from the community, got some Bible studies, and saw a good number of baptisms. Why was this case? It was not something I initiated at all... It was because you were talking, inviting, & studying!
 - c. Some of Jesus' apostles came because someone met Jesus, saw their need for Him, and invited someone they knew to "come and see" – **(John 1:40-46, 4:29, 39)**
 - d. Relationships = warm contacts! They're the most effective "well" for evangelism because they already know you & you know them – They know your Christian life personally!
2. We also need to be looking for opportunities to be of service to others: **(1 Peter 2:12)**
 - a. We often have contact with people who are hurting emotionally, people who have broken lives, people who need financial help, people in some kind of temporary trouble
 - b. **Illustration:** Give list of things one can do – From simple acts of kindness to big deeds
 - c. As you find opportunities to help others, let them know you are a Christian! Let them know where you go to church at and invite them. Some may think this sounds prideful but it's not – It glorifies Christ & may spark the salvation of another soul!
3. Third, we should seek to be involved in the community whenever possible: **(John 17:15-19)**
 - a. Here in Jesus' prayer He emphasizes that He doesn't want His disciples to come out from among the world and He specifically says He has sent them into the world. Jesus wants His disciples involved in the daily affairs of the society they were a part of

- b. Christians sometimes go in the reverse direction! While we condemn the reaction of the monks who completely withdraw from society, but some become practical monks!
 - c. You can be on city councils and other city boards, a PTA member, on some community project team, part of a civic club, coach a ball team, substitute teach, be a tutor, join some type of group (bowling team, bunko group) – Anything that gets you out there!
 - d. As people get to know you and you let Christ shine through your life, God will open doors!
4. And last of all, there is a place for programs in reaching out to the lost:
- a. Most preachers I talk to report that these are the least effective tools available (fewest results); however, programs are the first things people want to use for evangelism
 - b. The problem is programs often become a carnal tool (**2 Cor 10:3-6**) → They may use carnal appeals (like sports) or become a source of carnal pride (LOOK AT OUR PROGRAMS)
 - c. For programs to work, they have to be worked by relationships... As you build relationships with others you invite them to get involved in the program. In this they get to know some of the members of this church better. Then, set up studies, invite to services
 - d. We have programs in place now you can use – Bible 101 class, monthly get-togethers, and our regular Bible studies (not every church has these), and we could start doing so much more! **Question:** Why do we only advertise & invite during gospel meetings?

CONCLUSION: What all of this boils down to is our desire. Do we really have a zeal, a passion, a desire to grow or do we just want to sit around and talk about it? For those who truly want to grow: Get active in these things regardless of what the other Christians here may or may not do, don't give up if you meet obstacles or some rejection, work with those you can (shake off the dust applies to Christians too!), keep it positive & motivating, pray hard (why do we only put sick people on our prayer lists?)