



## ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

November 2021

# It's Harvest Time

"God Will Add To His Church - But We Must Do Your Part."

### SCRIPTURE READINGS

**Main Text:** Acts 3: 31-47

**Devotional Readings:** Psalms 65:4, Matt: 9: 36-38 and Matt. 28: 19 - 20 Acts 13:48, I Corinthians 3:6 - 7

Acts 2:46-47

46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. KJV

### The Story:

Sandra was ardently examining an invitation she had received from a mega-church not too far from where she lives. Sandra knows several people who attend the church and they are always telling about all of the different programs and activities they have for youth and adult members. Sandra has been thinking about visiting the church, but she is really involved at her church. As Sandra kept looking at the brightly colored advertisement from the mega-church, She remembered when this church first opened about three years ago and now she wondered how did they get so big so fast? A even bigger question was in Sandra's mind, "why wasn't her church growing like the church in the ad?" "After all, we've been around for over seventy years, and we have some really nice members too!", Sandra thought to herself. She wondered if this mega-church would end up drawing away members from her church. Sandra was very concerned.

### Church Of the Right Now

According to the latest census data the average church in America has no more than 70 participants with an annual income of \$85,000 or less. Interestingly, this same data states that most people who do attend church attend very large congregations. So, it looks like the "mega-church" has

attracted a lot of church goers. It is not hard to see why these large congregations are so appealing. Most have beautiful buildings, state of art technology and overall, they provide attendees with an awesome church experience. In addition, many of these larger congregations boast active local outreach and international mission ministries. Without question, many of these size churches provide exceptional ministry. But, is this reason for Sandra to be concerned about the size of her church's membership? Before we can answer that we will need to do a bit more study.

### QUESTIONS:

- 1) Are larger congregations better at ministry than smaller congregations?
- 2) Why do you think some churches grow to have one thousand members or more?
- 3) What does the size of congregation tell you about a church?

### The Discussion

To some degree, the church has always been interested in numbers. Someone pointed out that there's even a book in the bible called "Numbers." Numbers are important, but all numbers are not equal. One must consider not just "that" something gets bigger, but "why" is that something getting bigger. There is a distinct difference between growing and swelling. Growing is the body's healthy response, while swelling could be symptomatic of a dire condition. During the late 1980's some church's began referring to themselves as "seeker sensitive." According to Wikipedia, "the Church Growth Movement is a movement within evangelical Christianity which aims to grow churches based on research, sociology, analysis, etc." A great number of today's mega-churches support some form of a seeker sensitive" strategy. Basically, the seeker-sensitive church tries to reach out to the unsaved person by making the church experience as comfortable, inviting, and non-threatening to the unsaved as possible

The idea behind the concept is to get as many unsaved people through the door as possible, and the church leadership are willing to use nearly any means to accomplish that goal. This concept stresses the need to give the unsaved people what appeals to them, what keeps them engaged and whatever will get them to come to the church's functions or programs. This may include hosting streaming sporting events, professional day care services, state of the art technology and theatrics, extravagant musical events, 20 minutes sermons and the list goes on and on.

### QUESTIONS:

- 1) Should the church be more involved in giving the unsaved what they want or providing the unsaved with what God wants for them? - And is there a difference?
- 2) What are some pros and cons of a "seeker sensitive" church growth strategy?

### The Study

#### Acts 2:41-47

41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

42 And they <sup>1</sup> continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine<sup>2</sup> and fellowship, and <sup>3</sup> in breaking of bread, and <sup>4</sup> in prayers.

43 And <sup>5</sup> fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

44 And <sup>6</sup> all that believed were together, and <sup>7</sup> had all things common;

45 And <sup>8</sup> sold their possessions and goods, and <sup>9</sup> parted them to all men, as every man had need.

46 And they, <sup>10</sup> continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and <sup>11</sup> breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

47 <sup>12</sup> Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. KJV

The second clause of Acts 2:47: "*And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved*" is often quoted and interpreted in isolation and at times out of its proper context.

As the scripture confirms, God did and will add to the church, and in this case God added daily those who had been saved.

However, this action on God's part was directly connected to the actions on the part of the Christian believers. What is being stressed here is that God blessed the early church with numerical increase and growth only after the early church congregants committed themselves to practicing certain behaviors and demonstrating specific characteristics that help to build a church environment conducive to numerical growth.

Beginning at verse 42 through verse 47 you can see twelve subscripted numbers. These numbers count at least twelve different and very important actions that the early church committed themselves to doing. Among the list of actions we observe: The early church were committed to studying the word "continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching. Today, we can find the apostle's teaching in the bible, yet least than 15% of Christians attend any regular form of bible study. These early Christians completely revered God is what is meant by "fear came upon every soul." In addition, all that believed were "together." Not only together physically but spiritually and emotionally; meaning that any divisions or schisms were not allowed to fester and continue to exist but were promptly dealt with before they could gain a stronghold in the congregation.

### QUESTIONS

Review these twelve actions of the early church.

- 1) How might each action contribute to the growth of a healthy church?
- 2) On a scale of 1 - 10, one being the lowest score and ten being the highest, how might you score your local church?
- 3) What could be done to raise your local church's score?

### Final Thoughts

"Whenever God blesses you, He will always leave something for you to do." I'm not sure where I heard this but I've been quoting it for over 30 years because it's true. The bible emphasizes that we are "co-laborers" together with God. The Harvest of souls is plentiful but laborers are in short supply. When we commit to doing our part, God is faithful and will bless our efforts.



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