

GROW IN CHRIST

The late Gus Nichols once shared the following humorous illustration with his readers: “If a man were given a mule, a goat, a bee, and a skunk and assigned the task of making a working combination of them in order to accomplish a given work he would throw up his hands in disgust and say, ‘That is impossible.’ Yet, in almost every church there is a kicker, a butter, a stinger, and a stinker, and the elders have the task of trying to make all of these a united working group with the faithful of God’s children” (Words of Truth, 12-10-1976).

Making the members of a local congregation work together sometimes presents a formidable task to even the wisest of godly elders. I preached on this passage a number of years ago under the heading of “Let’s Learn to Knit,” from Ephesians 4:16 where Paul mentions that the “the whole body [is] framed and knit together.” The connotation in this word “knit” suggests the idea of closeness, beauty, and harmony. Such should be the goal of every member of a local congregation. Think with me about the growth and work of the local church and at least some of the elements mentioned in Ephesians chapter four that lead to the accomplishment of spiritual maturity. What are some of the essentials of growing in Christ?

First, we must have Christ as our head (Eph. 4:15b). There are other passages in this epistle that express the same thought. God “gave him to be head over all the church” (Eph. 1:22). “For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body” (Eph. 5:23). There should be no difficulty in understanding the implications of someone being the head of any organization. In our work place we have our “boss,” in sports teams have a “head coach” and in the military there are generals and captains from whom the orders are passed along to the enlisted personal. A congregation will only function and grow to the extent that its members recognize that Christ is the head of the church.

Second, we must have growth as our goal. A goal is defined thus: “to increase in size, amount, or degree.” Growth

is more than “swelling the ranks.” A congregation can grow in number and never mature or increase in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Nor is growth an increase in “frenzied activities.” Many a congregation is involved in work, but little of that work accomplishes the purpose for which Christ set us in the church in the first place. Some years ago I read of a congregation of the Lord’s church that hosted a two day “seminar” offering classes on everything from financial guidance to home cooking. No, growth is not an increase in frenzied activities. Finally, growth is not simply chalking up an impressive attendance record, or impressive figures regarding the contribution.

In his second letter to the church at Thessalonica the apostle Paul had these words: “We are bound to give thanks to God always to you, brethren, even as it is meet, for that your faith growth exceedingly, and the love of each one of you all toward one another aboundeth; so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which ye endure; which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God; to the end that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer” (2 Thess. 1:3-5). There are some words worth examination in these three verses. The first of these is the Greek word “huper-auxano” and is translated “your faith growth exceedingly.” It is not just an increase, but an increase beyond or in great measure. The second word is “pleo-nadzo” and is translated “abounded.” It simply means an unusual amount, or that which abounds. The difference between these two words (“huper-auxano” and “pleo-nadzo”) is this: while “huper-auxano” is internal, as the organic growth of a tree, “pleo-nadzo” is expansive, as a flood would irrigate the farmland. The third word is “oiki-do-meo” and is most commonly translated “edify” or “build up.” It is used twenty times in the New Testament and is one of the most often used words to refer to growth, both of individuals and congregations. Here is the point: there are some things that simply do not edify: strife about foods and dietary habits, endless questionings about fables, and so forth. On the other hand, those things that do edify would include preaching the

whole counsel of God, following the authority of the apostles, Christian duty motivated by love, etc.

Third, to attain unto growth we must have truth as our basis. Two major threats to the growth of the church are false teachers who hesitate not to use unscrupulous means in order to corrupt the truth, and unstable disciples who can be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. This is why our Lord warned of false teachers and described them as “ravenous wolves” (Matt. 7:15). This is why Paul warned of false teachers (Romans 16:17-18), as well as Peter (2 Peter 2:1 ff).

Fourth, we are to have love as our motive. Actually truth and love are co-joined in the chapter in that we are to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Neither is complete without the other. But when we speak the truth, it is to be in love of what? At least three things come to mind: love of the Lord (John 14:15), love of the recipients of our message (Gal. 4:16), and love for the word of God itself. Our relativistic age with its political correctness and post modern mentality has somehow concluded that disagreement is unloving and intolerable.

The late R.L. Whiteside wrote: “Much is said about preaching the truth in love, and so it should be preached...The preacher should so love the truth that he will not sacrifice any of it nor pervert it, and he should so love people that he will not withhold from them even one unpleasant truth. He that does either of these things loves neither the truth nor the people. We frequently fool ourselves; we think we do thus and so to spare the feelings of others, when it is our own feelings that prompt us.”

Beloved, if we are going to grow a congregation, it will take Christ as our head, growth as our goal, truth as our basis, and love as our motive. Any of these elements lacking will wreck havoc in the congregation, weakness in the child of God, and an utter failure in our attempt to grow in Christ.

Tom Wacaster from *The Good News*

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Sunday: Caeden Cole; Mary Huffman; Brooke, Monica, and Taylor Nemechek; Millie Robertson; Steven and Debbie Schleif; Tom Tucker.

Wednesday: Caeden Cole; Joel Nelson; Steven and Debbie Schleif.

Mary Huffman is recuperating at home. Dave Parish's uncle, Tom Parish, is being treated for cancer.

Those battling cancer: Ledgia Campbell, David Cole, Shauna Heck, Betty James, Tom Parish and Cleo Stone. Please remember these in your prayers.

HOME BOUND

Kathleen Camp is in Room 101 at the Royal Terrace Nursing Home in Olathe. Barbara James' Aunt, Evelyn Marquardt is at Sharon Lane in Shawnee. Please remember these in your prayers and visitation.

OUT OF TOWN

Chris Edwards was out of town during last week on business. Monica Nemechek was in Chicago during last week on business.

LADIES DAY

The ladies will host a Ladies Day on Saturday April 24, 2010 with Becky Boyd of the Blue Springs congregation as the speaker. All ladies are encouraged to attend.

GOSPEL MEETING

Our Spring Gospel Meeting with Bill Goring of the Chipman Road congregation in Lee's Summit will be held on April 25-29, 2010. Mark your calendars now for these dates, plan to be here, and invite some others to come with you for each assembly.

ATTENDANCE

Sunday AM, 42; Sunday PM, 30; Wednesday PM, 27.

Food For Thought

"It is better to offer a hand, than point a finger."

Those To Serve

February 21, 2010

BUILDING AND COMMUNION.....Thrasher (2)

MORNING WORSHIP

ANNOUNCEMENTS.....Trent Thrasher
SONG LEADER.....Joel Nelson
OPENING PRAYERJohn Cody Carter
PRESIDE.....George Thomas
ASSIST.....John Dodson
ASSIST.....Dave Parish
CLOSING PRAYER.....Chris Edwards

EVENING WORSHIP

OPENING PRAYERStanley Anderson
CLOSING PRAYER.....Jared Nelson
LORD'S SUPPER.....George Thomas

WEDNESDAY 24th

SONG LEADER.....Joel Nelson
INVITATIONJared Nelson

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday

Bible Study..... 9:30 AM
Morning Worship..... 10:30 AM
Evening Worship..... 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Ladies Bible Study..... 10:00 AM
Bible Study..... 7:00 PM

Preacher: Ted J. Thrasher

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