

“That’s a Good Size for a Church”

I’ve worked as a full-time preacher with four churches now. Lake Road in Dyersburg, Tennessee, had about 120 in regular attendance. Dowlen Road in Beaumont, Texas, had about 350. The Franklin church in Franklin, Tennessee, had about 140. And now here at Brownsburg we have about 230.

The one thing all four churches have in common is they are a good size for a church. I know that sounds odd, but if the word of Christians is worth anything, it is true. Allow me to explain. Any time I travel somewhere and folks find out I’m a preacher or if I’m holding a meeting, someone will inevitably ask, “How big is the congregation where you preach?” I tell them. For each congregation I’ve heard, “That’s a good size for a church.”

Having said that, each church had another thing in common. They are obviously all a terrible size for a church. I know that also sounds odd, but if the word of Christians is worth anything, it is true. Allow me to explain. While some folks have always been there to claim they were a good size, someone else would complain that either they were too small, or usually that they were too large.

What does that mean anyway, “That’s a good size for a church”? What most folks mean is they have decided, based on what makes them comfortable, how many members a church should have. They make up man-made rules about sizes. They ask questions like, “How do the elders keep up with all those people?” Or they say, “You couldn’t invite all those people over to your home.” Sometimes they are thinking about their own grandstanding. “I like a small church where I’ll get lots of opportunities to stand on the stage and lead singing, pray, wait on the table, etc.” Maybe they are thinking about resources and finances for the larger churches. “Oh, that big old church can get a lot done.” Sadly, sometimes they are thinking about anonymity (though they rarely say this out loud), “I could get lost in there and no one would bother me.”

But no matter why we think a certain size is a good size for a church, what are we really saying when we say that? If we believe the size of the congregation is a good size for one, what does that mean about the lost people still in our area? Does that mean they just need to stay lost? “We’re already a good size and don’t have room for you?”

Have you ever stopped to think about the Jerusalem church? In **Acts 2:41**, it started with about 3000 souls. According to **Acts 2:47**, they were adding folks to the congregation daily. By **Acts 4:4**, the number of men in the congregation was 5000. By the time you added wives, widows, and children, the congregation could easily be over 10,000 members strong. According to **Acts 5:14**, multitudes of men and women continued to be added to the congregation of the Lord. Bet you couldn’t invite all those people over to your home for a potluck. I wonder how the apostles kept up with all those Christians. Why didn’t they just plant a new church on the east side of town?

What really amazes me is that the Jerusalem church pulled this kind of growth off twice. In **Acts 8:1**, there arose a huge persecution that drove most of the members of the Jerusalem church into foreign lands. Essentially, only the leadership remained in Jerusalem. However, by the time Paul visits the Jerusalem church in **Acts 21:20**, James is able to say, “You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed” (ESV). No matter what size they were, they didn’t seem to believe it was a good size. They worked to keep adding more. They kept growing.

If the Jerusalem church is a good model for us, then I’m pretty convinced that no matter how many folks make up a congregation, it’s always at least one more person away from being a good size for a church. Let’s do what we can to find that one more person.

--Edwin L. Crozier