

Church Work Not Church Growth

I was reminded of something recently. I have spent much of the last 20 years as an evangelist learning how to make churches grow. After all this study, I have finally learned the secret to church growth.

It is not our job to grow churches!

I Corinthians 3:5-8 says:

What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor (ESV).

Whose job is it to make churches grow? God's. What is our job? Our job is to work. Our job is to plant and water. Consider the vineyard keeper. Who actually makes grapes grow on the vine? Is it the farmer? No. He plants the seed, he fertilizes the field, he waters the crop. But the farmer does not know the secret of life and cannot make things grow. God does that.

This should change our concept of successful work. I used to believe a work was only successful if people got baptized because of it. That is just not true. A work is successful when it gets Christians working. None of us will be lost if we never baptize anyone in our lives. We will be lost if we never work. We must not be like the one talent man of **Matthew 25** who was so convinced his works wouldn't work that he never worked. As the master informed that slave, we must do something.

Granted, if we have two opportunities to work and we know one of them tends to bear more fruit to God's glory, I believe we should choose that one. However, what we usually see is people saying, "That doesn't work." And instead of doing something they believe does work, they do nothing. Let me assure you, doing nothing doesn't work.

Do I want people to be baptized? Do I want the congregation to grow? Obviously. However, what I have learned is we need fewer church growth seminars and more church work seminars. We need fewer goals about numbers of baptisms and more goals about amount of work.

What would happen in a congregation that changed its annual goal from "We want 20 baptisms this year" to "We want 20 more people reading and studying their Bibles with their lost friends and family this year"? Do you think that church would grow? I do. But if it didn't, that really doesn't matter. That church is the one doing what it is supposed to, getting Christians working. That is our job.

The final question then is how much work are you doing?

—Edwin L. Crozier