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God's Blueprint for Building a Biblical Church Part I

This article marks the beginning of what will be an extended study on “God’s Blueprint for Building a Biblical Church.” Although a number of Scriptural references will be used throughout this study, our key text that I’ll use as a springboard to get us thinking is found in **Acts 1:8** when Jesus said, **“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”**

Introduction

A rule in biology says that a sign of life is growth. For an organism to stop growing means death. The church is not an organization, but an organism and there are several different ways that growth can take place in a local New Testament Church. We need to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ as well as our love, dedication, and service unto Him. Needless to say, if a congregation continues to decline numerically, then this could be a warning sign of what is to come. Actions that a local church takes today regarding the Great Commission may very well shape the future of that congregation.

Anyone interested in the subject of church growth should start with God’s Word. Today, all kinds of church growth manuals are being written, but the Bible is the original one and cannot be improved upon. In fact, within the early church at the time great growth was taking place, they didn’t even have all the written Scriptures that we have today, but they did have the “power” of God. There are some basic Biblical

principles necessary in order for a church to be built God's way. The principles are found throughout the Bible, but some specifically good ones are found in the Book of Acts.

Principle Number One

The first principle that we find in Acts 1:8, shows us that there must be a commitment to serve as "witnesses" for Jesus Christ. Our commitment must not be to growth, but to obedience to the command of Christ in being "witnesses" to the ends of the "earth" beginning in our own "Jerusalem." We must be committed to making evangelism and missions a top priority. That outreach is to begin right where we live, in our "Jerusalem." The early church did grow numerically because God grew the church. Only God can grow His church! He is Lord of His church! He does expect His church to be obedient to His Word. The early church didn't sit and wait for people to come to them, but they took the Gospel into the streets and marketplaces. It's the job of every believer, not just the pastor, to be a positive witness for Jesus Christ within our local communities. May God help us to so live that we will demonstrate before our peers that we serve a living Lord that has changed our lives, made us new creatures in Christ, and remains in the soul saving and life changing business today.

Principle Number Two

The second principle teaches us that God's people ought to be in harmony and must be people of "prayer." Acts 1:14, tells us that the early believers "continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." More than eighteen times in the Book of Acts, the prayer life of the church is stressed. We need to learn how to agonize in prayer over the needs of a lost world and our own spiritual conditions. There are no substitutes for prayer because apart from it, genuine godly spiritual growth will never be realized. S.D. Gordon said, "Prayer is striking the winning blow, service is gathering up the results." Spurgeon called prayer, the healing apparatus of the church. Prayer gives the church its warm fervent spirit and connects us to the power of God. The church must commit itself to corporate prayer because that's how we acknowledge our total dependence on God.

Principle Number Three

The third principle teaches that there must be good leadership "chosen" to "take part" in the ministry. Acts 1:24-25 tells us that "they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou has chosen, That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place." In this passage of Scripture, we are reading about a replacement for Judas who had sold Jesus out to the enemy. We learn from the life of Judas that it is possible for wrong leadership to arise within the church of which we ought to beware. There is no institution, not even the church that will arise above its

quality of leadership. If we have the kind of local church that God wants us to have, then we must have spiritual leaders that are willing to pay the necessary price. Godly leadership will not always make people happy, but godly leaders will seek to please God rather than men. The leadership of a church is responsible for seeking the mind of God, which will determine the direction of a local congregation.

Principle Number Four

The fourth principle shows us that there must be a time of “gladness” and “praising” within the fellowship of believers. Acts 2:46-47 speaks of how “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, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” Ten times in the Book of Acts, Luke described the New Testament Church as being harmonious. There is such bickering in the world; people shouldn’t find it in the church. The New Testament assembly ought to be a place where God’s Spirit of love, joy, unity, and sweet fellowship is found. Conflict in the church has no place among those that focus on the preeminence of Christ. The early church had joy in their services because they focused their attention on God and not themselves. Joy comes from unity and unity comes from hearts that genuinely are praising God.

Principle Number Five

The fifth principle reminds us that there will be obstacles along the way; therefore, we must have a determination to overcome them in the “name of Jesus” (Acts 4:12,18). The early church faced great obstacles, but rather than becoming barriers, the obstacles became channels for the demonstration of God’s supernatural power. I remind you of the old chorus that says, “At the name of Jesus, demons will have to flee.” Just keep in mind that there were people who tried to discourage the early church and the devil still has his same ungodly crowd around today.

Principle Number Six

The sixth principle shows us that there must be an attitude of celebration with the “Holy Spirit” being evident in our services (Acts 4:31). When we gather for a congregational worship service, we need to remember that it’s not about us but our Lord. Too many of our local churches of today have lost the spirit of excitement and anticipation. Vance Havner said, “We meet at 11 o’clock sharp and quit at 12 o’clock dull.” We don’t need to turn a church service into a three-ring circus, but we do need to let people see that the power of God is still in our midst.

Principle Number Seven

The seventh principle teaches us that there must be a firm stand upon the “Word” of God (Acts 8:4). The Bible must be central in all that we do in the local church. We must share it, teach it, and preach it with clarity and conviction if hungry sinners are going to get spiritual satisfaction. Not only must it be taught in the classroom, preached in the pulpit, but believed and practice by those who profess it. The Word of God is not something that we merely talk about, but live-out both in the church and in our community. God never told a local church to be big, but He does expect her to be faithful to His Word and by faith to stand upon His promises.

Principle Number Eight

The eighth principle will not let us forget that God’s work is not easy. There must be a willingness to “work” hard “night and day” (Acts 13:2, 20:31). Christian service is a privilege, but it’s also hard work. We need to declare war on laziness and realize that we cannot enjoy victory without sacrifice. God needs willing workers that will exert the effort and be available to serve as a channel of blessing to others. Local churches are not social clubs for the elite, but spiritual hospitals for needy sinners. Our message is that Jesus saves sinners and then empowers us to glorify Him in a world that is in desperate need of Him. May our prayer be that God will use us and not refuse us in magnifying Christ to our community, city, and regions beyond.

A Word From The Ministry

As we have just completed the observance of Christmas for 2014, I trust that you have had a blessed time of celebrating the meaning of this precious time of year. It’s more than the mortal mind can comprehend to think how God could love sinners so much that He would come down to earth in a human body and pay the sin debit for His people. To God be the glory!

I’m glad to report that my new book, ***Godly Servants, A Glimpse into the subject of Elders, Deacons, and Deaconesses***, has now been published and is ready for distribution. Also, I’ve just completed the second printing of ***My Life as A Pastor, Shepherding God’s Sheep and Herding Goats*** and also the second printing of ***Divorce, Marriage, and Remarriage, What Does the Bible Really Teach?*** These books are available upon request and are free of charge. There is no cost to anything that we offer. Let me also say that these books are not published with funds from this ministry. If any donations are received as a result of these books, the money is deposited into COGM. This is a faith ministry and we trust the Lord to supply the needs as long as He wants this ministry to continue. COGM exists to exalt Christ and to get the Word of God out to the world so that the Holy Spirit might call out God’s elect and build up the body of Christ.

For a matter of information, I’m currently working on my newest book that I hope to have published sometime in 2015. The name of it is, ***On What Day of the Week Was Christ Crucified?*** Hopefully, all of these books will be of help to many who are struggling with satanic attack and be helpful in discovering the beautiful truths of God’s Word so that one might find strength to help in the time of need. Thanks to all who support this ministry with your prayers and financial giving.

Because of His Sovereign Grace.....BWM