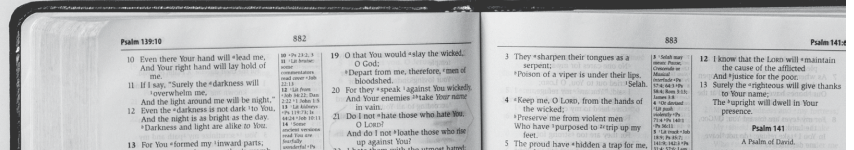


Words of Truth

Growing Christ's Church God's Way



Featured Authors

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Adam Faughn- Adam is the pulpit minister for the Central church of Christ in Paducah, KY. He has also preached for the Lebanon Rd. church of Christ (TN) and the 9th Ave. church of Christ (AL). He's married to Leah and they have two children.

Why I Must Preach the Gospel?

Erick Chaney, Priceville, AL

When presented with an opportunity, under normal circumstances, one has two primary responses, to take advantage of the opportunity or to let it slip away. In Matthew 28, Jesus presents his people with the opportunity to change their lives and the lives of others by following his commands of making disciples! The word "Gospel" means good news, and what an opportunity to shine our light into a dark world! The best example of discipleship is how you live your life for God daily. We will examine three reasons why we must preach the Gospel!

Conviction- Jeremiah thought he could curb the urge not to preach, but he described it as a "fire in his bones." Peter and John in Acts 4 asked, "Should we please men or God?" They could not deny the things they had seen or heard about Jesus. Note how Paul describes the Gospel in 1 Corinthians 15- Christ died for our sins, was buried in a tomb, and three days later he raised! All of this was confirmed according to the Scriptures. Preaching must convict us of sharing the soul-saving message of our Lord.

Compassion- After a long day of teaching, Jesus and the apostles realized they had not eaten. The apostles wanted to send the crowd home, but Jesus had more work to accomplish among the people. He looked upon them compassionately and fed everyone until they were filled. How many of our friends, neighbors, and even enemies are walking around hungry when we have the bread of life? Jesus says He is the bread of life! (John 6:35)

Completion- Sin means to miss the mark. We all have sinned against God and have fallen short (Romans 3:23). The payment for sin is death, but God intervened and gave us his Son so that we may be completed in righteousness (Romans 6:23). He gave us his inspired Scriptures to shape and mold our lives so that one day we may obtain what God intends for us to be. (2 Timothy 3:16-17) I must take up my cross daily and embrace the new life God has given me (Luke 9:23). I must preach the whole counsel of God, even when it is uncomfortable or conforming to the pressures of modern culture. The Gospel, when preached wholly and correctly, will create a complete Christian ready to reach any listener for the cause of Christ. The Gospel will transform us from self-serving to savior- serving!

Jesus promises his church to dwell with him in heaven one day eternally. (John 14:2) I must preach the Gospel to help make sure no rooms are left empty. The church must preach the cross of Christ with conviction, compassion, and completion. What a perfect opportunity to reserve a place among the redeemed. I must preach the Gospel!

Being an Evangelistic Christian in Today's World

Matthew Morine, Castle Rock, CO

No one just tells you to act. No one tells you to walk on to a stage and portray a character without some coaching. People would not expect you to shoot a basketball without some instruction. You are given pointers on how to hold the ball, where to place your feet, and the technique of releasing the ball. Instruction is helpful in all areas of life. You could put on a pair of skates, step onto a hockey rink, and fall flat on your face. You are not a bad person or unathletic. You are merely lacking the proper know how.

The other problem is the people doing the instruction. The gospel is the same every day, but the approaches how to share it can change. Years ago, a preacher would ride into a town, set up a tent, and hold a gospel meeting that the local residents would attend. Did it matter which Church was hosting? Not really. The people would be happy to hear preaching. Imagine doing this today, you buy a horse, rent a tent, and put it in the center of town without advertising, and how many people do you believe would be there? During other times people would host debates within the community, and thousands of people attended. People would be persuaded by the truth and turn to Jesus. Now many people feel it is wrong to even disagree about religious matters. We need to teach how to evangelize within modern America. To be evangelistic in the world today, there are two valuable lessons. One is to be the right person and then to use an authentic approach.

Be The Right Person

Jesus warns his followers about the need to be the right person to spread the word of God. To teach others about Jesus, you need to be the right kind of person inside. Your motives need to be pure. You are not sharing Jesus to gain numbers or to meet some goal. You are delivering the saving message of the Gospel because you care about the eternal destiny of other people. Matthew 7:16-20 states, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them."

Look at the first phrase, "Beware of false prophets." These prophets were evangelists. Their goal was to spread God's message to other people. Everything a modern day Christian is to do, like teaching people about Jesus, these prophets had the same evangelistic

commission. Would Jesus look at some of our people and call them "false Christians?" Have you ever thought about how you produce what you are? These false prophets did not have pure hearts in converting people, so instead of producing a crop of loving prophets, all these prophets were more wolves, thistles, and bad tasting fruit. If the youth group is awful, maybe do not look at the youth group. Look at yourself. Did you help produce this? Jesus puts this principle even harsher in Matthew 23:15 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves."

Use an Authentic Approach

In an age of authenticity, speaking through a story allows someone to transcend the resistance to the faith. A person's story is always legitimate and valid. Instead of creating a debate or dispute, a person's story is received and often accepted. Start with drawing out the other person's faith experience first. If you can invite that person to share a story with you, there is a good chance that this person will listen to your story too. A person will find it difficult to debate the meaning or experience of another person's faith journey.

We often overlook the role of shame in sharing the gospel with others. When people encounter the gospel in American society, there is an assumption that the Christian is judging them. When someone shares their story and begins with weakness, the other person can listen better. There could be hidden resistance to listening because of unspoken shame in not living up to specific moral values. Unless someone can trust you with feelings, that person rarely allows an honest hearing of the gospel. Shame will block receptivity.

One sees the role of shame in the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. John 4:16-19, "Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come here.'" The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus told her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet." In this interaction, Jesus addresses the elephant in the room.

(Continued on page 8)

Church Growth in Urban Areas

Scott McCown, Tuscaloosa, AL

Books, online posts, and lectures on church growth focus on programs, research on attracting various generations, and what people say they look for in a church. I am learning from these books, articles on church growth, and thirty-five years of experience in ministry at three congregations in suburban, rural, and urban settings that growth begins with a welcoming atmosphere.

Where We Preach God's Word- What else should a cell group of Christ's followers teach? Jesus said His word is the standard. ". . . the word I spoke will judge him on the last day." (John 12:48)

Where There is Compassion- Preach God's Word and demonstrate love to each other. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: even as I have loved you, that you are to love one another. By this will all know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35, LSB).

Where There is Accountability- Christians are to be different from the world and hold each other accountable. Paul urges Christians to live moral and godly lives. "But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh;" (Galatians 5:16-17)

When a Church Provides Avenues for Ministry- Plug people into worship roles, ministries, or projects they can participate in by contributing their time and talents. Be sure these ministries reach out to the lost and encourage others. "Pure and undefiled religion before our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained by the world" (James 1:27).

Where Worship is Theological and Meaningful- Many church leaders think people want entertainment in worship. However, many worshippers wish to come in closer contact with God, His Word, and His holy people. Prayers should bring people into the presence of God, and the Lord's Supper should take people back to the Cross and Christ's sacrifice. Fill worship with contemporary and traditional hymns that point people to God and encourage living for Christ. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with gratefulness in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16).

Where We Do More Than Go Through the Motions of Worship- We can do all the right things in a worship assembly and perform them in all the right ways, but if our spirit is not in worship, our worship is useless.

God and those who visit our assemblies can see the difference. "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24).

Where the Church is Multicultural- We live in a multi-ethnic society and must welcome those of different ethnicities. This principle should not be something that needs to be said in the 21st century, but many still struggle with some form of prejudice. Remember, the good news is for all. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. . ." (Romans 1:16).

When We Focus on Christ, not What is Wrong with _____ - One might fill in the blank with a political party. When I was in college, one Christian told me a Christian could not vote for a Democrat. A few months later, a Christian leader told me that a Christian could not be a Republican. Let the news cover politics while we focus on the Good News of God's love. One might fill in the blank with a denominational doctrine. Preach the dangers of sin, but also proclaim the good news of Christ. Preach the nature and purpose of Christ's Church but don't forget our first love. "But I have this against you, that you have left your first love." (Revelation 2:4).

Where Christians Live Consistently- People are watching; our actions will influence them toward or away from Christ. Treat people the way Christ would treat them. God told His Old Covenant People, "I hate, I reject your feasts, nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer up to me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; and I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fattings. Remove from me the tumult of your songs; I will not even listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." (Amos 5:21-24). His New Covenant people should not live worldly during the week and think we appease God with an hour of worship. If we are not daily living for God, why should we expect Him to accept our worship? If we live inconsistent lives, why should we expect others to want to be a part of our group?

In our world of social media connections, people live increasingly isolated lives even while dwelling in urban areas. They need a place to belong, a community that welcomes and inspires them to grow. What will you and I do to help the congregation where we belong to have a welcoming atmosphere?

Practical Suggestions for Church Growth in a Small Town

Phillip Hines, Hartselle, AL

Hartselle, Alabama is a city with a population of 15,649. I have lived and ministered here for the last forty-two years. When I moved to Hartselle in 1980, the population was 8,000-9,000. I have always loved small towns and chose to serve God in these places all my life. The opportunities for church growth are immense. The main thing that has always appealed to me is that the local church can build a strong relationship with the whole town. In spreading the gospel, the adage “People do not care how much you know until they know how much you care” is true. Through the years, we have been doing various things to build a relationship with our city. Our goal has been for everyone in Hartselle to know that we exist and love our community. We want the citizens of Hartselle to know what we are doing, and we strive to get them into our facilities as often as possible. Put another way, we try to saturate the town with good works and Good News.

Two things are essential if a local church is to saturate a town with good works and the Good News. First, a church must want to grow. Secondly, they must be willing to pay the price for that growth. Growing a church anywhere requires money, time, volunteers, and energy.

Below are some practical things that we have done in the past and continue to use now to reach out to our small town, show God’s love, and share the truth of His Word.

Mailing into every home in the city and the seven rural routes around Hartselle- We would do this every year and during special events. These mailouts informed everyone about what was going on inside our walls. I realize that times have changed with the popularity of social media, mass emails, and texting. However, there is still something special about getting a personal invitation through the mail. During election times, politicians know this is still a great way of getting the message out.

Campaigns at the Local Civic Center- Throughout the years, this has been one of the most effective things that we have done. We moved the location of our campaigns from the church building to a neutral site. We mailed into every home, used radio and television ads, social media, hung banners across Main Street, and displayed yard signs. Everyone knew about the event. The theme would vary each time. There would be some years when we would focus on the family, and other times we would just have a good old-fashioned Gospel Meeting. This type of meeting was done every two to three years. The response from the community was unbelievable. During one such campaign, we had 357 visitors from Sunday through Wednesday!

Involved in Organizations and City Projects- Members are encouraged to be involved in the local clubs and

the service projects that they sponsor. We were heavily involved in the Clean City Organization. Groups from the church would consistently clean our own adopted area in town. Before special events in Hartselle, we would help the city by weed eating and cleaning wherever necessary.

Feeding the Hundreds- Each Christmas Day, we feed somewhere between seven and eight hundred people who are elderly or otherwise in need. Our members prepare food, and we assemble and deliver the meals on Christmas Day. Most everyone in town knows about our feeding of the hundreds. We even receive financial donations for this event each year from various community members. Other citizens show up that day and want to help prepare and deliver the meals. What an outreach this has been for us in Hartselle!

Preschool- This has been one of our best evangelistic ministries in the last several years. Children from the community come to our facility three days a week. Three-fourths of the students were children this past school season who did not attend our church! Their parents and grandparents regularly visit our facilities, and we can build wonderful relationships with them. Some have been baptized, and others are visiting our services regularly.

Come Home Campaigns- Another way to grow a small church is to work on restoring the erring. Through the years, we have had campaigns just for that purpose. A list was made of all who had stopped attending. Letters were sent to each one. Within a month, the elders and minister set up times and visited each person. During that month, sermons were preached on the subject. This was all done in a very loving way. In every one of those campaigns which we have conducted, we always had those who had wandered from the Lord to come back home. During one of those campaigns, close to two hundred responded to the invitation on a Sunday morning!

Trunk or Treat- We have transformed our Trunk or Treat event into a city-wide block party for the past several years. Along with decorating the cars and giving out candy, we prepare hotdogs and hamburgers and invite the town to join us. Hundreds come to this event! Information about the Church is handed out to all who attend.

The apostles were accused of filling Jerusalem with their doctrine (Acts 5:28). “Publicly, and from house to house” they testified both to Jews and Greeks (Acts 20:20). They used every available means to reach out to every available person. We must rededicate ourselves to capturing our cities and towns for Christ

Practical Suggestions for Effective Gospel Meetings

Adam Faughn, Paducah, KY

“We had a Gospel Meeting, and not even our members came.” “Folks just don’t turn out to a meeting anymore.” “We used to have meetings, but it’s not worth it these days.”

Have you found yourself saying or hearing similar things? For many congregations, a Gospel Meeting is something they either have stopped having altogether. Or, they do it each year because they have always done it. Often, leaders are frustrated by a lack of attendance, and they wonder if it is worth it.

Certainly, each congregation’s leadership needs to make such decisions for their location. Having or not having a Gospel Meeting is not a sign of spiritual health or lack thereof! That said, in a time when people are wondering if Gospel Meetings are just a thing of the past, there is an argument to be made to continue the practice, but with some other considerations to see it as an effective use of time and funds.

Here are a few suggestions to consider.

State the Purpose- This point needs to be made each time a meeting is held. If there is no purpose other than “we’ve always done it,” that is not good enough. Why do you want to have this meeting and have this speaker address these subjects? Is it evangelistic? Is it to build up the membership? Is it to teach on a specific topic (family, plan of salvation, etc.)? Having a stated purpose will give you direction in your planning and help evaluate the meeting once it is done.

Promote Widely- A few announcements from the pulpit and a blurb in the bulletin just do not do it anymore. Utilize social media, and seek to do so creatively. (By the way, this might be wonderful work for a young person in your congregation.) Just about the time when you think you have shared too much about the event, you are probably just starting to actually get into the minds of the people, so don’t stop.

Don’t Focus on Who is Not There- It is tremendously discouraging to hear someone get up to start a service and say something like, “Well, I wish we had more folks here tonight.” Instead, build up those who did make an effort to attend! When they are discouraged by low attendance at something, I often tell our elders to think of those who are there. They wanted to attend and were built up in the faith.

Clear Your Calendar and Announcements- If your church calendar is loaded with activities, that looks good in some ways, but it can also burn people out. Additionally, the

announcement of a Gospel Meeting, in the midst of 10 minutes’ worth of other announcements, gets lost. (And if you think people know that “this” announcement is more important than “that” one, they don’t.) People need focus. So, if the elders want the congregation to focus on a Gospel Meeting, that needs to be reflected in fewer but more clear announcements and a clearer calendar around such an event.

Plan More than Just the Speakers Years Ahead- This is very difficult to do, but it is worth a try. Certainly, you want wonderful speakers, but have you considered looking down the road and choosing speakers (1) on very specific topics and (2) that may not have to be a “Sunday through Wednesday”? Maybe every 3rd or 4th year, you simply have a weekend seminar on a needed subject in lieu of your “normal” Gospel Meeting. Or, perhaps, you get a speaker one year that is not as well-known but who truly knows a particular subject (apologetics or Christian finances, for example). The timing could still “rotate” around the normal Sunday (maybe your people know that the 3rd Sunday in July is always when your Gospel Meeting happens), but every few years, it is not the usual weekday meeting and is more of a seminar.

Pray Fervently- When something has worked in the past, it is quite easy to become complacent in prayer for that event. As such, it is worth asking if we are really seeking God’s wisdom and design for that particular event. Pray for wisdom for the elders. Pray for the speaker. Pray for yourself and your learning and enthusiasm for the meeting. Pray for open doors to invite others and the courage to go through those doors. Pray that other members who may not typically come to such an event will see the spiritual benefit.

Before closing, let me give a quick word to those who may speak at Gospel Meetings. I wish this went without saying, but it still needs to be said: do your best! It can be tempting to dust off an old sermon, glance over it, and not really put your heart into it because you are a guest speaker. But you are still preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ, no matter the setting! Even if you feel as if the crowd is small or not engaged, give the preaching of the Gospel everything you have, all to the glory of God.

The days of a simple advertisement for a meeting drawing a huge crowd may be well in our collective rearview mirrors, but that does not mean that these special efforts do not still have some value. We just have to look at them the right way and do all things as unto the Lord.

Twenty-First Century Church Growth the First-Century Way

Justin Guin, Editor

You read about a thriving, growing church in Acts of the Apostles. Luke lists several church growth reports throughout the book as the gospel spreads from a fledging band of disciples in Jerusalem to the “ends of the Earth” (Acts 1:8). A few years ago, I marked these passages in my Bible. It reminded me of the zeal and dedication of the first-century church. Note the exponential expansion of the gospel:

- “So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41, ESV).
- “Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47, ESV).
- “But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand” (Acts 4:4, ESV).
- “And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women” (Acts 5:14, ESV).
- “And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7, ESV).
- “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied” (Acts 9:31, ESV).
- “And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:21, ESV).
- “But the word of God increased and multiplied” (Acts 12:24, ESV).

Can you imagine if a missionary reported these types of responses at your local church? Frankly, I am ashamed to admit that I would immediately be skeptical if they did. What were they doing to be effective? What can the twenty-first century church learn from our first-century spiritual ancestors? For these answers, let us consider some thoughts from one of these passages, Acts 9:31.

Acts 9 is a pivotal chapter in Luke’s second volume. The gospel is transitioning from Samaria to the Gentile world (cf. Acts 10:1ff). Also, the primary church leader is changing from Peter to Paul. As Luke ends this chapter, he notes the state of the church thus far in the narrative. They had four characteristics: 1) The church enjoyed peace. 2) It was edified. 3) The disciples walked in the fear of the Lord. 4) These Christians were comforted by the Holy Spirit. This recipe led to the church growing in zeal and number. These qualities in the twenty-first century church will produce healthy, growing churches. Consider each one of them further in our study.

In the Bible, there are only a few things that are described as both good and pleasant. Psalm 133:1 says, “Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity.” A

unified church is healthy, and healthy churches grow in all areas. What are some characteristics of peace-filled churches? They are servant-minded disciples. They look to others’ interests above their own. Furthermore, they seek selflessness in a world motivated by conceit (Phil. 2:1-4). Loving, caring people attract others because they are encouraging and helpful.

People come to our assemblies that are beaten down by the world. They’re looking for an oasis of refreshment in a desert of discouragement. The church is that place for many people. Following time together, you should leave edified. Why? A church that builds up others helps people believe in the possibility of improving their character and circumstances with God’s help.^[i] Unity, encouragement, and growth go hand-in-hand (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-36).

What is your congregation’s attitude toward God? The first-century church walked in the fear of the Lord. What does this mean? Let’s understand what it means to “fear the Lord.” This attitude reveres God with the respect and obedience he deserves. When Moses approached the burning bush, the LORD required him to take off his sandals because the ground was holy. Isaiah saw the glory of God in the temple and could not help but exclaim, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” (6:3). Fearing the LORD recognizes the holiness and magnificence of God and responding with obedient faith (cf. Eccl. 12:13). There is no substitute for Bible-believing, Bible-obeying Christians. It shows you are walking in the fear of the Lord.

What made the presence of the Holy Spirit comforting? Following Jesus’ departure, his role was to reveal the truth to the church (cf. John 14:26; 16:13). The church clearly understood God’s will by the Holy Spirit’s revelation. The church today must take up the mantle of being a pillar and buttress of truth (cf. 1 Tim. 3:15). It is comforting to know we also can clearly understand God’s divine truth through the Scriptures. As we uphold truth before the world, we preach it in word and deed. There can be no compromise of truth. When compromise creeps into the church, it ceases to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As we seek to restore New Testament Christianity, the attitudes of the first-century church are just as important as the actions. The first-century church continued to grow in health and number. If we will follow their example, so will the twenty-first century church.

[i] Aubrey Johnson, *The Barnabas Factor* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 2004) 23.

PREACHING MATTERS.

God is more invested, interested, and involved in the growth of your church than you are. Because it is His church and because of His investment in it (Matthew 16:18-18; Acts 20:28). We believe that the power of the Gospel is still effective and that a congregation of God's People can remain true to the Word of God and grow. But church health, which is most directly connected to church growth, does not just happen. It takes effort to keep a body healthy. In our work we have been blessed to work with growing churches and today we see many healthy growing congregations. We offer to you two Top Ten lists, one of the church at large and one for the minister.

We invite your comments and ideas as we strive to make this as useful as possible. Please send any of those to TJI@TheJenkinsInstitute.com.

- Jeff & Dale Jenkins

Top Ten Church Growth Keys from The Jenkins Institute

FOR THE CHURCH

- Provide and promote strong Biblical Preaching and Teaching
- Build up faithful, Christ-exalted Leadership
- Encourage servant-minded Deacons
- Focus on evangelism & outreach
- Build a Bible School Program that focuses on children
- Create a vibrant Youth Ministry
- Design activities that show caring for the community around you
- Support a Mission Program that involves the whole Church
- Take Care of Widow/Widowers in meaningful ways
- A Church where every member serves and loves one another

BONUS: Never forget, Church Growth is really about Church Health

FOR THE MINISTER

- * Preach the Word
- * Conduct Personal Bible studies
- * Be a positive influence
- * Work with your Elders
- * Don't fixate on non-essential matters
- * Do not let growth become God
- * Do not seek or escalate strife
- * Dream: Have goals and plans
- * Help plan and implement programs that show care for your community
- * Promote programs that involve everyone
- * Love the church and express it in everything you do

Only 44% of churches of Christ have an annual planning/goal setting time.

-TJI Research, 12/21

OUR MISSION

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in [b] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

- Matthew 28:19, Jesus

Church Growth is a by-product of fulfilling our mission which is the Great Commission.

A Word of Encouragement JESUS & CHURCH GROWTH

Jesus was never vague or uncertain in His statements about the Kingdom. He was clear from the beginning that He wants His Church to grow. "Preach the Gospel to every creature," "Make Disciples of all nations," and, "as far as the remotest part of the earth."

Our Lord was passionate about the spreading of the Kingdom. "How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling."

If Jesus was that interested and that passionate, why would His disciples today, not have the same desire to follow in His steps? Brothers, those of us who are preachers should be leading the way. We should be talking about Kingdom growth, and we should be praying about it, we should be promoting the growth of the church. We should be studying the Word with those who are not Christians and we should be encouraging our church families to do the same.

In our seminars, we often discuss the significance of church health. We believe generally that healthy churches will also grow spiritually and numerically. However, it is possible for us to be so inward focused that we fail to reach out with the Good News to those who do not know our Savior. There is no substitute for prayerful, hard work when it comes to sharing the Good News!



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The conversation about faith would be stalled out until this secret was revealed. No matter how Christians view themselves, the world sees Christians as judgmental and unaccepting. To evangelize well, young Christians need to be vulnerable, within limits, by sharing personal mistakes because people's shame will keep an impenetrable wall up between the gospel and their hearts. In telling our salvation stories, weakness and grace have to be at the forefront of the account. The reason is that people will do everything possible to get out of the conversation to protect themselves from feeling shame. Jesus could not continue to make an impact with the Samaritan woman unless he cut through the guilt she would have been feeling about her multiple marriages. Over the last few decades, the standard methodology in evangelism was to share facts and hope for faith. With the changing societal dynamics, the pathway of gaining a hearing for the gospel has become more complex. But the gospel will work when we work on sharing it through a story. The barriers might be higher currently, but the power of the gospel will still resonate in good and honest hearts. So share your story.

When you combine a loving story with a loving heart, people will be more receptive to you sharing your faith with them. We might not always do evangelism perfectly, so remember that God is also part of the evangelistic process. Do the best you can, and trust God to use the power of his word to do the heavy lifting. God desires all people to be saved, so God through providence, can influence the evangelistic process.

The words of *Truth*

The Words of Truth

is a bi-monthly publication overseen by the elders of the Sixth Avenue Church of Christ in Jasper, Alabama. It is dedicated to the promotion and defense of New Testament Christianity.

Justin Guin, Editor



The Words of Truth

is sent free to all upon request.

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