

BENEFITS AND OBLIGATIONS OF A SMALL CHURCH

Matt 18:20

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Churches come in all sizes... Some large, numbering in the thousands, even tens of thousands; some small, with as few as two or more people meeting in a home Matt 18:20
- B. Definition of church size rather arbitrary, but here is one
 - 1. Small church less than 200 (80% of churches)
 - 2. Medium church has 201-400 (10% of churches)
 - 3. Large church has 401+ (10% of churches)
 - 4. For some, even 200 members is a large church
- C. Each size has advantages & disadvantages
 - 1. Large church can do more with increased resources
 - 2. Benefits of small churches often lost in larger churches
- D. Purpose is not to encourage stagnation in church growth, but to remind us of the benefits (and obligations) of a small church lest we become discouraged

DISCUSSION:

I. BENEFITS OF A SMALL CHURCH

- A. Stronger sense of family Eph 3:14,15; 2:19
 - 1. Everyone knows everyone. Face-to-face interaction easier - even if don't remember names, we do faces
 - 2. Easier to develop familial relationships
 - a. A sense of "family", which is proper 1Tim 5:1-2
 - b. An opportunity to cross generational lines
 - 1) Children relate to others besides their peers
 - 2) Young & old benefit from other's strengths
 - 3. Family of God a wonderful blessing Mk 10:28-30; a blessing most often experienced in small churches
- B. Greater opportunities to grow Eph 4:15; 1Pet 2:2; 2Pet 3:18
 - 1. More likely that we are needed: roles to fill not much different in large and small churches
 - a. Such as serving in worship, Bible classes, etc.
 - b. Large or small, number of teachers, preachers, song leaders, etc., needed is about same
 - c. Ratio of roles to members usually greater in small
 - d. Don't have as many members to choose from
 - e. So often greater need in small churches
 - 2. More likely to be used in small church
 - a. Larger churches often have large rotation list, so may be used only once in a long while
 - b. Smaller churches use those willing more often
 - 1) Of necessity at times, but may be by design
 - 2) Small churches often training ground where leaders for large churches develop skills
 - 3. More likely missed in small church

- a. Absence more keenly felt in a small church
 - 1) May be needed as Bible class teacher etc
 - 2) Absence not noticed much in larger church
- b. Important for ones needing encouragement
 - 1) It is too easy to get lost in a crowd
 - 2) Take notice at signs of weakness Gal 6:1-2
- 4. Proportionally speaking, more preachers, teachers, elders, and average members have been developed by small churches than large churches
- C. Many things large church can do a small church cannot.
- D. Must appreciate benefits of a small church

II. THE OBLIGATIONS OF A SMALL CHURCH

- A. Nurture sense of family Note Eph 6:4; 1Tim 5:1
 - 1. As a church provide for spiritual fellowship
 - a. Bible classes, gospel meetings, etc.
 - b. Visit to encourage weak, minister to sick
 - 2. Individually, provide opportunities for hospitality
 - a. Inviting others into homes, going out together
 - b. Get together socially, such as potlucks
 - 3. While nurturing sense of family, be careful not to limit efforts to those in our physical families!
- B. Provide opportunities for growth 2Tim 2:2; Acts 18:26
 - 1. Training those willing to learn and serve 1Tim 1:18; 6:20
 - a. Men's classes to develop abilities
 - b. Ladies' classes on teaching ladies, children
 - 2. Using those willing to develop abilities
 - a. Men opportunities to preach, lead singing, etc.
 - b. Women willing to teach children, other women,
 - 3. Preacher not shirking duties when pulpit & classes opened so others can gain experience 2Tim 2:2
- C. Watch for stagnation 1Cor 15:58; Gal 6:9
 - 1. Tempting to remain small because of advantages of a small congregation - its warmth, friendliness, etc.
 - 2. Lord expects us to grow Matt 13:31-32; Jhn 15:1-2
 - a. Must not be content to remain small
 - b. Must grow as individuals and congregation
 - 3. If not growing, we are likely beginning to die
- D. Appreciate obligations of small church

CONCLUSION

- A. There are advantages to different sizes in congregations
- B. Point not to suggest one size is superior to another, but ensure we do not let smallness become hindrance
- C. As a small focus on strengths, leading to growth, if not, we will likely stagnate, if not die altogether
- D. By recognizing benefits and obligations, it is more likely they will remain healthy