

CHURCH UPDATE

"The Secret To Church Growth"

We are living at a time in church history that has seen the emergence of mega churches. I refer to those whose membership numbers are in the tens of thousands. However, at the same time, many churches still struggle to experience even marginal growth, and some are in decline. Why is this? What is the secret to church growth?

We pastored Resurrection Fellowship for 32 years. When we arrived, the church had only 47 voting members, but we were blessed to witness remarkable growth, resulting in a church of over 3,000 at the time of our retirement. I share that only to establish the fact that we have some knowledge about church growth. God gave us an understanding of how to grow a church, and I would like to share it with you.

It all starts with the word "ministry." True ministry is simply touching people at the point of their need, and if you do this effectively, church growth will happen. Nothing can stop it. However, churches often use that word without truly understanding its meaning. As a result, they become a ministry that never ministers.

For us, ministry started by getting clear direction from God regarding which age group we wanted to target. We wanted to reach all age groups, but to achieve sustained church growth, we needed to focus on targeting one or two key groups. The church we had inherited was mostly made up of older adults. We loved these people, but we also understood that this demographic had to change if the church was to thrive for many years to come. Therefore, our focus was placed on reaching young adults.

We started by trying to figure out what their greatest needs were. You can't touch people at the point of their need if you don't know what their need is. This is not rocket science! We felt the greatest need of young married couples was to find a church

that really, truly cared about their children. Because we understood this, we set out to provide the best children's and youth ministries possible.

But now comes the difficult part of this article. Nearly every church claims to place a high priority on ministering to children and youth. But can they back that claim up? You have probably heard the saying, "follow the money, honey", and if you follow the money, you will find that they really don't place ministry to youth and children at the top of their priority list. The largest portion of most church budgets is typically allocated to debt retirement and salaries. Youth and children's ministries usually get the leftovers, and unfortunately, there usually isn't much left over.

Such was not the case with Resurrection Fellowship. I could write many pages about the things we did that were aimed at ministering to youth and children, but the best examples are Resurrection Christian School and the Rez Preschool. When Rez Preschool started, we provided all the facilities they needed, and never charged them any rent. We viewed Rez Preschool as a "ministry" of the church. Additionally, we invested millions of dollars to provide Resurrection Christian School with the facilities it needed to become one of the premier Christian schools in the nation. What most people don't know is that we also subsidized the school hundreds of thousands of dollars every year. Once again, we considered the school to be a "ministry" of the church. Obviously, there were other things we considered very important, but these were our primary focus.

In closing, every church needs to discover exactly what God has called it to do and then do it with a high degree of excellence. Included in this must be a mandate to touch people at the point of their need. If a church gets this figured out, church growth will happen. It cannot be stopped.

AND THAT MY FRIENDS IS THE TRUTH!