



Why Some Evangelism Fails – And What Really Works



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An evaluation of the principles that create healthy, growing congregations of quality

Point of Understanding: Growth Is The Natural Result Of A Healthy Organism

Sterility, or the inability to reproduce, is a consequence of a lack of health

- No flowers on a rose bush
- No fruit on an apple tree
- No heads of grain on a wheat plant
- No kernels of corn on a corn stalk

Crops depend on multiple factors to be fertile

- Healthy DNA in the seed – planting seed is not enough – it must be fertile seed
- The right balance of soil nutrients
- The right amount of water
- The right amount of sunlight and heat

When there is no fruit, the organism:

- May not be mature
- May not be healthy
- May not be properly fed (not “digged and dunged”)
- May not have good DNA – it may be sterile

We depend on the ability of God’s creation to reproduce – farmer’s math

- Normal math: $1+1 = 2$
- Farmer’s math: 1 seed + dirt = 300 new seeds
 - Farmers fertilize the soil
 - Farmers plant the seed
 - Some crops they water, other crops depend on the rain
- God gives the growth – we study it, but with all our science, we cannot duplicate the reproduction of life. ONLY God gives the growth.

Point of Understanding: The True Fruit of a Congregation:

- True Fruit of an apple tree? = another apple tree
- True fruit of a leader = another leader
- True fruit of a Christian = another Christian
- True fruit of a congregation = another congregation

Evangelism efforts by sick congregations don’t produce good results:

- Toxic congregations – dying for a reason



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- Better marketing of a bad congregation simply turns off more people in less time at a greater cost
- Congregations in conflict, focused on politics and the form of religion
- Congregations that do evangelism because they have to
- Evangelism for the wrong motive – “GETTING people to come to MY church.”

What works:

- Healthy and balanced congregations grow
- Focusing on improving the quality of your congregation across the board
- A shared passion for evangelism
- Enthusiastic members who are fully engaged in the mission of making new disciples
- Attending to local needs in a compassionate manner
- Being real people focused on real work
- Works in house churches up to mega/meta churches

What Can't Be Controlled:

- You can't control who will be called
- You can't control how many will be called
- You can't control when they will be called

What Can Be Controlled:

- The qualities of your leadership – who leads and how they lead
- How you utilize the gifts God gives your congregation
- The level of spiritual passion
- Whether your organization serves the mission of evangelism or whether the church exists to serve the organization
- The inspiring quality of your worship service
- How well you build bonds of fellowship and connect people
- Whether your evangelism meets your needs or the needs of non-Christians
- How much and how genuine your love is for each other



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How did Natural Church Development Get Started?

Problem: Churches are Losing Relevancy

85% of USA churches are not growing. They have plateaued or are declining.

Churches are losing their impact on society:

- No county in the USA has more people attending church than it did 10 years ago.
- The population of the USA has increased 11.4% while the combined church attendance of all Protestant denominations has declined 9.3%
- In 1945, 60% of Canadians attended church. In 2000, 15% attended church. 85% consider themselves spiritual.

“Church Growth” literature and movements have focused on methods and their results have generally not replicable or transferable.

Premise: God causes His natural creation to grow “all by itself” (Mk 4:26-29)

Question: How do we get in harmony with God’s will, His methods and His principles so our congregation will grow “all by itself”?

Basis:

- Empirical research
- Understanding how God’s creation works
- Scriptural study

Initial Research Study:

- 1,000 churches
- 32 countries
- 4.2 million pieces of data
- Tested for reliability and validity
 - Reliability = the consistency of the results, i.e. you get the same results if you repeated the survey
 - Validity = the relevance of the results i.e. the survey measures what it’s supposed to be measuring



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The Research Today:

- 32,000 churches
- 20,000 in the USA
- 60 countries involved
- Published in 25 languages
- 85% of churches that apply these eight quality principles grow in numbers

Research results:

- Healthy churches are growing churches
- Apart from unusual marketing or some other atypical factor, unhealthy churches tend not to grow
- Eight essential qualities were discovered:
 - Empowering leadership
 - Gift-oriented ministry
 - Passionate spirituality
 - Functional structures
 - Inspiring worship
 - Holistic small groups
 - Need-oriented evangelism
 - Loving relationships
- Churches that focus on their lowest quality characteristic:
 - Improve overall quality
 - Tend to grow numerically

Bottom line: New people are repulsed by low quality churches.
