

“See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.”

Matthew 18:10



BEREAN BIBLE CHURCH

Worship & Communion Service

Sunday, May 7, 2023

SERVICES & CONTACTS

Worship Services In-person & Online 10:40am & 6pm

 <https://www.youtube.com/user/bereanbarbados/live>

 <https://www.facebook.com/BereanBarbados/live>

Sunday School In-person 9:30 - 10:15am

 **ZOOM** links provided

Midweek In-person & Online Service (Wednesday)

Noon & 7:30 pm | ZOOM links provided

Youth Service in-person 7pm (Friday)

 **WhatsApp** 845 - 5752 or Tel: 426 - 4707

email: info@bereanbarbados.org

www.bereanbarbados.org

How A Good Desire for Church Growth Can Lead to Bad Ministry Practices

Many pastors around the world are weighed down with a heavy burden to see numerical growth. Whether you pastor in the global West or the East, you can feel the pressure.

Sometimes the desire for numerical growth is good-natured. A pastor wants to reach more lost people and provide faithful teaching to more people. Sometimes the desire is for pragmatic reasons. More people will make the church more financially viable, a pastor reasons. And a bigger budget can accomplish more ministry. And sometimes the desire for numerical growth is compromised. A man lusts for greater personal influence. Or to impress his donors and raise more support. Or to take pride in leading a large church.

The desire for numeric growth, in turn, leads many pastors to constantly look for growth strategies.

THE WRONG PATH

The trouble is this preoccupation with numbers sets us as pastors on the wrong trajectory. It lures us away from our primary calling of faithfully shepherding the flock that God has entrusted to us.

Let me assume for a second, pastor, that you desire such growth. What happens when you don't see hordes of people thronging through the church doors? When your dreams don't match reality are you tempted to think you're doing something wrong? Or that you're failing to do something you should do?

When such thoughts come, hopefully you turn to the Scriptures. But sadly, it's all too easy for us to look elsewhere. We can turn to other churches that seem to enjoy the growth we desire. We read books and attend seminars that celebrate all kinds of strategies. Perhaps we begin to focus on understanding the culture around us. We take polls and surveys to figure out what our neighbors might connect with. We assume the survey answers will help us know what people are really looking for and how we can connect our church to those needs.

I've spent a few years in the global West. I watched as pastors were tempted to think just the right kind of music or the right kind of programs or the right kind of application in preaching would do the trick. Pastoring in the East, as I do, I've watched as pastors feel the temptation to offer promises of healing, exorcism, or prosperity. But no matter where you are or what packages of promises tempt us, such philosophies of ministry address felt needs. They appeal to the flesh, soften the offence of the gospel, and sugarcoat its demands.

Yet here's what escapes our attention when we build our churches on these kinds of "attractional" strategies: we risk building on something other than the cross of Christ and the gospel. We also fail our people when we don't warn them that they will pay a price to follow Christ.

Worse still, you can cajole people into making decisions based on false promises of breakthroughs, a renewed purpose in life, a perfect loving community, prosperity, freedom from harm, even utopia! Sometimes the lies are blatant; more often they are subtle and disguised.

In the process, you offer a different Christ to people, one who appeals to their natural and often selfish desires, but who doesn't confront their sin, demand repentance, and

command total submission in all areas of their lives. Maybe they even join your church, but it's not because they want a crucified Christ. They certainly don't want to deny themselves and carry their cross to follow him.

Brother pastor, if you can see yourself in this at all, I appeal to you for love's sake, be careful. My guess is you might assume that, if lots of people are showing up, it must be the work of the Spirit. You tell yourself, as long as the lost are reached, it doesn't matter what strategy is being employed. But that's not true. The Spirit isn't the only one who can draw a crowd.

I can understand the impulse to lovingly disarm people, help them be comfortable, meet them where they are, and be relevant. I understand how you can tell yourself, "Let's just make first contact, and offer an easy introduction to the spiritual journey. Once the seekers have taken the first few steps, then we'll present Christ's demands." But ask yourself, did Jesus adopt this method? Is there any risk of bait-and-switch?

When you begin by promising people what they want, it's difficult to follow up with Christ's demands. If you do preach them to the church, folk respond with disillusionment, disappointment, and departure. Those who do stick around do so as long as they can get what they first came for: healing, wealth, prosperity, kids' programs, community, music, and so forth.

I trust you heard the phrase, what you win them with, you win them to. That's a real problem. When we build our churches by trying to attract people with what we know they like, we continually risk affirming people in the self-centeredness and consumerism. Some people will become Christians, but they won't grow, remaining spiritual dwarfs. The crowd on the whole, furthermore, will prove not to have loyalty or commitment. They'll be fickle, hard to please, easily disappointed. The day some other church can offer them something more exciting, more thrilling, they will be out of the door.

In the meantime, your pastoral team will practically kill themselves trying every trick to stay afloat in the market and retain an edge over your competitors. And, brother pastor, I don't want any of this for you.

THE WONDERFUL PANACEA

Consider Paul's strategy instead. You might find it refreshing. And simple. He writes,

And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. (1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

Paul did not want to draw people with the wisdom of men. He wanted the faith of his hearers to rest in the power of God and nothing else. That's why he was simply going to preach the gospel of Christ crucified.

This is exactly what we must do. When we preach this gospel, his sheep hear his voice—and they come to him, not to us, but to him! They don't have to be lured or pampered or coerced. They come because they see Christ's glory, and they stay because they love Christ's glory. As long as they hear his voice and see his glory in the preaching of the gospel, they will stay.

I'm reminded of what Simon Peter said to Jesus: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). It really is as simple as that. Once people see Jesus, then Jesus and his words are enough. Enough to draw them, enough to keep them, enough to sustain them, enough to bring them home!

Order of Service

COMMUNION SUNDAY

May 7, 2023 at 10:40am

THEME: "He alone is worthy to be worshiped"

1. Welcome/Announcements
2. Meditation
3. Invocation
4. Song: He Alone is Worthy
5. Hymn 383 – No Not one
6. Scripture Reading – Acts 13:1-12
7. Choir
8. Prayer
9. Tithe & Offering/Offertory – Hymn 619 – Stand Up Stand
10. Sermon – ACTS Sermon Series: Rev. Paul Garnes
11. Song – Behold the Lamb (vs. 1 & 2)
12. COMMUNION – DISTRIBUTION OF ELEMENTS
13. Song – Behold the Lamb who bears our sin (vs. 3 & 4)
14. Benediction
15. Choir – Postlude

ITEMS FOR PRAYER



- For mothers as they care, nurture and sacrifice for their children.
- For guidance as we build God's Church.
- Pray for Roselyn Dixon and the Greenidge family.
- Pray for the ministry and wellbeing of our Pastor and family.
- For healing for our sick members.
- For grace for our shut-in members.
- For the Berean Church DR Congo.
- For the friends of Berean – The Gilmours, Haecks, Hulls, Moores, Montagues, Porchers, Rogers, Rudders and Taylors.
- For our unemployed members to find meaningful employment.
- For the peace of Jerusalem.

May Birthdays



- 1 - Elon Richards
- 3 - Rachel Gibbs
- 5 - Joel Ellis
- 7 - Michael Aimey

- 8 - Julia Licorish
- 10 - Alfred Drayton
- Angela Ward
- 13 - Pamela Kellman

- 16 - Rachel Williams
- 19 - Harold Codrington
- 23 - Jennifer Thompson
- 28 - Heather Payne