

Why Church #7: What About THIS Church?

From previous lessons (1-5), we saw the Biblically-supported activities of a NT church:

Regular meetings	Evangelism
Recognized leadership	Fellowship and General Communion
Reading, preaching and teaching of the Word	Financial relief of poor saints
Discipleship training	Participation in the “ordinances”
Worship	Encouragement to “body ministry”
Prayer	Discipline of erring members

In lesson 6 we considered the purposes of the church, toward us as individuals, toward each other, toward other Christians, unbelievers, society in general, and toward God.

Now let us ask questions or make observations about our own particular church here in New Santa Fe, Indiana. This lesson will hopefully have more open discussion, so let us be completely honest. We can easily see activities and purposes in other churches that we think are off the mark, but how about us?

1. How do we line up with the activities and purposes described above?
 - Are we engaged in all the activities we see in the NT? If not, why not?
 - How well are we doing each of those activities? Are we balanced (not stressing some activities to the neglect of others)?
 - Are we doing other activities, and if so, are they in any way supportive of the real purposes of a NT church? If not, why are we doing them?
2. What is our goal, or purpose as a local church? Are our purposes the same as what we saw in the previous lesson? Do we have goals that are unique to us?
 - I used to think that a unique purpose of ours was to be a church for those who had come out of the Amish and Mennonite background, but it appears they saw us as more of a halfway house and so have moved on. We want to be supportive of Christians from whatever background they come, but we are not “Mennonite-Light”. We are simply Christians who desire to model ourselves fully after what we see in the Bible.
 - I believe God does have a unique calling for our church, but what is it? We are not to be mere copies of the large churches. There are at least four available in Kokomo alone. If people want a super church, they will just drive there, so there is no point in us trying to be one more of the same.
 - We must be faithful to what God has called us to be, and to the pattern he has laid out in the Bible.
3. So why would someone want to come here instead of driving to Kokomo for one of the large churches?
4. How can we perpetuate this church? The only way a church can continue generation after generation is to get new members – old people die off, and then what?
 - New members can come as children of older members, assuming they are converted and are not lackluster. But in this age of mobility, children don’t stay in the same locale for their whole lives.
 - Because of that mobility, sometimes new members will come as they move here from elsewhere, if they see in us a healthy church environment that meets their needs. In our rural community, I don’t see this as being very common, as it would be in Charleston, SC where people are moving in at over 100 a day.

- Some people will come to us from other churches, presumably because they see something here that they like better. But God's kingdom isn't really growing just because people are hopping from church to church. Churches should not be trying to snipe members from one another.
 - The only really effective way for a church to continually grow is for sinners to be converted and brought into the church for their spiritual development. That means people who already live and work here in this area.
 - Rev. 2:5 has a warning that applies to all churches – "... repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." We do not want God to remove our lampstand!
5. When we say we want to perpetuate the church, it is not for our own sake, but so that God will work through us for the glory of his name and his kingdom, in this community.
- Of course we want to see God glorified in other countries and cities, but this is where we live. This is where we should be laboring in the harvest. When we hear of great movings of the Spirit in other countries or cities, we should ask why not here? why not now? What are we doing to let it happen?
 - Why have so many people left the church? It is normal for people to come and go, but can we say that we are thriving as a church?
 - Why do we see so few new converts?
6. What is success?
- To be all that God has called us to be, and to do all that he has called us to do.
 - This means we must know what God has called us to be, in the past, the present, and at least partially in the future. We probably do not know (fully) what he has called us to in the future, but the only way we can ever hope to enter in to that, is to be faithful in the here and now.
 - This applies to us both as individuals, and as a church.
 - To those who are faithful in little, he will give the more.
 - For example, Philip and Stephen were appointed in Ac. 6:5 to what appears to be a type of "deacon's" office in the church. Yet they grew so that in 6:8 "Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people", and went on to become a great martyr for the faith in chapter 7. Then Philip became an evangelist to Samaria and the Ethiopian eunuch in chapter 8.
 - Are we being faithful as individuals, so God can trust us with more?
 - Are we being faithful as a church, so God can trust us with more?
7. What are our personal goals and purposes in the church?
- My own goals are to be a Christian teacher, to be a stable example of a life lived faithfully to Christ, to pray for everyone in the church, to support it financially, and to be constantly growing spiritually. I also want to see a great outpouring of the Spirit in power and anointing for healings and miracles. Why? So God will be glorified, and because people NEED to be healed, and to see that God is still real and his Word is still true. I want him to confirm the word with signs following.