

SAVE A CHURCH FROM DYING



WRITTEN BY
JOSEPH SULLIVAN

Preface

My hope is this: when God's people know the truths (in this book) about the decline of the church, such awareness, will create in our brotherhood an urgency and uncertainty...for the future of His church. If we know of the regular decline of our congregations each year, how can we not but act!

Truth (spiritually speaking) can make the housewife a revolutionary and the bread winner a soldier. Truth can awaken in men and women an awareness of the need to reach out and follow God's higher calling; The calling we just can't ignore...to reach others for Jesus.

The kingdom is fading into the quiet horizon. The churches in the United States and in certain parts of the world are dying out.

Too often the world does not hear His voice. While most people are in a state of eternal peril, too many of our saints in kingdom culture and conscience are mute. At the rate the churches and saints are diminishing and the lack of evangelistic growth we are doing... where will we be in another 50 years?

We live in a golden age of limitless possibility. Nowhere in history has there ever been more venues to share Christ and more resources to readily do so. We have at our fingertips, (cell phones, airplanes, internet search engines, cars, USB drives, advertising outlets, social media platforms, websites, streaming video's and so much more)! Yet more so then anytime in the last 100 years, the Lord's church is shrinking at a decimal rate. How can this be? We have the means, yet to many churches do not have the will.

Read this book with me. You will see the fragile state we are in. Pray with me that things begin to change. They must or we (as a kingdom) will fade out in the states of America.

May God bless you, as you seek to do His will and His work.

- Joseph Sullivan

"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever."

- Daniel 12:2-3

Table of Contents:

Introduction

Page number 2-3

Chapter 1: *The Decline of the Church*

Page number 4-11

Chapter 2: *Do the Math*

Page number 12-15

Chapter 3: *“If you build it, they will come.”*

Page number 16-19

Chapter 4: *Where the money flows the energy and focus goes.*

Page number 20-21

Chapter 5: *“Will the Real Leaders Please Stand up?”*

Page number 22-25

Chapter 6: *Getting to the Work*

Page number 26-37

Bonus Chapter: *Lessons from Nehemiah*

Page number 38-39

Note: This book is written to church of Christ members.

The stats and the format below are focused on this audience of readers.

Introduction:

In writing this chapter, I am reminded of the phrase in where Solomon writes, for every season there is a time, there is ***“a time to be born, and a time to die,” (Ecclesiastes 3:2).***

As a teenager, I stood at my grandma’s bed and watched her die. It was one of the hardest things I ever had to do. A few years earlier my dad took his mother by the hand and had her baptized into Christ. The day of grandma’s passing, I knew she was in a better place. But I still missed her and still felt her absence.

My question to you is this, have you lost a loved one? If you have gone through such a process, how did you feel?

Many of us will eventually lose someone we care about. That person may be a best friend, a spouse, a child, a father or mother. Even though dying is a part of life, it is never easy. If you have lost someone close to you, then you know what I mean.

Now let me ask you this question, at some point in your life, have you witnessed a church die? If you had ties to the congregation, the memories, the years associated with that group, the bonds of friendship there, the work invested into that church, would make the loss a personal experience. Yet unlike our inevitable passing, we each will face, a church *does not have to die*.

A few years back, I moved across the country from Tampa, Florida to San Bernardino, California. I made this move to help a church with outreach. While doing outreach there, I kept hearing of the Bible belt that used to be apart of the California coastline.

A Bible belt that was spoken of with fond memories, yet was now a part of the past. Like in many places in the US, California is on the decline. Their congregations are getting fewer and fewer. From my visits to the California coast, there are now only a few congregations that remain on the pacific coastline.

Do you know what the most common concern I heard from congregations in California was? It was the same concern I heard from Christians in the churches of Florida. From one coastline to the other coastline in American one spoken concern came up.

Let me share what their concern was with you. Ask yourself if this rings true for you in where you have visited to worship or even where you are now attending.

What people said to me...goes like this, "Our congregation is small and has a lot of older people, when they go, what will happen to our church?" Many of them did not see a future for their group.

Now if your church is huge and has mostly 20-30 somethings, then you're a dime a dozen. Most churches in the United States won't fit such a pattern. I will get into the stats that show the steep decline of the Lord's church, (not only in numbers, but in young people), to detail this.

Regardless, if your church is further along in its regression or in its early years, if a church does not do certain things, both groups (sooner or later) will end up the same. We will go over details that show that most churches in the United States are moving towards decline.

Even large churches are seeing a diminishment in numbers. Most churches are shrinking. This decline (for many congregations), will eventually lead to death, unless the issues are addressed.

Yet with every problem the Enemy has created, God has given us solutions. This book will focus on Biblically based, preventive measures, that if followed, will keep your church from dying.

The following chapter will help us get into the numbers. If we are to know the serious need of our situation as the body of Christ in the United States, we must know the facts.

The Bible says we need to make the most of our time on earth, for our days are evil, (harmful). We are given a brief span to do kingdom work and to touch lives for the Gospel. Let us make our days on this globe count.

As **Ephesians 5:15-16** says... ***"Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil."***

Chapter 1: The Decline of the Church

Please know it's not just the Lord's church that is declining in the United States.

70-80 percent of religious of churches are in plateau or decline. The magazine "The Atlantic" reports in its article "America's Epidemic of Empty Churches"

"Many of our nation's churches can no longer afford to maintain their structures—6,000 to 10,000 churches die each year in America—and that number will likely grow. Though more than 70 percent of our citizens still claim to be Christian, congregational participation is less central to many Americans' faith than it once was. Most denominations are declining as a share of the overall population, and donations to congregations have been falling for decades."

Source: www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/11/what-should-america-do-its-empty-church-buildings/576592

Regarding the serious issues of the decline of the church of Christ...

Stan Granberg has compiled data on the churches decline through the years. Granberg has researched trends among religious movements in the U.S. He uses data from the "Association of Religious Data Archives" and the directory "Churches of Christ in the United States," published by "21st Century Christian." In his finding he shares these facts...

- "The fellowship stopped growing in the 1990s and has been in decline since 2000."

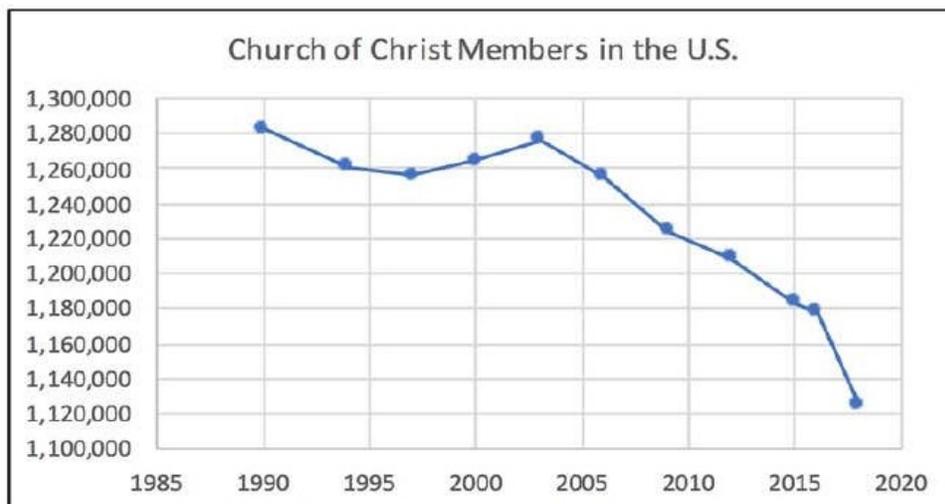
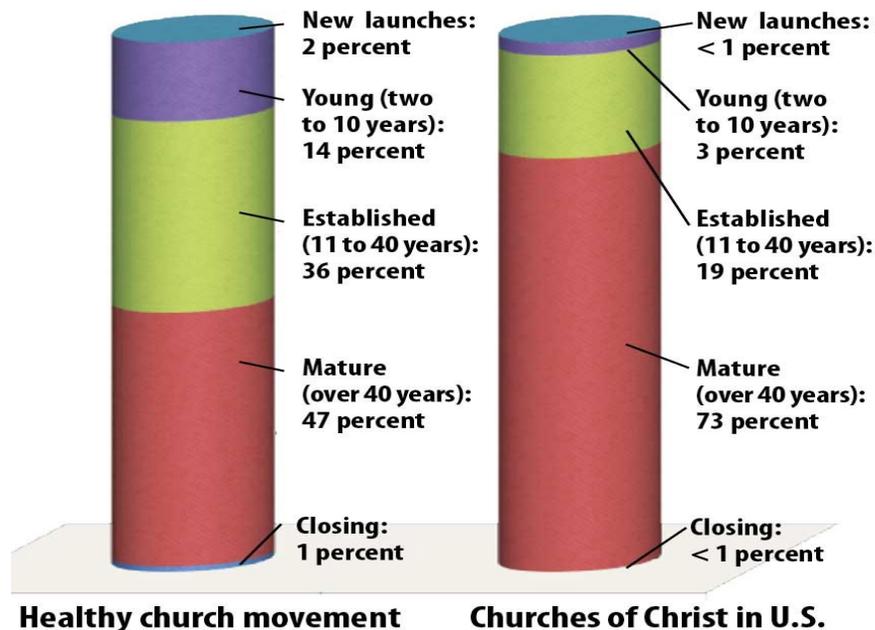


Table 1: Decline rate in membership since 1990.

Stan Granberg further states...

- “For a church movement to be considered healthy, at least half of its congregations should be below 40 years of age, “the age when reproductive capacity and initiative are at their highest.” Only about 21 percent of Churches of Christ are in that age range.”



Source picture: <https://christianchronicle.org/can-churches-of-christ-be-saved>

Here are more alarming facts from Stan’s findings...

- “From 2006 to 2016, about 58 congregations closed each year, and the overwhelming majority of churches that remain are small...”

How small is small?

- “Average attendance among the nation’s 11,965 Churches of Christ is 94, and 54 percent average just 34 people in the pews on Sundays.”

Source: <https://christianchronicle.org/can-churches-of-christ-be-saved>

Let me restate what Stan just shared. **We have less than 12 thousand churches in the US. Half the churches only average 34 people on the Lord’s day.** Let that sink in a moment. It gets worse from here...so hold on tight. Writing this book and collecting the data was profoundly heartbreaking for me. But until our brethren are aware of the reality of this sever situation, the epidemic will continue in ignorance.

I am *assuming* most (in the Brotherhood) don't know of these facts. Since...

- I don't hear sermons or Bible classes from my local churches on this topic. Have you seen such content in your congregation?
- I don't read about this in *most* Christian magazines. Do you read such news in any articles or magazines you know of?
- I don't hear about this from well-known COC groups in our brotherhood address this in their annual lectureship forums. Have you witnessed such lectures and heard such material?
- Have you been to a Gospel Meeting where this topic was addressed? I have not.

If 90 percent of the brotherhood are unaware or indifferent, then I pray this book, helps in some way to stir things up. In my 40 plus years I have not heard this theme addressed like it should be. Things need to change in this regard.

Where will this (congregational) decline take us?

- Stan Granberg further states: "At the present, the best analysis is that each month six CoC congregations close their doors. Given the current trends, we expect that rate to double—or even triple—before we arrive at 2050. If this does occur, we could see the fellowship of CoC drop from just over 12,000 churches to under 3,000."

I am writing this book in February 2020. 2050 is just 30 years away. Now consider where we will be in let's say, 50 years? Or even in 100 years?

I want to note that some of Stan's ideals are mainstream in matters of doctrine. I do not endorse his views of the Bible. I do, find his research though very practical in this matter. Let me also say, I do not endorse all the beliefs from the cited websites where the sources I have shared come from. I am simply sharing stats collected. Please keep that in mind.

Researcher: Bobby Ross Jr. writes about his findings on the decline of the churches of Christ.

- “For anyone paying attention, this news isn’t really new: Churches of Christ in the United States are losing members. In the last quarter-century, total membership has fallen to 1,183,613, according to the 2015 edition of “Churches of Christ in the United States,” published by Nashville, Tenn.-based 21st Century Christian. “
- “That’s down 100,443 souls — or 7.8 percent — from a total membership of 1,284,056 in 1990...”
- “Add in unbaptized **children** and **spouses** of members, and the numbers are even more stark: The “adherents” figure stood at 1,684,872 in 1990. That number has **dropped** to 1,519,695, a decline of 165,177 souls — or 9.8 percent — the 2015 directory reveals.
- Meanwhile, the total number of U.S. congregations has slipped to 12,300, down from 13,174 in 1990. That means a net loss of 874 churches in the last quarter-century — an average of 35 per year.”

Source: <https://christianchronicle.org/165-000-fewer-souls-in-the-pews-five-questions-to-consider>

Did you know...we have lost 200.000 thousand members in 20 years...

Another fact from researcher, Bobby Ross Jr...

- "Since today’s college freshmen were infants, roughly 1,200 Churches of Christ in the United States have closed, and the number of men, women and children in the pews nationally has shrunk by 200,000."

The source link that details these finding, also says “church of Christ colleges” are shrinking too. Sadly, less and less students who come to such colleges are **affiliated** with the church of Christ.

Source: <https://christianchronicle.org/christian-universities-feeling-the-pinch-as-churches-of-christ-shrink>

If you go onto Wikipedia and research “church of Christ,” you will find these stats.

- “These (church of Christ) churches comprise about 2,000,000 members in over 40,000 individual congregations worldwide.”
- “Overall U.S. membership was approximately 1.3 million in 1990 and 1.3 million in 2008.” “Within the U.S., membership in the Churches of Christ has declined by approximately 12% over the period from 1980 through 2007. Membership is concentrated, with 70% of the U.S. membership in 13 states.”

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Churches_of_Christ

From all the stats we read, that the United States only has around 12,000 congregations and in the globe 40,000 congregations.

We are shrinking, while places like South American and Africa are growing. You know what I see on Facebook all the time? I see pictures of people being baptized in 3rd world countries. Why is this happening? A larger percentage of the 3rd world preachers and Christians there are actively sharing Jesus.

To see how we got to the place we now are, we need to look at where we came from in our history.

In the *1920's -1940's* the Lord's church...was well known. The churches of Christ were spotted all throughout the United States. We as the Lord's kingdom were growing.

- “General church of Christ estimates in the mentioned dates - “By 1926 this number had grown to over 435,000, with estimates of 600,000 in 1941. This growth was largely the result of ***evangelism*** by ***traveling preachers and ordinary members*** who were convinced Churches of Christ had restored New Testament Christianity.”

Source: www.encyclopedia.com/philosophy-and-religion/christianity/protestant-denominations/churches-christ

When evangelism is regularly done, results follow. When it was done back in the 1920-1940's, the churches grew. Sadly today, evangelism is prayed about, sung about, preached about, talked about, but is seldom practiced (actively) in the brotherhood. If it was still being done, we would still be growing.

In the 1960's-1970's we changed...

Due to many factors, culture change, increase of secular venues of entertainment, etc., we stepped back from the activity of soul saving.

Most churches today are full of the elderly and are struggling to get by. Watch on YouTube, videos of churches of Christ worship services. You will see in many of these videos, congregations that have a large building, yet have only a few people sitting in the pews. Many of the saints you will see in such videos are ages 40 and up. As the stats have already showed, **"73 percent are 40 and up"**. Most churches have very few children and young parents. Sadly, the retention rate of keeping our children in the church, is also low. To many congregations are made up of Senior Citizens. When such people are gone from a local congregation, that church will end up dying.

I've been to churches where people talk about not having young people/families in their congregation. They are concerned about their small assembly's future. They mourn that their church is dying out.

Yet these are the same people who do NOTHING ABOUT IT. This is the main reason; we are losing more churches then we are planting annually.

If your part of the conservative/non-institutional COC, the numbers are even smaller.

- "Churches of Christ that are non-institutional were estimated in 2009 to comprise 113,656 members across 1,898 congregations."

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_churches_of_Christ_\(non-institutional\)#Present_day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_churches_of_Christ_(non-institutional)#Present_day)

Keep in mind the mentioned US recorded stats are over 10 years old, (since the book was written in 2020). If the (general COC) congregations are estimated to be at less than 3,000 by 2050, and they (presently) make up 12,000 churches in the US, where will the non-institutional body be in American in 20 years? Food for thought.

The Past and Present:

In the *1940's-1950's*...

The Lord's people were known as walking Bibles. They were zealous for outreach. And we were one of the largest religious bodies in the US. Now people scratch their heads, when they hear about us. They have no idea who we are! People think we are Mormons, or Methodists,

when they hear the term, “church of Christ.” Can the past become the present? It has throughout history. It quite possibly can again. Can we thrive again? Most certainly.

A picture is worth a thousand words.

Closing graphics to share from Stan Granberg:

source: www.kairoschurchplanting.orgcocstudy2019.html

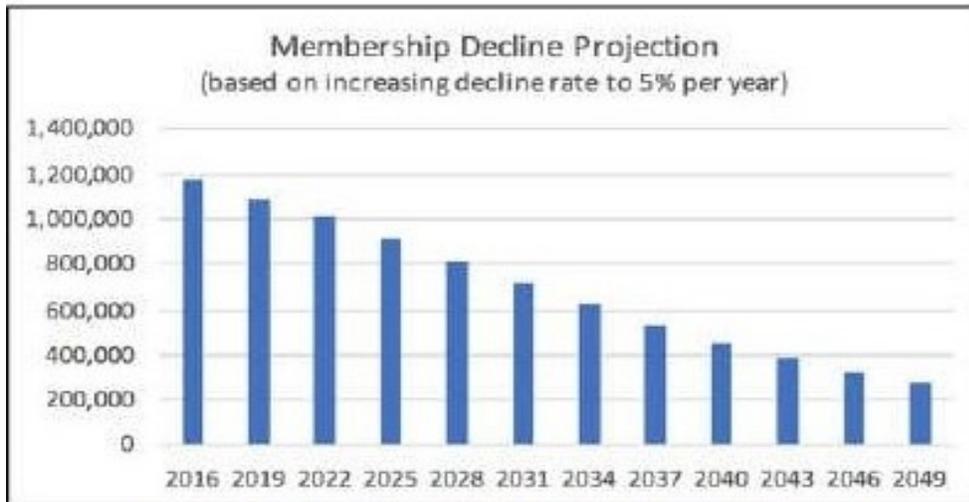


Table 2: Projected membership decline rate assuming rate increases to 5% annually by 2034.

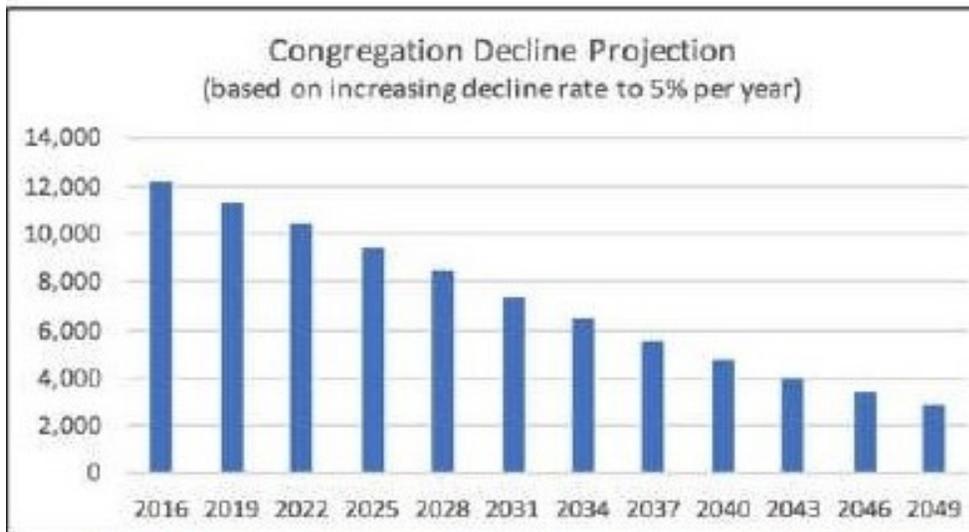


Table 3: Projected congregational decline rate assuming closings increase to 5% annually by 2034.

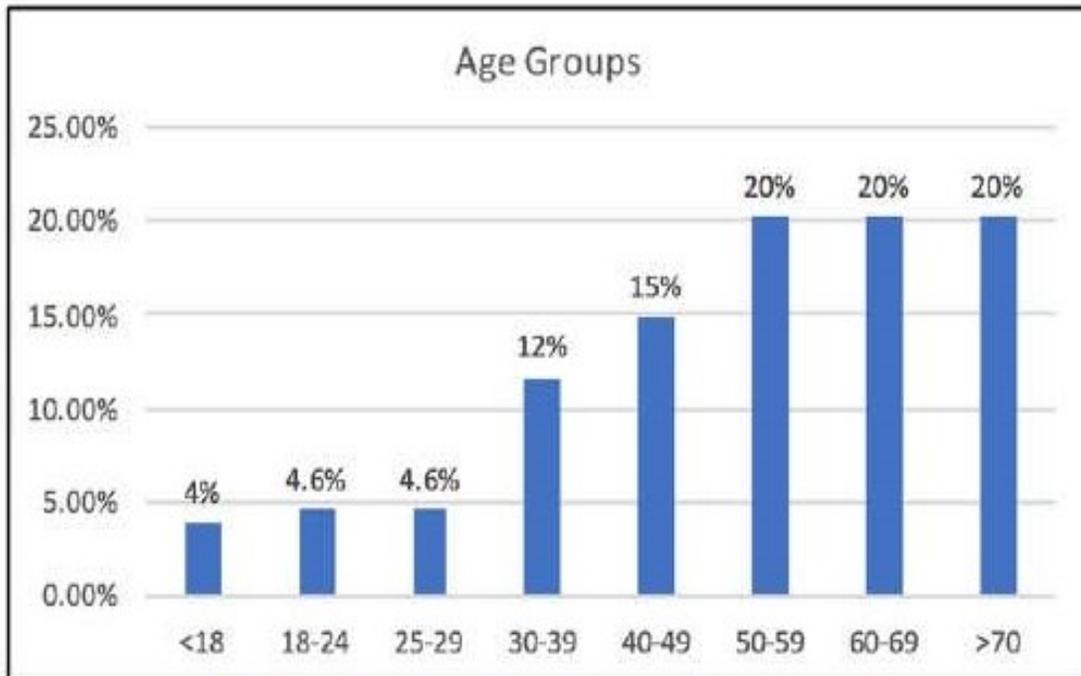


Table 4: Age groupings of 9,484 respondents in 50 congregations of the Churches of Christ

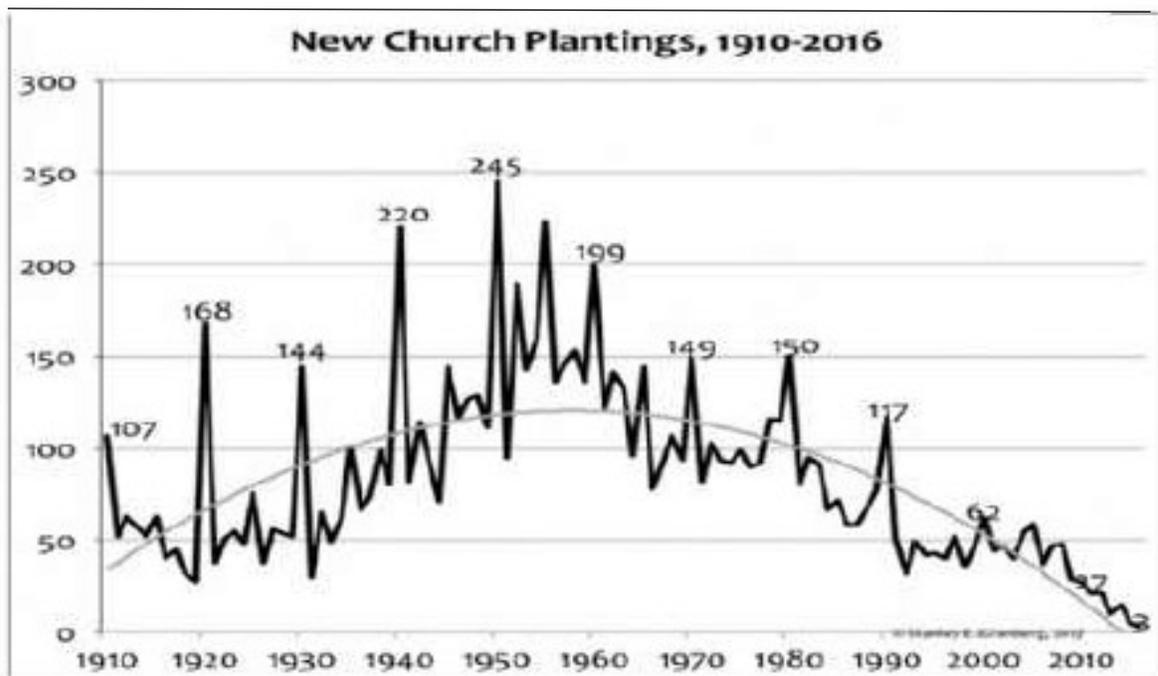


Figure 6. New church planting, 1910-2016.

Chapter 2: Do the math

How many churches reflect the spirit of the church of Laodicea? Where God says...

“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.” - Revelation 3:15-16

The best way to answer this question is to look at the state of a local church externally. Is the church growing, are the members hard workers, etc. The external state is a mirror of its internal soul.

Is your church zealous? Is your church evangelistic? Are your leader’s visionaries or are they pew warmers? Are your preachers passionate or passionless?

By the churches fruit you will know its heart. A church that goes into the community, doing outreach. A group of shepherds who promote a sense of personal responsibility and stewardship will grow a church.

One of the solutions for church growth, is evangelism. We will explore further this important topic in this book.

The following church of Christ facts are from the well written book, “Hearts on Fire.” This book was written by a brother in the faith, Don Humphrey. Please read the following statements with me on evangelism.

Don Humphrey writes... *“Church sociologist Win Arn says that at least 75 percent of American churches have plateaued or are experiencing a decline in membership. Most of the churches that are numerically growing are only growing because their church building is located in a booming suburb, and people are placing membership from other congregations.”*

“The average member of the church of Christ has heard 4,000 sermons, sung 20,000 songs, participated in 8,000 public prayers . . . And converted zero sinners.”

Since most churches are shrinking.

Is your church part of this diminishing congregational demographic?

Let me ask you a few questions.

1. **How many people attend faithfully at your worship services (on Sunday and Wednesday? (Does your church have regular attendance of 10 people, 30 people, 100 people, etc).**

2. **Has your church been apart of the average trend of decline since the 1990's? If so, reflect on your congregation's history. Where was the churches attendance rate 10 years ago, 20 years ago, 30 years ago, 40 years ago, 50 years ago, etc., (measure these numbers, if in fact your church has been around during the mentioned time periods).**

3. **Is your church part of the 73 percent average rate of membership being 40 years and up? (With the young people in the most frequent years of childbearing being the minority).**

4. **Does your church have (the average rate of) young children ages 2-10, as part of 7 percent of the congregation?**

Review: If you replied with a “yes” to any of the questions that required a “yes” or “no” response, (2.3.4.) your church is part of the average norm in church kingdom decline. If your church is high in numbers but meets any of the other questions with a “yes,” your church is in decline. Granted a church with 200 people will last longer than a church of 10 people, yet if numbers are being lost, (in slow generational decline) the end will be the same.

Simple truth, at the rate of overall decline we (the kingdom) have faced in the last 70 years, (1950-2020) most churches will not be around in the next 50 years.

Most of the congregations out there (in the US) are struggling. I can think of churches I visited in the past, that are now closed. To many congregations across America are closing. Yet this can be prevented. If a church follows the (Biblically sound) steps in this book it will save itself.

Many Christian church members (most out of ignorance) are unaware of the pink elephant in the room. If you like this book, please share this data with others in the Lord’s family.

Slow Erosion:

I was eating at a barbecue place near the church building after Sunday morning services with some saints, recently. While leaving the restaurant and heading for my car, a woman called out my name and flagged me down. I did not recognize her at first or the teenager standing with her. I had not seen her or her son in in over 10 years.

When I did, I was astounded. The changes of time were noticeable. Not in a bad way, just in comparison to how things were. Many parents don’t get shocked seeing their children from infancy to adulthood, for they saw the changes in stages. Yet for a person who see’s someone for the first time after 10 or 30 years, the changes are noticeable.

Slow decline: The problem in many churches is the same, week in and week out, year in and year out, church members attend services, and don’t register the sever changes that have taken place (in growth) in 10 years, 20 years, 30 years, 40 years, 50 years, etc.

When people come up to me, (I’ve not seen in years) and say, “you’ve changed, you look different.” I think to myself, have I? I look at myself in the mirror daily and don’t readily reflect on the long-term changes of my appearance.

For churches, this perspective is the same. Churches change, yet it is not readily noticed, due to the slow and yet pervasive nature of the decline. This decline is insidious, because it does not happen in a day or a week or in a month. We need to review our local churches history to understand the recession of our local congregation. We must do this to get an idea of the

(numerical) state of our church. Only by understanding the past, can we understand our churches dangerous future, (if things don't change).

Thorn Rainer in his book "Autopsy of a Deceased Church," states, ***"Imperceptible decline – those closest to a declining situation are usually the last to notice the decline. Remember the frog in a cold pot, on a stove? They focus on the Past as the Hero and ignore the present. There are several points in decline where the church can turn around, but the key influencers refuse to listen."***



Chapter 3: “If you build it, they will come.”

Have you ever seen the 1989 movie, “The Field of Dreams?” In this movie, Ray Kinsella (played by Kevin Costner) is walking through a corn field as a farmer and he hears a voice. The voice tells Ray to build a baseball diamond in his field. The story has Ray following the voice. At the closing end of the movie the closing plot has a line of cars as far as the eye can see, going out the baseball diamond at the farm.

The movie is a little more complicated than that. But the message the movie conveys is, “if you build it, they will come.” As interesting as the movie was to watch. This fiction does not imitate real life.

Many churches have a “come to us” mentality. They seem to think that if they have a building, people will come. I mean, if 70-80 percent of the church funds are going into the building, (or activities associated with the building) for the furniture, the carpet, the electricity, the water utilities, etc. And the Bible tells His church to reach the unsaved, then that must be the implied inference, right?

The gospel says in the **Matthew 28:19** for us to “*go*” and “*preach*” the gospel. Not sit and wait for things to happen. A mentality of sitting has never got us anything we wanted. For everything there is a “cause and effect.” In the past, if you wanted to ask someone out during your years at high school, did you sit around hoping and praying that person would start dating you, or did you act?

Prayer works with faith. Yet true faith, is comprised of action. As **James** says, in chapter **2:19-20**, “*faith without works is dead.*” If you pray for an opportunity to get an education, if you are a young person, or for a job if you’re in the work force, would you not do the things necessary to get these result, like go to college, study, take tests? Or make a job resume, do interviews? So, it is with evangelism, we must pray, give it to God and *then get to work* and find ways to reach the lost.

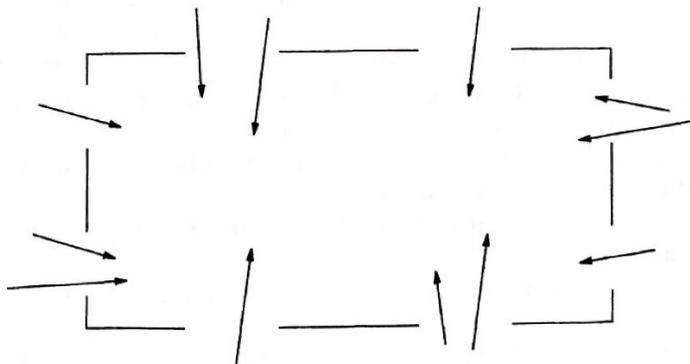
Quotes worth reading on evangelism:

Here are some good quotes from the evangelism book "Hearts on Fire," by Don Humphrey.

To many churches no longer are soul saving institutions.

- *"Many of our churches are no longer soul-saving institutions. They are worshiping societies, and their main emphasis is on holding services. Most of our planning is concerned with something that pertains to our assemblies. What we now have is what is referred to as a "maintenance mentality." This means the attention of the church is focused on itself and its own life. The most important business of the church seems to be meeting to promote the next gathering of its members. The great challenge is keeping the bored and apathetic members coming to the meetings. Our church activities are increasingly inward-focused. Many congregations are placing more emphasis on buildings, parking lots and carpeting than on redeeming souls. While the church is specifically charged with saving the lost, most of the weekly contribution—sometimes as high as 95 cents out of every dollar—is used to pay expenses for preaching to ourselves or to pay for the building in which we meet to preach to each other. Meanwhile, millions of people who never enter a church building are going unsaved."*

The mentality of many churches in the brotherhood. If we have a church, they will come, we will grow. Picture from the book Hearts on Fire.



The “come to us” model of evangelism is not working.

- *“If our church-building evangelism method could win America, it would already have done so. The point is obvious. We have faithfully attended services, preached to each other within the confines of the four walls of our buildings, even given our money, and then gone home thinking we have been evangelistic. The church is a museum! Is a complaint from many. To many churches are emotionless, stagnate, filled with dry husks. We must change our attitudes to recognize the need to reach others and find our passion again. We are commanded in **Romans 12:11**, to be passion filled people. Not passionless! Someone said that if there are icebergs in the pew, it is because there is a polar bear in the pulpit. Every church should be experiencing regular baptisms. If there are no baptisms over an extended period of time, this means that not even the preacher is active in trying to convert the lost.”*
-

The Lord’s church is a business. A soul saving business.

- *“What would you think of a cafeteria where the staff members showed up for work at the proper time each morning, the management lets them in and then promptly locks the doors, and the staff spends all day making food for each other? Is that the role of a food business? Most churches are no longer “soul saving” institutions. They are focused on just having worship for the members but in not sharing their spiritual food, (teachings of truth) with the lost local community. Churches are just involved with planning their services and the things involved with the building and worship, yet they ignore the bigger picture. That church is a place to bring people to Christ. Not just feed the saved. To many of God’s people have a maintenance mentality, instead of a outreach attitude. Most churches don’t try to format a active outreach campaign. What would you think of a cafeteria where the employees, show up for work at the proper time of the morning the management lets them in, and then promptly locks the doors and they all spend the day preparing food for each other?”*

Quotes from book “**Hearts on Fire**” by Don Humphry

Tragically in the churches of Christ: Most preachers and elders don't lead the charge or actively do outreach. Think to yourself on how many preachers and elders/leaders you know of who do such work and actively get events going for their congregation. I only know of a few, myself. If most leaders (in most churches) were leading in this aim, churches would be growing. They are not. If enough people had stepped up, the tide of congregational decline would be receding, in the United States. It is not.

Churches with no evangelism vision are not going to grow in numbers through saving souls. Simple as that. Preachers, elders, Christians need to step up and lead others in such important spiritual pursuits. Most churches would rather spend their money on updating the church windows or renovating the furniture than get members and funds together to do monthly outreach in things like door knocking, street evangelism and campus work. Many methods work, if we just regularly do the work.

Even in matters of evangelism, many local churches choose to spend money for overseas work, while their own local flock grows smaller and smaller. Does it not make sense to fix your own home first? Nothing wrong with paying a preacher to do evangelism across the sea's, yet to many churches ignore the evangelism needs of their local congregation.

When the church attendance in the building gets smaller, the funds get smaller, yet to many times, (in such situations) the leaders think the main focus should still be on updating the churches bathrooms and carpet, (instead of evangelism). Does that make sense? This needs to change. When Christians do nothing, the only result will be nothing! If we want to change as a kingdom, we must step up.

Chapter 4: Where the money flows the energy and focus goes.

Church Obsesses Over Facilities: The Budget Moves Inwardly.

Trends to church decline –

How many times have you heard the phrase, “that’s the preacher’s job?” In the denominational world and even in the brotherhood, the *paid* preacher, is expected to mostly care for those already in the church. Yes, many of us also believe a NT pattern of ministry is also an evangelistic one, but at the end of the day, saints will want the churches needs prioritized first. And if a preacher must choose between internal care of the members or the saving of the lost, to many times, the members expect him to choose them.

Most leaders have no vision. They have no clear plan for making new converts and in getting people to work. They are busy with church activities, like paying the bills, changing the light bulbs, getting new song books, etc. But the leaders have no sense of purpose in where they want to spiritually take the church. To many preachers have the same issues, they focus on spending hours in the church building reading the Bible, making sermons, yet neglect the main thing of ministry, that of making disciples.

To many dying churches are preference-driven churches. I know this sounds harsh, but when most members are not regularly/actively doing the NT Bible command to reach the lost, (among other things) to the detriment of that local body, (in such behavior), they are placing themselves first above the needs of the body and the desires of God. Regrettably, to many churches have no clear purpose. They meet for worship and leave, with no vision for the future or goals for the churches spiritual and numerical growth. Their preferences in the budget are for the comforts and maintenance of the church as first and foremost, while ignoring the greater NT command to seek the spiritually lost in the community.

Where the heart goes, the money flows. What should the Lord’s people prize the most, is it not in reaching others for Jesus? Is that not more important than new church tiles or a fancy office for the elders? Let us prize the spiritual things above the physical. An elder once said to

church members, that to hire someone to do evangelism is a waste of money. This very elder chose to instead spend a huge amount of the Lord's money, on updating the bathrooms...even while the church was growing smaller and smaller each passing year. Does that make any sense? Remember this verse, ***“for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*** - **Matthew 6:21**. What is more important, spending money on the external building or in filling the building up with newly saved sons and daughters of God?

Let me ask you a question, when was the last time your church had an evangelism training workshop, or an evangelism (theme based) gospel meeting? When was the last time your leaders actually got out to join the saints in church events (centered around evangelism)? To many churches and leaders don't focus on such things.

What we value the most, is often times shown in how we use the Lord's funds? Of course, there's nothing wrong with using money for such things as the church building and its facilities, for our comfort and convenience. But we should place of first importance (in our church budget) the spiritual and numerical growth of the church.

What do you think God cares about more, newly painted walls, refurnished pews, or using the Lord's money to share His son with those seeking answers? Churches that use money for tracts, Bibles, flyers, Bible study lessons, evangelism resources and get to work are wiser by far than those who are decorating a building, that is going to close in a few years due to number loss.

“In dying churches, the last expenditures to be cut are those that keep the church people comfortable. The basic pattern is funding to keep the machinery of the church moving and members happy rather than funding for the Great Commission.”

Source: Book **“Autopsy of a Deceased Church,”** by Thom Rainer

Brief warnings: The “new hermeneutic.” In the Brotherhood, there are some false teachers who are saying, the Lord's church must become like the denominational world in doctrine to grow. Please understand, most denominations are shrinking too. Church funds spent for such activities do not grow a church. The Gallup poll details a sharp decline in church attendance in most denominational groups. Source: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/248837/church-membership-down-sharply-past-two-decades.aspx>. This argument such “brethren” make is called the “new hermeneutic.” This doctrine is really just the same old dogma the NT Apostles faced during their ministry, dressed up in a new skirt. The only aspect of doctrine (connected to church growth) that needs to be addressed is evangelism. That is the reason for our decline. It's not because we don't do instruments in worship, have the Sinners prayer, etc. Denominations that are doing these things are also in recession. We are shrinking for this simple reason; the Lord's people don't follow the NT pattern of evangelism. This is where our problem lies. The solution is not in becoming like the denominational world. These groups are facing a decline too.

Chapter 5: “Will the Real Leaders Please Stand up?”

In large part the problem lies at that the top:

When we have Polar Bears in the Pulpit and Lukewarm Leaders, the members are guided poorly and influenced negatively.

You probably have heard of the saying “do as I say, not as I do.” This maybe a fine quote for college professors to state to their class students, but in matters of religion, this view has undercut the body of Christ.

Jesus warns the crowds about such teachers, with these words, ***“So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.” - Matthew 23:3***

Let me ask you a question, in the years you have attended the Lord’s church, how many preachers do you know of...

1. **Who are actively holding any kind of interpersonal Bible studies?**

2. **Who are regularly seeking the lost in outreach work?**

3. **Who are getting saints together for church evangelism events?**

Sadly, most preachers don't lead the church in such pursuits, let alone focus on just doing such work themselves. It's not just preachers, (however) who have this problem, many churches have leaders/elders who are useless in leading its members in evangelism work.

Let me ask you about your leaders.

- 1. Do your leaders lead by example in evangelism?**

- 2. Are your leader's visionaries in matters of evangelism?
Do they have plans for the future growth of the church?**

- 3. Are your leaders getting events together to reach the lost?**

From my years on the earth, I cannot think of many leaders who meet these NT Bible based standards. Can you? If you can, your part of the blessed minority in the Lord's kingdom. Too much of the time, the example of the ministers and elders usually sets the pace for the congregation. Sadly, when the examples are negative, they are not reflective of the NT pattern of evangelism.

Christians must have the right attitude. Yet to many church members say they want to grow and stay alive yet resist change.

In some cases, church members would only accept new members who were like them. They only wanted growth if it met their preferences and allowed them to remain comfortable. If the new Christian was poor, or had a troubled past, or required a lot of grounding, (Bible study work), or needed help with such spiritual things as transportation to church, people would complain.

Even leaders and preachers would complain and say such people are a burden to the church and discourage outreach work geared to such people. Leaders would say they don't want such people in the congregation.

Nothing discourages evangelism work more, then a leadership that reacts negatively to soul saving successes. Please keep in mind, Christ taught the poor, the sinners, the hurting. These were the people the Lord brought to the kingdom, (through repentance and being born again).

Some congregations wanted change, till they realized work was involved on their part, (as well as personal sacrifice). Or till they felt uncomfortable. Change is seldom, sunny skies, singing birds and rose buds. Change is not supposed to be easy. Have you seen this (attitude) in your congregation or heard of this somewhere else?

Some churches would say they "wanted change" and would get a new preacher to bring about new change but would complain and oppose the change once things got stirred up. Why the flip flop? You have heard of the cartoon I am sure, where someone stands up and says, "who wants change," everyone raises their hands, then the guy says, "who wants to CHANGE," and everyone just stands there.

Change in "principle" appeals to the saints, but when the reality of change, is shown, too few are willing to do what is required, (personally invest themselves into outreach work/make sacrifices, etc).

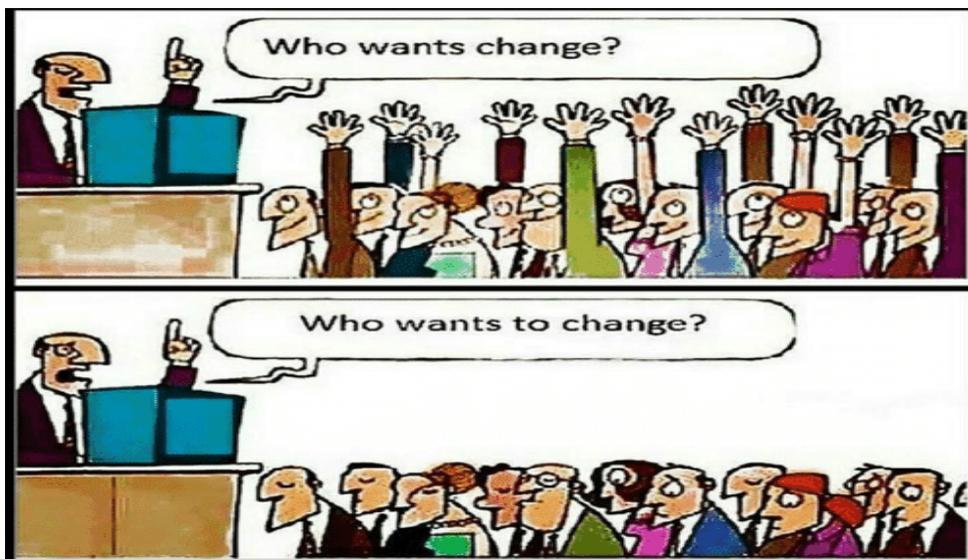
YET WHEN A PREACHER DOES WANT TO CHANGE THINGS...

At a church that does not want to change, one of three scenarios tends to happen

1. The preacher gets fired
2. The preacher leaves, (when he gets backlash)
3. The preacher chooses to sit down, shut up and keep his head down.

Sometimes in such churches, a preacher can change things around, despite the flack he gets. This of course is the best outcome to such efforts. But in wayward churches, a preacher will have his work cut out for him.

Churches may get rid of a preacher (in the name of change) and get another to lead the congregation in "change." Yet to many times, in the Lord's church, the preacher comes to the church and leads in a few changes... The members figure out these changes are going to take them out of their comfort zones, (calling members to do outreach, get to work, sacrifice, etc). Church members figure out they don't like the changes and resist. The preacher becomes discouraged and leaves or gets fired. This cycle repeats itself to often in our churches.



Chapter 6: Getting to the Work

(There is hope for the declining church)

The below items are the foundational structures of Christ's church.

If a church is to thrive spiritually, it must have the following Factors.

Foundational concepts: A church must be...

- **Strong in Doctrine - Ephesians 4:12-16**
- **Strong in individual Christian hospitality - 1 Peter 4:9**
- **Strong in congregational attendance/love/encouragement - Hebrews 10:24-25**
- **Using the members of the body in acts of worship and service - Romans 12:3-8**
- **Removing the leaven that corrupts the body - 1 Corinthians 5:1-12**

(Especially false teachers who destroy souls - Acts 20:28-31)

Why are these elements important?

Strong Doctrine: A church cannot remain God's church if it sacrifices the truth or its integrity.

Hospitality and church encouragement: If Christians are not encouraging each other spiritually within the church and without, the church is loveless, such a congregation will wither up from the inside.

Inclusion for God's people in worship: Churches that don't use their members or only the chosen clique (for Bible based roles), will cause certain saints to feel ostracized and underappreciated. This will, in the long term hurt the churches unity and harmony.

Removing corruption: A congregation that allows sin to spread throughout the church, unchecked, (especially false doctrine) will end up having the church corrupted. Division often will follow. As well as souls falling away. A church must stay on guard against such influences if it is to spiritually survive.

Yet I have been to places that practiced these foundational NT teachings and still were not growing. At the end of the day, these elements are important, yet without one more NT Bible practice, a church can still decline. The above principles must be in place before the church can (best) grow... as a Bible based church that belongs to God. But one more thing must be added.

1. What do you think this element is? I'm sure you know.

I'm sure you can readily say a church must be...active in evangelism to grow - Jude 23

When church members have a ***"mind to work," (Nehemiah 4:6)*** to rebuild the kingdom, that's when you will start to see things moving forward. The other elements must be in place for the church to have the right foundation and for the groundwork to be in place. Yet evangelism is the final detail that will bring the needed growth to further kingdom work.

For some reason, since the 70's...

"The Great Commission Has Become the Great Omission."

The problem in the brotherhood is the perspective of soul saving. I knew of an elder who prayed during services "Lord give us opportunities to save the lost." This same elder never helped with Bible studies, never showed up for any of the church evangelism events, (through the years). I knew of a preacher who gave sermon after sermon on evangelism themes, yet never helped with the new converts or joined the saints in doing church outreach work in the community.

To many people want to wait till the planets are aligned and everything is perfect to share Jesus with their friends. Christian's dupe this, "Friendship evangelism." Now nothing wrong with sharing Christ with one's friends. But it must be a regular lifestyle practice, not a cope out term to excuse oneself from actually doing regular evangelism work. If someone in the faith thinks they can wait around and share Jesus once a year if everything is perfect, they don't know what the NT Christians did.

In **Acts 8:4** the Bible says... ***"Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went."*** All one has to do is read through this book of evangelism deeds, to know why the book of **Acts** is called a book of *actions*. Evangelism in the NT was an active part of the Christian life. They did not share Jesus every blue moon or just when the mood struck. Evangelism is a lifestyle practice we are to follow, as well.

Until people stop looking at the great commission as a suggestion, (which seems to be the attitude in the kingdom) then... complacency and apathy will continue to slowly kill Christ's body in the US.

You may hear people telling you to, "Shut up!"

Preachers need to preach on this, and set an example and evangelize, elders need to lead their congregation in such works, individual Christians need to step up, churches/groups need to have workshops teaching people "how to" do evangelism.

People in whatever place they are and in whatever roles they have, must start stirring things up. Silence and apathy will only continue to cause yearly decline. Speak out, even if saints tell you to be silent. If people tell you to shut up, keep on speaking out. If most of the saints remain mute on this theme, we will fade out in the United States. Don't let apathetic people stop your zeal and your work for the Lord. You are here now for such a time as this. God has a plan for you in this venue. Pray about it, think about it, and don't let the world or misguided saints hold you back.

Taboo's in Religious Culture

Interesting thoughts on sin: Doing wrong like adultery is a sin. Yet sin is also found when we are not doing what is right, (like in sharing the gospel). The Jehovah Witness and Mormon groups are two of the fastest growing "Christian" groups in the US. Yet we are fading to near extinction in the US. Why do you think that is? They are practicing what the Bible teaches, (in evangelism). We are not.

Parents (in these two groups) teach their children they must do evangelism. Their preachers rebuke those who don't do evangelism, as willfully practicing sin. It is a taboo in the Mormon and Jehovah witness culture, to NOT actively be doing evangelism. Why? I asked both groups...they said the same thing, in a nutshell, the responses were as follows, "We do this, (evangelism) because the Bible commands it." In this regard they follow the NT command (to evangelize) better than we, (the Lord's church).

Of course, I know their doctrine is false, but the zeal is there. How many 18-19 young men and women in the COC do you see out their regularly door knocking? The Mormons advocate this in their youth culture. The Jehovah Witness are required by their denomination to go out and work each year. Both denominations expect their members to work. If they don't its taboo and viewed as sin. Such people who don't practice the command to evangelize are held responsible in these groups.

Is not a Sin a Sin?

My question to ponder: If the Bible commands it, why aren't God's people actively doing outreach? Why is apathy in trying to save people from Hell, condoned, yet, adultery and forsaking His church condemned? Is not a sin a sin? Not doing evangelism needs to become a taboo in the kingdom. Evangelism needs to be encouraged in the churches. And evangelism apathy needs to be condemned in the Sunday morning sermons, and the error of indifference, discouraged by the leadership in local congregations. Evangelism takes work, investment and time. But it does work. Evangelism is a process. Nothing happens overnight. But as with anything, if you do a thing with frequency, seeking to grow in the activity you're doing, you will get results.

Love is a Verb not a Noun

Love is an action word. We should care: If you saw a car on fire and a person stuck in it, would you not try to save them? If you saw a young person drowning, in the ocean would you not try to get help or get them? Yet the members of Christ's church, see people every day, who are walking to an eternal pit of fire and pain, and they do nothing. How can anyone in the brotherhood say they love their neighbor, enemy, etc. as the Bible commands, if they are silent, when people they know, need their help and they say nothing? Even though, I am sure you would save a person from the fires of a burning car, and be a good Samaritan, must folks don't care enough to save people from eternal harm.

*We are supposed to not just love people enough to help them in this life, but to also, snatch people from the spiritual flames of hell, as **Jude 23** commands.*

If someone heard they had cancer, would they just sit around and complain about the problem or would they get busy to work on the problem, (with doing research, to find the best doctors, and do the most successful treatments)? If we are aware of a problem in our local church, why are so many not actively trying to fix it?

The Blind Following the Blind

To many times in the Lord's church, leaders don't lead. They preach sermons and pray for such work, but never do anything, except on an annual gospel meeting, where they might get a few people for an hour to pass out flyers, a few days before the event. How many people in the Lord's church do you know who actively do evangelism? Sad truth, most don't. Many preachers and saints who have been in the church for 50 years don't have any experience in outreach.

*The phrase I have heard from preachers through the years, (when they are asked to study with a new convert, or help a struggling babe in Christ or do outreach with Christians at a church event) has been something like this, "I am too busy." We all have 24 hours in a day, we all have work and obligations, yet the person who is being paid to do church work, is the one who says, "I am too busy." How tragic is that. The Lord, while sharing the truth to the towns, said to His disciples...in **Luke 10:22** **"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."** This should be our prayer. The kingdom is falling short of this. Where there should be many seeking the lost, there are only a few. We need to be apart of the group that starts to change things.*

If we had received a 10,000-dollar prize, if we had gotten engaged, if we had a new baby, would we not share such exciting and wonderful news? Yet many Christians, who have done just that, (shared wonderful secular news) seem to want to keep the best news (they have ever gotten) to themselves. Salvation should be shared. God's people are saved from Hell and yet (too often) remain silent.

*There is a saying, "Give a person a fish, you feed him for a day, teach a person to fish, you feed him for a lifetime." But does it apply to literal fishing alone? Jesus said to those He called, to **"come follow me and I will make you fishers of men."** **Matthew 4:19** Our Lord taught them a soul saving skill that could be used for a lifetime. Jesus spent His ministry preparing His disciples to teach, **(Matthew 11:1-5)**. As Christ prepared the Apostles and Disciples in His day, we are expected to share/entrust/teach to reliable people, who in turn will pay it forward and will teach others. **"The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also,"** **(2 Timothy 2:2)**.*

We've outlined the negative trends in churches.

Now let's outline solutions.

Business Model:

Secular business companies know that in order to stay in business they must get "prospects." Yet the Lord's congregations don't seem to understand that unless they generate contacts for God's kingdom, the church will get smaller and smaller. If they did understand this, would they not get to work?

Here is a secular "Business model" example of what companies do to stay in business and get clients. The standards here are important for evangelism, as they are in any venue. I will list each stage and outline how this can be applied to spiritual matters.

This model is from John Kotter's eight-stage outline.

1. Establish a sense of urgency.

Churches should be aware of the overall declining church crisis in America. They should also be shown an outline of their local churches decline over the last 50 years. Nothing creates action and unity in a cause, like a sense of urgency.

If someone sees a doctor and hears they will die if they don't change their diet and go to the gym, this will create a sense of urgency in that person. If a church hears about its historical decline and is aware of their annual struggle with membership, this too should incentivize the church members to act.

2. Create a guiding coalition.

Once the church is aware of its situation and once the membership is aware of the congregation's long-term longevity concerns, then get people involved. Find people of like mind. Collaborate, work together to make a group of believers ready to do outreach. On average church participation in a specific field of church work is about 5 percent.

You may be at a church that has a higher turnout, or you may be at a church that has no turnout. Even if you get no turn out, remember you can still do the work and get results. I have done evangelism by myself and have brought people to the Lord. It can be done. But it is easier with a group being there for support.

3. Develop vision and strategy for the specific change.

Put together specific goals, you want to accomplish and write down the steps you feel like you need to do, to get there. You may revise the “mission chart,” from time to time. Daily or at the very least, weekly review the (written down) steps and the goals. Have specific goals created for certain outcomes you want to see accomplished.

Look for resources to help you with your goals, teachers, books, websites, supportive saints. Imagine your success, pray for guidance, fan your desire for success, look for opportunities to grow, stay hungry.

Interesting thoughts: I don't endorse everything said in this book, I will mention. But the first half of the book has profound key concepts that can be applied for excellent goal setting, in the book, “Think and Grow Rich” by Napoleon Hill the following themes are outlined. If you follow these methods, you will ingrain within yourself the goals you desire.

What I took from the above book:

- *Write down your goals in detail. Then write down the step you believe you need to do to get the results you want.*
- *Go over your written goals regularly. Read daily the detailed goals and the steps you outlined, (that you need to do to reach your goals). Each week review the details/steps and make adjustments according to the lessons you've learned while pursuing your goals.*
- *When you go over your goals: Envision your work goals (and their steps) being done in vivid imagery. Imagine the goals being carried out with success.*
- *After visualizing your goals and your success, (in the pursuit of these goals), tell yourself, “you will achieve them.” Dare to believe it. Fan this belief. Convictions and words have power.*
- *By doing these things you will fully be aware of what you want, (goal wise) you will know what you need to do to get there (through the steps) and you will ingrain these goals into your heart and mind, through visualization, positive words and belief.*

Back to John Kotter's eight-stage outline. Stage four...

Once you have "Developed a vision and strategy for the specific change."

4. Communicate the vision and strategic plan.

Once you have strategies in place and plans put together, share your plans with interested parties in the kingdom. If you have people supporting you, take the time to share where you want to go and how you want to try to get there.

5. Empower employees for action.

Of course, in the kingdom, the saints are not your "employees." This is a business term. Yet the same theme applies. Empower your group to get to work. If your group needs flyers, get flyers. If your group wants motivation or information on methods of outreach, get them resources that will do this.

If your group or one of its members is facing an obstacle and needs help, help them. If you're in the leadership seat or even just one of the coworkers, it's up to you to help the team when they need it.

6. Generate short-term wins.

After doing an evangelism event, I meet up with the group at church or somewhere else and I ask them to share their experiences. I want them to let me know if they talked with someone about Jesus or invited someone to church, or prayed with someone, etc.

I want to know how many people they talked to, how many houses they visited, (if door knocking) or Bible study signatures they got, if they did campus work. I want to know if they had any interesting experiences. If they had any unique conversations. Once each group member has shared their activities, I praise their work.

I also text or email them and thank them and encourage them. I let the group know these things ARE SUCCESSES. To many people look at soul saving as a success, and it is. But if you only look to this as the success and not the process of the work being done or the people being reached for Jesus, as a success, then the group can easily get burnt out.

Soul saving is a process and takes a lot of work and time to generate a result. Like in anything, regular activity yields fruit. Going to the gym, dieting, learning a hobby, dating, getting a degree, etc. Evangelism is no different. It is a process. Yet if a conversion is the only thing that is viewed as a success, the group can easily get discouraged. Let them know they are appreciated. Get together with them after an event to grab a bit to eat and chat. Positive reinforcement matters.

7. Consolidate gains and produce more change.

Capitalize results. Record the work being done and the feedback your group gives you on each event. If you can, have someone take pictures of group members in the field, (that makes a difference). Mention publicly the groups work, it can be done in church announcements or in the church email newsletter. Share the recorded data and pictures with the group. Make this work a big deal in the eyes of the group and *in the eyes of the church*, and it will be viewed, (rightly so) as a big deal.

Make the evangelism events a staple monthly work. Get evangelism embedded into the congregational culture. For those who want to learn how to teach, (the lost/new converts) create a teaching class at church or at home, to train people with desired soul saving/grounding lessons. Have evangelism workshops, evangelism Gospel meetings, celebrate long worked hours with church friends, promote the recorded success stories, etc. Find markers to place in the church to move the congregation forward.

8. Anchor the new changes in the culture.

Get people to be so busy with church work and tasks for its congregation, they have no idle time. The problem in most churches is the leadership, they don't get their members consistently busy. To many saints, instead of building up the kingdom and growing its borders, use their idle energy for misplaced things like petty in fighting, drama, power games, politics, gossip and slander. These things should be discouraged and replaced with activities that properly funnel their time and energies. This saying is true... "Idleness is the Devils workshop." If saints are busy with writing cards to the sick, visiting the elderly, being assigned to help with outdoor church activities, teaching classes, AND IN DOING EVANGELISM, ETC. they will have no idle time.

Then they won't have time for misspent energy. Not saying stupid stuff won't still happen, but if people are busy with positive things, they will be less likely, (unless they are really determined) to do the negative things. What do we do with a little kid who is acting up? A wise parent disciplines the child (admonishes such behavior) and looks for something to give the child that will keep the little one busy/engaged and out of trouble. Most silly behavior comes from God's spiritual infants in the kingdom, **(1 Corinthians 3:1-3)**. They need to be shown discipline, like parents do with children. We need to give them guidance, correction, grounding Biblical teaching, mentorship, and show them love, to help them mature. Also, for their spiritual growth they need to be given constructive activities to fill their time. A busy Christian, doing godly activities is a growing Christian.

Source: book "A Sense of Urgency" by John P. Kotter

Useful link on this model: <https://managementisajourney.com/summary-of-kotters-eight-step-leading-change-mode>

Solutions...

HOW TO MOTIVATE LUKEWARM LEADERS AND PREACHERS?

Idea's to consider. Have elders, leaders, preachers give an annual report each year on their work and future goals. As a church member, encourage them and the church to hold such men accountable for these reports. There's more to an eldership, then paying the church facility bills and reordering the church service activities, etc. They have a moral responsibility to support the flock in evangelism and to grow the church. Leaders should be concerned about the longevity of the congregation and its spiritual future. If such men have no goals for church growth, people need to question that.

Preachers are more than just pulpit speakers and caretakers of the sick and elderly, etc. They are supposed to practice what they teach. Evangelism is what the NT preachers in the Bible did. Paul did not just hover over a pulpit and talk to the saints, nor did John or Peter. They went out and shared Jesus. Preachers need to be encouraged by the leaders to do the duties of an evangelist. Paying someone to just talk to a dwindling congregation and allowing him to ignore the lost, is a futile investment. Elders/leaders need to know the church expects them to grow the church and lead in the NT teachings of evangelism. Preachers need to know this too.

Preachers/elders also should know they are expected to set the example as teachers/leaders in reaching out to the lost, **(James 3:1)**. Nothing worse than an elder or preacher who not only doesn't do evangelism work but undermines those who do it, (in the church). If you can, try to create an environment of accountability in the church. If a preacher wants to stop a new convert class, due to power games and control issues, bring that before the elders. Power games, politics, self-servicing leadership, etc., has no place in the body of Christ.

One church had a (monthly) report board for Christian activities, prayer, Bible studies, evangelism, visiting the sick, etc. And they had members mark the board when they did one of these things. Creating assignments and duties outside of church, as well as inside of the congregation, fosters accountability and personal responsibility. Get the members involved.

Make the church evangelism events a big deal, announce the events, put the events in the bulletin, encourage others to come to the events, especially the leaders, elders, preacher. These men set the tone for such work. If they are no shows, others will take less interest and stop coming. Please know you can still do evangelism, regardless of leadership support. People may still come even if you have a poor leadership. I know of different stories where they have. Yet even if you work alone, (as I have said before), you can still get positive results.

Evangelism should be in Stages:

Please understand evangelism should be begun in easy stages. No one runs a marathon, who has never walked around the block or jogged. Start where you're at, begin slow, reward the effort, be hungry, seek to grow in experience and knowledge, push yourself to slowly do more and more and raise the bar. Learn what methods work best and what methods don't work well. Test what you learn. Review your work and make the necessary changes. Adapt and grow in your knowledge and experience base.

Start of small. Reward the effort. With time, slowly add more, (time and events to your goal setting work). No beginner who wanted to get physically strong, starts lifting 200 pounds at the gym. They start where they were at and went from there. Progress with doing more and more comes with consistency (of work) and with time. Be hungry, seek the best methods, look for role models, ask for advice, search for evangelism materials to help you grow. If you do these things and pace yourself, you will mature in this field of work.

Understand evangelism requires patience, it is a process. If you consistently do the work, you will get results. But such results don't come over night.

Understand evangelism is about frequency, frequency in the hours spent and, in the events, done. Start small with your group, reward your groups actions. Slowly increase the frequency of either the time spend during the event or the events. The more you do in "frequency" the faster the results will come. Go at your pace. But increase it over time, (when ready) as your group adapts.

Remember you: *I'd also say, in doing this (evangelism) work, you need to find things that motivate you. Remember our Lord withdrew to pray and recharge. It is important you do the same. Nurture yourself emotionally as well as spiritually. Take care of yourself. Refresh yourself and find ways to fan the flames to keep your spiritual fires burning. I watch motivational video's on YouTube, walk in a park near the house, listen to COC songs on my phone, or sermons from uplifting preachers, etc. Find out what works best for you. With evangelism pace yourself as well. When you do the work, you may feel like you need a breather from time to time. Remember to take care of yourself and to nurture your spirit.*

Closing remarks: To create change, we must firmly believe in what needs to be done and dare to act. We must believe in the cause of “church growth” and “soul saving” enough to give our hearts to this ideal. Henry David Thoreau said, “The price of anything is the amount of life you exchange for it.”

If we invest in the NT pattern of soul saving as a lifestyle work, we will start to make a difference in the world.

My prayer is that this book motivates and stirs us for mighty things. We need to seek such opportunities. And pray to the Lord. ***“to send out workers into his harvest field,” (Luke 10:2).***

The church grew in that day, after its establishment, because the followers of Christ.... followed Christ. Our Lord’s chief desire and aim was to save the lost, **(John 4:34-35)**. This should be our desire too.

Churches that expect things to change, (without putting in the work) have the same logic as a man who waits for a train at the airport. When we aim for nothing, we will certainly hit it every time. We must see what can be (possible) and make it come into the world.

- Joseph Sullivan

P.S. I encourage you to download my free eBooks on evangelism.

Go to the below site to access tools, data, hear success stories, etc.

May God bless you in your zeal for Him.

www.churchofchriststreetcampusevangelism.com/church-of-christ-evangelism---free-material-store-page.html

Bonus chapter: Lessons from Nehemiah

Until kingdom culture changes in certain matters, congregations will continue to die out.

Let's look back into the past, further than 50-70 years ago.

History always has lessons for us to learn from.

Around 520 BC a man named Haggai was told by God to talk to the people of Israel.

- **What does the Lord say to the people of the Israelite Kingdom?**

*Haggai 1:2 "This is what the Lord Almighty says: "These people say, '**The time has not yet come to rebuild the Lord's house.** 3 Then the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai 4 Is it a time for you yourselves to **be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?**"*

In Christ's kingdom, what is the focus of most members? They are interested in their houses, kids, cars, football teams. Many churches out in the US are struggling? Why do you think this is? If one's family, job, social circle, etc. are flourishing, yet the Lord's house is spiritually, in ruin, due to neglect, where are these people's priorities? What are they placing first as their first love? Is it God?

Will God say of them, "***I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love,***" (Revelation 2:4).

We prioritize *first* what we love the most, "***For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also,***" (Matthew 6:21).

- **During this time period Nehemiah, (while in Babylon) heard about the state of the Jewish Kingdom. What did he do?**

*Nehemiah 1:3 "And they told me, "The remnant who survived the exile are there in the province, in **great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are burned with fire.**" 4 When I heard these words, I sat down and **wept. I mourned for days, fasting and praying before the God** of heaven."*

To change the kingdom, we must be aware of its state, (troubled and in disgrace). And yes, when God's kingdom is losing more people in the faith, then they are taking in from the world, (each year) that is a sign of troubled times. Such a situation (due to neglect), is also, disgraceful. Nehemiah heard the news and did what? Did he say, "o well" and ignore the serious issues of the kingdom? No, Nehemiah, *was a person of conscience*. Nehemiah felt the tragedy of this news and he mourned. *This man cared and shared his concerns with God in*

prayer, with tears and fasting. People need to be aware of the state of the Lord's kingdom. The "**walls are broken down, and its gates are burned with fire.**" Like Nehemiah, we must know what has happened and we must care about such sad news. Then we must ask for God's guidance. Nehemiah prayed for success, (in kingdom work) **Nehemiah 1:11/ Nehemiah 6:9.** We must do the same.

But prayer and faith alone are not enough. As the Bible states: "**But faith without works is dead,**" (James 2:20). What did Nehemiah do? He prayed, then Nehemiah journeyed from Babylon up to Jerusalem to **inspect the walls secretly by night.**

Nehemiah did this to **make a plan,** (Nehemiah 2:11-16). Once *Nehemiah counted the cost and made a plan, then he chose to go out and get to work.* Great leaders also seek to try to get others involved. This is what Nehemiah did, *he got others involved,* (Nehemiah chapter 3).

Nehemiah and those doing the work were opposed, (criticized, threatened, demeaned, etc.) by people in Israel and by those without the Jewish Kingdom, (Nehemiah 2:19; 4:10). Yet they *kept on working.*

Know, if you do God's work of rebuilding the spiritual kingdom, you will be opposed too. Yet, in this effort of kingdom work, we must not give up.

During this time period, both Ezra and Nehemiah led the people of God.

Ezra rebuild the temple; Nehemiah rebuild the walls.

God through Ezra helped "*The people gathered together **as one man to Jerusalem.**"* Ezra 3:1

God through Nehemiah...got the people working. "*So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: **for the people had a mind to work.**"* Nehemiah 4:6

We need such men and women in the church today, to build up the spiritual kingdom, one brick at a time. We need leaders to encourage others to get to work.