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Church As Disciples

My kids enjoy a good laugh at my expense when I try to talk in their generation's language. The same way that I used to tease my parents when they tried. It does seem that the youth nowadays is evolving much faster than previous age groups, constantly creating new ideas and new meanings of words. I suspect that social media plays a large part in this new normal in the world.

With one click of a button, children can see and experience so many more good and bad images than someone could in their whole lifetime a hundred years ago. With each new generation, I see the church struggling as a whole with trying to keep up with all the changes as well. Just when we figure out the latest trend, it becomes old news, and the youth have moved on.

I believe the church's role is to first help in the winning of souls to Christ but then focus on disciplining them into their fullness in Him. My core rule for winning the world is that we hold the message as sacred but not the method, meaning we should be free to use many methods to draw people to the message of salvation. When I was a youth pastor, we had the group involved with witnessing, and these young people dedicated their summer to sharing the gospel. We had a very good band, drama team, and a power team that we would use to put on shows out in public areas.

The power team was the group of young men who would break bricks with their hands, blow up hot water bottles until they exploded, and snap baseball bats in half. The crowd would come around and see the spectacle of all this action, and then we would share Jesus at the end. This is what I mean by saying the method is not sacred, but the message is. I am open to many different tactics that church people use to get the world's attention. Ultimately the way to draw the world is through the miracles of divine healing. Salvation is the most important message that anyone can hear. However, it is also vital for us not to neglect the other assignment to the body of Christ. Becoming born again is the starting line of a person's salvation, not the finish line. The body of Christ needs to remember this.

Matthew 28:19-20 *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.* Even though salvation is the most crucial moment of a believer's life, it is only the beginning of their spiritual journey. The primary focus of our life is to develop as disciples in the kingdom of God. In other words, the majority of our work as a church needs to be in the teaching and discipleship of each believer.

When a church focuses its energy on keeping its building full, it usually means it must constantly give people what they want instead of what they need to mature. When the goal is numbers instead of discipleship, we make a critical error with a high cost that involves many

never finishing their calling. The next generation will pay the price with a watered-down standard of leadership. If we make it our mission to minister to each other in our churches, we can miss the main goal, which is to grow up in our calling.

I heard one message from a well-known speaker inspiring believers to live their Christianity by going around and ministering to people. I understood and appreciated his heart in encouraging the church to get out and preach and pray. Still, the group seemed more interested in ministering like Jesus instead of developing into a Christ-like believer.

The Lord spoke to me and said that the message preached by that group would cause an entire generation to fall short of their callings. I understand that there are people whom God wants to get to heaven that will only commit to a one-hour service with energized worship and sweet candy-like motivational preaching, and they need a church to provide that for them. I also know that it should not be the standard example of a healthy church, but rather it should be the exception.

It says in Hebrews 5:12-14 *“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”* The expectation of God for His children is to grow up and mature in Christ.

We should be able to reach out to the lost, strengthen each other and focus on growing into the knowledge of Christ. God doesn't only want a part of our lives; He desires every part of our life. He wants to lead every step, and He wants our complete devotion. Reality is for that kind of commitment, the Holy Spirit is the only one capable of guiding and teaching us individually. Step by step, He will walk us through our struggles, selfishness, fear, insecurities, and pride as He helps us mature in God's knowledge and love. Every stronghold and impasse you might face holding you back will eventually be defeated if you allow the Holy Spirit to help you. Let's keep spending time praying in that heavenly language and maturing into who God desires us to be. Let's not only be members of a group of believers but also turn the world upside down.

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