

The Great Commission Is Not Great Numbers

It is predictable.

Any time I write about anything dealing with church sizes, some of the discussion degenerates into a debate about the best size church. It happened last week when I wrote some positive words about smaller churches. It has happened in the past when I wrote some positive words about megachurches.

We need all churches. All sizes of churches. We need more churches. It's not either/or. It's both/and. Allow me to point out seven reasons why a debate on church size bears no good fruit.

1. **Church health and church size are not synonymous.** There are many healthy small churches. There are many healthy large and megachurches. And there are plenty of unhealthy churches of all sizes.
2. **Conflict is not unique to a particular church size.** Indeed some level of conflict is in every church. There are times where conflict is more visible in the smaller church because everyone knows everyone. But that does not mean conflict is not present, and sometimes intense, in larger churches.
3. **Categorical statements are harmful to the body of Christ.** "All pastors of large churches care about are the numbers." "If a small church was doing as it was supposed to do, it wouldn't be a small church." Such categorical statements do no good. Indeed, they do harm. Why should we even participate in such conversations?
4. **The body of Christ is diverse; that is good.** In 1 Corinthians 12, the Apostle Paul lauds the diversity of the individual members of the body of Christ. Similarly, there is diversity in the congregations working for His glory. Some of those churches are small. Some are mid-size. Some are large. Some are mega.
5. **The death of churches is not a function of church size.** Obviously, a church gets smaller on its way to death. But that does not mean the church size is the cause of the death. It simply means the church is getting smaller as it approaches zero.
6. **Faithfulness and obedience are mandated of all church members. Leave the numerical results to God.** He may lead a church to become very large; or He may lead a church to be a standard size church in the community. Neither size is inherently good or inherently bad.
7. **It would be wonderful if churches worked together as much as some churches often criticize others.** Our communities may be waiting to see if we churches can work together before the members of the community decide they even want us around.

God gives us small churches. God gives us mid-size churches. God gives us large and very large churches. They are all part of His plan. Let's stop criticizing each other and start working together.

We may be surprised how God will then use us.

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