



**GROW
IN
GRACE**
NEWSLETTER

Volume 41, No. 35, September 1 , 2015 / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / The Grow in Grace Newsletter is **a weekly Bible Study**, plus local church news notes— designed first and foremost for members and those attending services at Southside Church. It is sent forth with the desire to aid one and all, (including friends far and wide), in the experience of 2 Peter 3:18. ***"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."***

Two Radically DIFFERENT Churches!

Get a group of pastors together and in one form or another the issue of CHURCH GROWTH will come up. From pastors or strangers who discover I am a pastor— I have often received this question: **"How many do you 'run' in Sunday School?"** (Success is based on 'how many you 'run'... being a REAL MAN OF GOD is judged by 'how many you run!') SO PASTORS are keenly interested in things like.... "How can we reach more people?" "How can we reach the youth?" "How can we reach the young adults?" The pastors who 'run a lot of folk' are invited to tell others HOW THEY BECAME A SUCCESS. I've heard them say things like, **"Well, we have to change... not our message, but our methods."** **"We have to get out of the 1950s!... etc, etc."** Then the conversation will turn to 'what works!' — "Youth love hard rockin music." "We draw crowds with comedians, various forms of entertainment, or with pro ball players." One church 'packed the house' with Jeff Foxworthy; another had a Rodeo — in the auditorium! The list is endless as to what churches are doing to increase the crowd and to motivate the faithful.

"We are a 'country music' church— we pack them in with country music stars, or race car drivers, or by having 'Motorcycle Sunday'... etc, etc. Over the last 40 years, high attendance days have been a huge success in

Independent and Southern Baptist circles. It is simple. You set an attendance goal and you offer prizes. (The congregation is promised: Reach the attendance goal and the pastor will come Sunday dressed as a clown, eat live gold fish, shave his head, or whatever... the options are endless!) **Why?** We have to have some excitement! (By the way, in such Pastor meetings— a serious study of Acts and the Epistles of the New Testament are not normally on the table... so Bibles, if present, remain closed.)

In case after case the ‘attraction’... the ‘drawing card’ is some ‘three-ring circus’— but whatever it is— it has nothing to do with Jesus! Neither JESUS nor HIS GOSPEL IS THE ATTRACTION. “O, but brother we do it so we can preach the gospel to them; and we will not compromise our message... we will only change our methods!” **My, how blind we can be! When the Gospel, when JESUS is NOT the attraction— our message - (not merely our method) - has already been changed... and has radically left New Testament Christianity!**

DARE THIS QUESTION BE RAISED: Is it possible that the chief problem in Evangelical, Bible-believing churches is our own severe lack of Christ-likeness in our pulpits and pews?

TRAGIC REALITY: The works of the flesh— sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these (Gal. 5:19-21) - **flood our churches!** Yet, we seldom rebuke or chasten— less our attendance drop and the church budget is not met!

QUESTION: 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus are ‘pastoral’ Epistles— how far would one have to search to find a pastor or group of pastors seriously drinking at these wells? These small Epistles are revolutionary. These Epistles ARE NOT PRAGMATIC. Heeding them is no guarantee of ‘running more!’ They do not show pastors how to please and motivate via the flesh. NO! A THOUSAND TIMES, NO! **INSTEAD, God shouts—** preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people

will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. (2 Timothy 4:2-4) O WOW! No fun and games, no 'christian' comedians'... Nothing here for 'high attendance' day!

MAJOR WAKE-UP CALL: *The underlying reality is that we have to decide WHICH CHURCH we desire to see built!* [Some of the concepts/thoughts in which follows, influenced from Robert Burnell's book, EXCAPE FROM CHRISTENDOM]

There are Two Churches on the earth!

1. There is the true Church of Jesus Christ, comprised of those personally "planted" by God the Father (Matthew 15:13) and personally given to God the Son by God the Father! (John 17:2) Ultimately, this true church will make up a numberless multitude out of every kindred, tongue, tribe, and people (Revelation 7:9).

This church experiences the life of God in their souls by the miracle of new birth and revival by the Spirit of God. **Those** who all their lives had been dead in sin and living according to the course of this present world, and duped by the devil, and under the holy and just wrath of God (Ephesians 2:1-3) — now find themselves set free from satan, and set free from sin's guilt, power, and domination by the precious blood of Jesus; and set free by the power of the Holy Spirit who now resides in all true saints of God.

No one has to beg, bribe, or entice these saints to become loyal or excited about Jesus and His Kingdom work. True conversion yields fruit: Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 John 1:3! **ALL THOSE WHO ARE SHEEP of the Good Shepherd all follow Jesus. WAKE UP:** There are many who present 'following Jesus'... being a Disciple of Jesus... as a mere option for 'good Christians'... **THE HERESY is this:** You church members ARE ALL SAVED... Now, we INVITE YOU... we plead with you... JESUS INVITES you - it's your choice, your option - HE INVITES you to follow Him.

THE TRUTH is this: No genuine Christian follows Jesus PERFECTLY in this life; but EVERY SHEEP OF JESUS... every genuine member of the true Body

of Christ, follows JESUS. HE SAYS SO: John 10:27-29)

2. THERE IS ANOTHER, different CHURCH— She is often outwardly impressive but inwardly she is an evil harlot. She is an adulteress— FOR she loves the world and is loved by the world. [Former President Jimmy Carter teaches a Sunday School class. He openly rejects clear and major truths of the Bible. THE WORLD LOVES HIM. There is no mystery here!] This great harlot and all her daughters are in explosive end-time revival! It is a revival that pleases the flesh. It is a revival that offers the comforts of “religion” while at the same time allowing deceived masses to keep their sin and their ego.

At the harlot (Wide Gate!) church there is a massive variety of folks from all denominations and non-denominations! HOWEVER, there is no need of denying yourself, taking up your cross daily, and following Jesus. The most deadly ‘wide gate’ churches are those who look the most like the true Bride!

However, God did not plant her and she, in due time, shall be rooted up! (Matthew 15:13) JESUS teaches us that one day MANY PASTORS and religious workers will have a rude awakening— JESUS NEVER KNEW them and they will be cast out of the presence of JESUS for eternity: Matthew 7:13-27.

CONSIDER THIS: There is a strong sense of oneness among people who have been saved from a fire, flood, shipwreck, etc.

FAR GREATER: Real Christians are those who have experienced deliverance from the ULTIMATE DISASTER— God’s fierce, just, and holy wrath against sin. This is a good way one can know that the multitudes are in the wrong church: They have never owned personal bankruptcy, they have never cried for mercy— and so they are strangers to grace and have no INDWELLING COMPELLING to love and follow Jesus.

A CLUB OR A CHURCH?

Clubs are organizations we join because they meet **our needs, goals, and desires.** Earthly clubs such as the *Lion’s Club*, have their place in society. MULTITUDES of folk who visit churches, looking for a church home

are looking for a church that pleases them. **Being loyal to the Christ and His gospel and His Word is not even on their radar screen!**

However, the true church of Jesus Christ is no club! She is the creation of God and she is for God. She (And thus, each and every one of her members!) exists to be to the praise of His glory and to be conformed into the image of Jesus Christ. **She gives herself to the threefold calling**

of Worshipping God,
of helping other saints mature in Christ,
and of evangelizing the lost.

In a genuine, New Testament Church, the Holy Spirit invigorates and motivates Christians, (Even newborn Christians!) to a continual study of the Word of God, to prayer, to fellowship with other saints, to the Lord's Supper, to sharing with and caring for other believers, and to a lifestyle of proclaiming the gospel to the lost— from holy, loving lifestyles and with boldness (Acts 2:36-47; 4:23-33; 8:1-4)

Moreover, saving grace teaches the Bride to say “**NO!**” to ungodliness and “**YES!**” to godliness! (Titus 2:11-14) REALITY: Anyone for whom this is not true, had better check their spiritual ‘birth certificate’ before it is eternally too late!

Some Examples of the Mentality of the Harlot

There are Harlot Churches. But also, a member of “the Harlot” may be found in a true expression of Christ's church— in the pulpit or the pew! The wheat and tares often grow together! Thus, as the following is read, let each one of us ask:

Does the mentality of the Harlot live in me?

Newsweek Article: Shopping for a church! “...the customer is king... the most successful churches are those that most resemble the suburban shopping mall... the aim is support not salvation, help rather than holiness...”

Marketing the Church, by Barna: “It is... critical that we keep in mind a fundamental principle of Christian communication: The audience, **not**

the message, is sovereign...”

Ashamed of the Gospel, by John MacArthur: Many quotes could be given from this book which exposes the world’s church: “After all, the church’s chief competition is a world filled with secular amusements and a host of worldly goods and services. **Therefore, the marketing experts say** we will never win people until we develop effective alternative forms of entertainment to capture the people’s attention and loyalty away from the world’s offerings.”

Rebirth of the Congregation, by R.E. Bieber: “For generations there was a cohesiveness in [many] congregations which had nothing to do with the Christian Gospel... People with no conception or experience of the **Cross of Christ** were loyal to their church because of family loyalty... denominational loyalty... seniority... a beloved pastor... certain doctrines... and/or because of certain programs which the church offered. **Many churches adopted** the philosophy of ‘anything to hold the youth’ ...”

The Heart of the True Church is the Gospel of Christ

R.E. Bieber goes on to correctly remind us that the apostolic church, “...Used the **Gospel alone** to arrest the world’s attention and bring men to conversion... it also relied upon the **Gospel alone** to hold men and women to their commitment and to build the church.”

The true church of Jesus Christ is comprised of **a people to whom** the Kingdom of God has already come! The Bride of Christ is **a people over whom** the Spirit of God is already sovereign. The true church is **a people among whom** the Lordship of Christ is already received.

Among members of the Bride of Christ, the real and only cohesive factor and loyalty factor is Jesus Christ the Lord! The Bride listens to and receives the Word of God. She goes forth out into her world as a people sent forth by Jesus Christ.

The Bride of Christ is comprised exclusively of saints in Christ who are:

- 1. Followers** in the steps of Jesus!
- 2. Pupils** at the feet of Jesus!
- 3. Servants** submitting to the wishes and commands of Jesus!

4. Ambassadors of Jesus to a lost world! None have perfection. HOWEVER, all are possessed of a genuine, life-changing love for Jesus because He first loved them!

Example of the Bride

Just look in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of the New Testament! But let us pay close attention to Acts 2;36-47; 4:23-33; 8:1-4:

When the lost are converted, born again by the Spirit of God— No one has to beg, bribe, pamper, threaten, or motivate or be CREATIVE or entertain! Discipleship is on automatic!

There is INDWELLING DESIRE! There is an INDWELLING COMPELLING! These folk continued fervently in Bible Study, Prayer, Worship, the Lord's Supper, Caring for each other practically and sacrificially, and giving the gospel to the lost. Even the so called 'carnal Christians of Corinth were **RADICALLY transformed** from their former lifestyle! (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

CRITICAL NOTE: Another difference between the Bride and the Harlot is this: The Bride never, never threatens, never seeks to force, never imprisons, hurts, or kills in order to advance her cause. THE HARLOT IS BLOODY WITH THE BLOOD OF SAINTS— **WHICH PROVES THAT ISLAM AND MUCH OF WHAT IS CALLED CHRISTIANITY ARE ALL OF THE HARLOT!** (Rev. 17:1-6) **The harlot**, will pretend love; but she hates and persecutes and tortures the Bride.

The Bride is willing to be tortured and even killed... but she is never willing to inflict such on others. **God may not call you, me, or our youth to martyrdom. But such is the case in parts of our world this very day.** We must be developing a spirit like theirs! Even in this present hour our confession must be: ***"There is no higher position than to be a child of God and no greater honor than to be a voice for Him."***

FINAL QUESTIONS:

There are only two churches in my town OR in your town! Let each of us

dare to ask:

To which do I belong?

And which church am I helping to build?

May Grace Abound To All! James Bell www.southsidegallatin.org

SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES:

TUESDAYS: Come and sing every Tuesday night at Gallatin Health Care nursing home. Meet at the front door at 5:30PM. Questions call Bradley Pennington at 615-804-3054.

WEDNESDAYS: **6:30pm— Children** Ministry/activities; ☐ **6:30pm— Youth** Activities and Bible Study— **(For both of these... enter via double doors by gym)**

☐ **6:30pm— CHURCH PRAYER SERVICE...** Come in side entrance, iron steps... meet in Ladies Sunday School Room

LADIES BIBLE STUDY— NEXT, SEPTEMBER 10, 11:00am, The Life of David! Cindy Bell, teaching. {Meet in Ladies Sunday School Room: Come in FRONT doors of the church auditorium or the SIDE door at the top of the IRON STEPS!}

* **EVERY SATURDAY MORNING @ 8am: Men's Fellowship/Bible Study!** {Study in ROMANS}... Come to back of Church building... Come in under the drive-thru awning... walk forward... till you smell the coffee!

SUNDAY SERVICES! September 6, 13, 20, 27:

1. 9:30am, Sunday School // 2. 10:45am, Worship Service

3. NOON 'Covered-Dish' meal // 4. 1:00pm afternoon service.

NOTE: Schedule for Third Sunday, September 20:

1. 9:30am, Sunday School // 2. 10:45am, Worship Service/LORD'S SUPPER SERVICE // 3. NO meal & NO afternoon service

[SOME HOME GROUPS MEET IN THE EVENING— INQUIRE FOR DETAILS]

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**SOUTHSIDE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL— *Uniting Church, Home, and School in CHRIST!* For the 2015-2016 school term we are offering **Second through Twelfth grades.** Children need the Home, the Church, and the School to model and teach the same basic philosophy of life. ***Children are like young plants in a garden— they must be protected.*****

<http://www.aceministries.com/curriculum/?content=presentingACE>