

Church Growth by God's Power

By Pastor Sonny Wahl

Sonny Wahl has been a Missionary Coordinator in 45 countries with the Assemblies of God, Rheinhard Bonkke Ministries, Bethany BWPC, JSM and WDF. He is the Senior Pastor of Praise Church in Prairieville, Louisiana.



The Great Revival

God is calling the churches of today to return to her roots of Pentecostal Power. Twenty years ago the Holy Spirit visited denominational churches up and down the Mississippi River and energized Pastors and congregations alike. The results were the same as recorded in the book of Acts; people got saved, filled with the Spirit, healed of terminal illnesses, prophesied, delivered of evil spirits and entered into a greater level of joy and peace with God. A mini-revival of God-centered Christianity broke out in the Deep South as new converts from most every family became a light for Jesus. Mighty missions works were birthed as new missionaries were sent out of these new Spirit filled churches. These God inspired works continue even today impacting the distant corners of the earth with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Great Departure

Sadly, many churches have left this awesome Pentecostal Power available through God's Spirit and have adopted their own dead programs of endless activity. Instead of praying and hearing from the Holy Spirit many leaders and congregations simply look to the larger churches for direction and guidance. They conclude that the larger churches are "big" because they hear from God and therefore have the answer to church growth. But "big" as man sees it is not always an indication of God's blessing or direction for a church. God told Samuel when choosing David to be King of Israel, not to look at outward appearances as men do, but to look at the heart and the motive of men before choosing". God chose David not because of his outward greatness but because of the devotion of his heart. The main reason many churches are headed down the wrong path is because they have stopped praying and seeking the face of God as a people and as a congregation. Only by spending time in His presence will we know the real motive, focus and goals of our heart. Here is the secret of growing your church for Jesus. Grow it deeper! If you dig a hole, it will automatically become wider as you dig deeper. In the same way if we seek the Holy Ghost our churches will automatically grow in numbers as we go deeper with the Lord. It is not the size of a church that matters to God but the quality or depth of Christ formed within the individual lives of that church.

Many churches have initiated new programs to help manage or encourage new church growth. The problem is that some of these programs have stop serving the people and the people are now pressured to serve the programs. Jesus said that Man was not made for the Sabbath but the Sabbath was made for man. God did not make man to be in bondage (being in a state of joyless over-commitment) to the church and it's programs but rather commanded the church to serve, edify and build up the believers. (Eph 4:11). The

programs in themselves are not bad or unscriptural. Many times the churches and their leaders will use programs that God gave someone else to do, to try to pump life into an already exhausted congregation without the Holy Spirit's permission. The result is always death. The Bible says the letter of the law kills but the Spirit gives life. Many of God's people are tired of the shallow, barren, dried up, controlling conditions of these once godly institutions and are wanting to be free. God is willing that we be free, not so much from a person or a place, but from our shallow heartedness towards Him. Pray for your leaders and church members that all would know His Power in a new and refreshing way.

The Greater Purpose of Life

The great reformer Jonathan Edwards from the 17th century said, 'People will only find their true purpose in life when they are totally satisfied in Christ alone.' Life's purpose is not about a book, a program or a philosophy. It's all about Jesus. He must become our love, our focus and our passion. When this happens all of the world's passions, pleasures, fears and distractions will fall by the wayside. Only then will our life's direction and purpose become crystal clear. Have you ever tried to take away an old bone from a hungry dog? He will not turn loose. First you must offer him something tasty and then he will drop the bone! We need to stop offering God's people the world's old bones and instead give them Jesus, the Bread of Life and the Giver of that Life!

Whatever Jesus touches becomes alive. The Lord has not changed, the Word of God has not changed and the Holy Spirit is still alive! He is still watching over the lives of every Christian waiting for permission to come in and baptize us with fresh fire from heaven. The Lord is speaking today that we have left our Holy Spirit inheritance and need to return for His refreshing. Let us all return to seek His face. Wait upon the Lord and He will renew your strength like an eagle. Freedom is yours today!