I Want the Church to Grow–But Do I Want Any More People? #1

Acts 6:1-7

Introduction:

1. In October 1987, Ross Jordan asked Cordell Holloway and me, “Do you want the church to grow?”
   1. Cordell replied that he wanted the church to grow.
   2. I answered, “I want the church to grow, but I don’t want any more people.”
2. There is a difference between what I know I “should” do and what I want to do.
3. I WANT THE CHURCH TO GROW BECAUSE IT WAS IN GOD’S PLAN.

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days

That the mountain of the Lord’s house

Shall be established on the top of the mountains,

And shall be exalted above the hills;

And all nations shall flow to it.

Many people shall come and say,

“Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,

To the house of the God of Jacob;

He will teach us His ways,

And we shall walk in His paths.”

For out of Zion shall go forth the law,

And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

He shall judge between the nations,

And rebuke many people;

They shall beat their swords into plowshares,

And their spears into pruning hooks;

Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,

Neither shall they learn war anymore (Isaiah 2:2-4; ).

“And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever (Daniel 2:44).

For the earth will be filled

With the knowledge of the glory of the Lord,

As the waters cover the sea.

But the Lord is in His holy temple.

Let all the earth keep silence before Him” (Habakkuk 2:14, 20).

1. BUT – I MAY NOT WANT PEOPLE THAT I FEAR.

And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple (Acts 9:26).

* 1. We understand that the Jerusalem disciples were afraid of Saul.
     1. He had hurt and helped kill other Christians.
     2. Ananias didn’t want to visit him.

Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, “Ananias.”  And he said, “Here I am, Lord.”  So the Lord said to him, “Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying.  And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight.”  Then Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem.  And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name” (Acts 9:10-14).

* + 1. Ananias wanted the church to grow, but he didn’t want certain people.
    2. Think of the loss if Saul had not been converted.
    3. I’m glad Ananias let the Lord decide who needed to be in the church instead of Him making that decision.
  1. Whom would I want to keep out because of fear?
     1. Child molesters?
     2. Another staff member?
     3. Another elder?
     4. Jeffrey Dahmer?
        1. Crimes.
           1. Serving 15 life sentences for murders in Wisconsin; 1 from Ohio.
           2. Dismembered victims.
           3. Kept parts of their bodies for trophies.
        2. Conversion.
           1. Curtis Booth of Cresent, Oklahoma, and Mary Mott of Arlington, Virginia sent a Bible correspondence course to Jeffrey.
           2. He requested baptism.
           3. Roy Ratcliff baptized him.
        3. Reactions.
           1. Praise.
           2. Behind back, “If Jeffrey Dahmer goes to heaven, then I don’t want to go.”
           3. “Do you think he was really sincere?”
  2. What if God really could and would save Saul of Tarsus and Jeffrey Dahmer? 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Conclusion:

1. I want to the church to grow, but do I want any more people?
   1. How many?
   2. What kind?
   3. Do I want more people in the church if God will check with me before He lets them in?
2. What does God want?
   1. All who are burdened with sin.

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.  Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.  For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

* 1. All who want to be saved.

And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!”  And let him who hears say, “Come!”  And let him who thirsts come.  Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely (Revelation 22:17).

1. How will I cooperate with Him?
2. What is your response to God’s call?
   1. Are you weary?
   2. Do you have the desire?
   3. Will you come?