I Want the Church to Grow–But Do I Want Any More People? #7

Introduction:

1. Let us invite God’s word to examine the thoughts and intents of our hearts.

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).

* 1. How am I similar to some of the people we have considered?
  2. How am I different?
  3. How do I want to change to be more in tune with the mind of Christ? Philippians 2:1-8

1. WANT THE CHURCH TO GROW BECAUSE THE EARLY CHURCH GREW – GOD WAS PLEASED.

Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:41,47).

However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand. (Acts 4:4).

And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women (Acts 5:14).

Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.

Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith (Acts 6:1, 7).

Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.

So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord. (Acts 9:31, 35, 42).

And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.

For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord (Acts 11:21, 24).

Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed.

And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch (Acts 14:1,21).

So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily (Acts 16:5).

* 1. Growth was normal for the early church.
  2. One man heard and read of a church that was growing rapidly. He commented, “They’re growing so much. They’ve got to be doing something wrong.”
  3. We are so subnormal, if we ever got to normal, we would seem abnormal.
  4. Would it be more biblical to ask, “If we are not growing, could there be something wrong?”

Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil;

Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness;

Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! (Isaiah 5:20).

1. BUT–I MAY NOT EVEN WANT PEOPLE WHO ARE MY RELATIVES IF I AM ASHAMED OF THEM OR IF I DO NOT FEEL THAT I HAVE RECEIVED ENOUGH RECOGNITION AND APPRECIATION. Luke 15:25-32
   1. Both boys were homesick like the teenage girl I heard about: “The only time I am homesick is when I am at home.”
   2. How am I like the younger son?
      1. I want my inheritance now?
      2. Discontent with the Father’s house?
      3. Waste what I have with wasteful living?
         1. He wasted.

GK - 1399 { diaskorpivzw }

1) to scatter abroad, disperse, to winnow

1a) to throw the grain a considerable distance, or up into the air, that it may be separated from the chaff

1b) to gather the wheat, freed from the chaff into the granary

1c) to winnow grain (Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon , (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1995).

**15.136 diaskorpivzw a ; diaspeivrw ; dialuvw** : to cause a group or gathering to disperse or scatter, with possible emphasis on the distributive nature of the scattering (that is to say, each going in a different direction) - ‘to scatter, to cause to disperse.’

**57.151 diaskorpivzw** b : (a figurative extension of meaning of diaskorpivzw a ‘to scatter,’ 15.136) to spend foolishly and to no purpose - ‘to squander, to waste.’ ejkei’ dieskovrpisen th;n oujsivan aujtou’ zw’n ajswvtw” ‘there he wasted his money in reckless living’ Lk 15.13. Louw, Johannes P. and Nida, Eugene A., Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains, (New York: United Bible Societies) 1988, 1989.

* + - 1. His living was wasteful

**88.97 ajswvtw**” : (derivative of ajswtiva ‘senseless deeds,’ 88.96) pertaining to senseless, reckless behavior - ‘senselessly, recklessly.’ ajpedhvmhsen eij” cwvran makravn , kai; ejkei’ dieskovrpisen th;n oujsivan aujtou’ zw’n ajswvtw” ‘he went to a far-off country where he wasted his money by living recklessly’ Lk 15.13. In a number of languages ‘to live recklessly’ is ‘to live without thinking’ or ‘to live without being concerned.’ Louw, Johannes P. and Nida, Eugene A., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains,* (New York: United Bible Societies) 1988, 1989.

* + 1. The bottom line–he didn’t want to be with his family–his brother and his father.
  1. How am I like the older son?
     1. He was angry and would not go in. v. 28
     2. He was arrogant. v. 29
     3. He was jealous. v. 29
     4. He accused his brother without known evidence. v. 30
     5. The bottom line–he didn’t want to be with his family–his brother and his father.
  2. Some of the most difficult times I have had in talking with others was when relatives “protected” members of their families from me.
     1. “Why would a relative not want a Christian to talk with their loved one?”
     2. Answers.
        1. Bad experiences in the past where people have been hurtful.
        2. Afraid of offence, driving them further away, and never talking to anyone again.
        3. The spouse or relative has tried and if someone else were to be successful in bringing them to the Lord, it might reflect on them.
        4. They know the dedication of their spouse to anything they believe in; if they were to be converted, the “Christian” spouse would have to change.
  3. This is in contrast to Paul’s attitude toward his relatives.

Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God (Romans 10:1-3).

I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen (Romans 9:1-5).

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?