

The Purpose and Plan of the Church

Acts 2:37-46 Pt 2

Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?”

38 Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.”

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

42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common,

45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,

47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

The New King James Version. (1982). (Ac 2:37–47). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Mt 16:16–19

- 16** Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
- 17** Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.
- 18** And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.
- 19** And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

The New King James Version. (1982). (). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

I. Christ is Lord of His Church

18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church,

Peter

Petros: "a stone" or "a boulder," Peter, one of the twelve apostles

Original Word: Πέτρος, ου, ὁ

Part of Speech: Noun, Masculine

Transliteration: Petros

Phonetic Spelling: (pet'-ros)

4074 *Pétros* (a masculine noun) – properly, a stone (pebble), such as a small rock found along a pathway. **4074** /*Pétros* ("small stone") then stands in contrast to **4073** /*pétra* ("cliff, boulder," *Abbott-Smith*).

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What does the **This** refer to;

What ever the This is it is also the Rock

16 Simon Peter answered and said, **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”**

17 Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

The truth that Christ is Lord of His church may sound somewhat benign to a casual listener in our generation, but the struggle for Christ’s authority in the church has come to us through the ages on a sea of blood. Thankfully, literal bloodshed over the issue is no longer very common. But faithful Christians are still waging a fierce moral and intellectual battle for Christ’s lordship over the church.

One of the major early catalysts in the Protestant Reformation was a book by Jan Hus, a Bohemian Christian who preceded Martin Luther by a full century. The book was *De Ecclesia* (The Church), and one of Hus’ most profound points was proclaimed in the title of his fourth chapter: “Christ the Only Head of the Church.”

Hus wrote, “Neither is the pope the head nor are the cardinals the whole body of the [true] holy, universal, catholic church. For Christ alone is the head of that church.” Pointing out that most church leaders in his era actually despised the lordship of Christ, Hus said, “To such a low pitch is the clergy come that they hate those who preach often and call Jesus Christ Lord.”

Hus’ candor cost him his life. He was declared a heretic and burnt at the stake in 1415.

More than a hundred years later, already at odds with the papal establishment, Martin Luther read *De Ecclesia*. After finishing the book, he wrote to a friend, “I have hitherto taught and held all the

opinions of Jan Hus unawares; so did John Staupitz. In short, we are all Hussites without knowing it.”

Emboldened by his reading of Hus, the reformer took up the fight for Christ’s honor as true head of His church. Luther wrote, “I am persuaded that if at this time, St. Peter, in person, should preach all the articles of Holy Scripture, and only deny the pope’s authority, power, and primacy, and say, that the pope is not the head of all Christendom, they would cause him to be hanged. Yea, if Christ himself were again on earth, and should preach, without all doubt the pope would crucify him again.”

In many ways, the question, who is Lord of the church? was the over-arching issue of the Protestant Reformation from the start. (That’s what Luther was tacitly acknowledging when he said “we are all Hussites.”)

Of course, Roman Catholic canon law still insists that the pope is her supreme earthly head and the ruling vicar of Christ in that capacity.

But the historic Protestant commitment to Christ’s lordship over the church has also subtly eroded, and that is a trend that deeply concerns me. It’s an issue I have written much about over the years.

For example, some evangelical leaders aggressively teach that it is not even necessary to confess Jesus as Lord in order to be saved. That’s what the so-called “lordship controversy” is about. It would be hard to imagine a more obvious attack against the lordship of Christ over His church, but “no- lordship theology” has thrived for years and seems to be gaining strength.

Evangelicals also gave birth to the “seeker-sensitive” movement wherein church services are tailored to please trend-savvy unbelievers. Novelties ranging from circus acts to slapstick are deliberately injected into corporate “worship” in order to keep worldly minds entertained. That is a practical denial of Christ’s

lordship over His church, relegating His Word and ordinances to secondary status while granting hedonistic fashions the right to determine even the order of worship.

Feminists want to redefine the idea of headship, eliminating the idea of authority from the concept altogether. That, too, is a frontal attack on Christ's lordship over His church.

Bible translators and paraphrasers who tamper with the true sense of God's Word; emergent church leaders who question the clarity of everything Christ has said; and above all, preachers who seem to talk about everything but Scripture — all of them do what they do in direct defiance of Christ's rightful authority over His church.

One thing would do more than anything else to answer every challenge to Christ's authority: the restoration of clear, powerful, expository preaching to its rightful place at the center of all the church's activities. If we truly believe Christ is Lord of the church, then the church needs to hear His voice. His Word must be proclaimed and its content taught accurately, systematically, and unrelentingly whenever the church comes together.

Jan Hus said the same thing. Declaring that the lordship of Christ over His church means emphatically "that the Christian ought to follow the commandments of Christ," Hus then cited Acts 10:42 ("[Christ] commanded us to preach to the people") and called on church leaders of his day to preach the Word of God at every opportunity — even though a papal bull was then in force, strictly limiting how and where the Scriptures could be proclaimed.

The church today is badly in need of reformation again. And Christ's lordship over His church is still the central truth we must recover, which requires the unleashing of His Word among His people again. We cannot merely float along with the latest evangelical trends and expect things to get better. Like Jan Hus

and Martin Luther, we need to fight for the honor and authority of Christ as Lord of His church.

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Psalm 118:22

The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner stone.

Ephesians 1:22

Verse Concepts

And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,

Ephesians 5:23

Verse Concepts

For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.

box

Colossians 1:18

Verse Concepts

He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

II. Christ Builds His Church

18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Now I will acknowledge that there are many, many ways to build the first church of the tares...many ways. Behind which Satan is the real power. And it can be done very effectively. The church of the tares can be very effective, it can be big and it can be enduring. The Gnostics did it and it's still around. The Roman Catholics have done it and its still around. The liberals have done it and its still around. The cults have done it and its still around. The church of the tares is actually bigger than the church of the wheat. And today those who call themselves evangelicals are busy doing it.

And there's a long list of locations called churches where tares assemble in increasing numbers with a scattering of weak wheat stalks among them. The successful assemblies of tares will eagerly market their skill at tare development. It can be very seductive to those who are motivated by numbers or pride or popularity.

So, if you want to take a shot at competing with the rest of the tare pastors to see how many tares you can get in a building, there's ample information, lots of seminars, plenty of books and data on the Internet that you can draw down to work on building your church of the tares with a smattering of wheat.

However, if you serve Christ and you recognize that He is the one head of the true church and He it is who builds the church by divine design, determined by the Father, energized by the Holy Spirit, then all you want to know is how can I be useful to Him in the building of His church. And I assume that's why you're here and not somewhere else. So we're back to our one essential issue, how does Christ build His church and has He revealed that

to us? Or are we in the dark? Is there some wiggle room here that allows for some of the contemporary approaches to this?

Well I'm happy to say to you, the answer is not vague, the answer is not obscure. When you ask how does Christ build His church, the answer is not debatable, it's not complicated, it's not even difficult. It is simple, it is straightforward, it is so clear that it is inescapable. It is so singular as to make every one of us duty bound and accountable to the Lord of the **church** for faithfulness to His will and His means so clearly revealed. If you are caught up a little in chasing every passing fad for **church** growth, if you are buying the bags of **church** growth stuff that clever entrepreneurs and marketers are selling, if you're reading every survey that comes out and doing your best to analyze culture, you're trying every device to increase numbers, I sort of want to throw the gauntlet down today and ask you to make a choice. If you want to build the **church** of the tares, you're on your own, get all you can. You want to be a means by which Christ **builds** His church, that's a different thing all together.

Ac 1:12–15

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey.

13 And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James *the son* of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas *the son* of James.

14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said,

Ac 2:40–47

40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.”

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

42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common,

45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,

47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

Ac 4:4

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

Ac 5:14

14 And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,

(Ac 6:7

7 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.

Ac 9:31–32

31 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.

Ac 12:24

24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.

Ac 16:4–5

- 4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.
- 5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.

Ac 17:12

12 Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.

Ac 19:20

20 So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

Ac 28:30–31

- 30** Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him,
- 31** preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.

How Christ Builds His Church

How did the the disciples experience Church Growth

1. They had a Transcendent Message

1 Pe 1:23

23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,

Ro 10:17

17 So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

So we have this singular message which then by definition must be a transcendent message.

What is plain is that the message of the early **church** transcended all languages, all nations, all cultures, all societal norms, all contexts, all levels of education, all notions about status. It transcended everything. And remember this, please, there was no global village. You understand that national identity was fixed and unmixed in many, many cases. They didn't have media to wash away all the differences in the sort of universal mentality that we're used to in our exposed culture. There are hard lines drawn between people groups and languages and societal norms and behaviors and forms of entertainment, etc. There was no mass media creating world norms. There were deep-seated distinct, cherished, ingrained, cultural perspectives all over the globe and they had no effect on the message...no effect. Jesus said,

Matthew 28, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel. Make disciples, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." And all those great commission passages.

Acts 1 now verse 8. "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." You'll receive power for evangelism when the Holy Spirit is come upon you and you will be witnesses of Me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the remotest part of the earth. You notice the utter indifference to language, societal norms, social issues, racial barriers, they don't exist. The power of the Spirit and the power of the gospel, that's all that is necessary. You can take that message from where you are in Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

All that is necessary for the power of God to be released in a situation is that the truth of God be proclaimed. It is irrelevant what the cultural expectations are.

And then Peter preaches his sermon and at the end, verse 36, Acts 2, "Let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified. And when they heard this they were pierced to the heart." **Who** was pierced to the heart? All these people from Jerusalem and from all these other countries. Peter simply proclaimed the truth concerning Christ and did an exposition of Psalm 16. Right? That's what he did. And they were pierced to the heart. And they said, "What do we do?" And Peter said, "Repent and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." It is a message of sin and repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It doesn't matter what nation you're from, it doesn't matter what language, the message never ever changes.

"For the promise...there we are in verse 39...is for you and your children, for all **who** are far off in the Gentile world, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself." We know **who** is going to respond to the message, the ones the Lord calls to Himself. And with many other words...many other words, "He solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation.'" Not only did he not identify with the generation, he

said you've got to be saved from it. There were those three thousand souls that were added by God that day to the hundred and twenty.

The message is transcendent. You say, "Well what are the practical implications of that?" It didn't matter whether he was talking to Jews or Gentiles, the message never changed. And you can follow that through the book of Acts. It doesn't matter whether Paul's talking to Gentiles, or synagogue talking to Jews, the message never changes. The Jews said, "That's a stumbling block." First Corinthians, right? The Gentiles said, "That's foolishness." Paul said, "I will continue to preach only Christ and Him crucified." It's immaterial. The message never ever changed. Why would you do anything to change the message? First Corinthians 2, "When the natural man understands not the things of God." You're talking to the dead. If our gospel is hidden, 2 Corinthians 4, it's hidden to those that do not believe.

So, the Apostles went out with absolute disdain for...here comes the buzz word...any contextualization at all. The modern cry for contextualization is a curse...it's a curse because people are spending all their time fussing around with trying to figure out whether they should have holes in their Levis and a skull and crossbones on their Tshirt as if that's a means to drawing in the elect.

Contextualization...I call it Zip Code ministry. Is that what you want? We're big in our zip code.

The message of the **church** is transcendent. The message of the Word of God is transcendent. You have the Bible in your hand, you must affirm the message transcended its original culture. It crosses the world. It ignores all the nuances of social order. It ignores all the peculiarities of style. It never

descends to clothing and musical styles as if that had anything to do with Christ building His church.

Can your message go to any person, every person? Not only in your zip code but in your town, in your state, in your country, and can you take the message you preach on Sunday any place in the world and preach it? Does your message ignore all the trends and fads and pop cultural superficial icons and bring heaven's truth down in its full alien reality? Can you take your sermons anywhere on the road and preach them?

This is the way it ought to be. Or should there be a warning label on your CDs, "This message destructs in five seconds?" Or, "Discard three months after the date?, or a week after?", or whatever.

The Lord built His church with pure, simple, straightforward gospel truth. The Corinthians, of course, they were very bothered that Paul wasn't contextualized. That ate at them. And he couldn't have cared less. He didn't care at all. John the Baptist was a little out of touch with his society. I don't think he found a whole lot of folks wearing camel's hair, so were all the Old Testament prophets for that matter. And so was Jesus. And please, do not appeal to anything in people that is innate to their fallenness. Wherever their corruption goes, don't go there...don't go there. The true gospel has to be alien, it has to be alien.

1. They had a Transcendent Message
2. They had a Saved Congregation

To call an assembly of non-believers a church is preposterous, outrageous. The Lord only adds believers to the church. There's a serious defect in a so-called minister

content to be proud of assembling non-believers and calling them a church. Something deeply wrong there. Modern evangelicalism seems to exhaust every imaginable and unimaginable means to attract and collect non-Christians into a building and then call it a **church** and call it **church** growth. Maybe there's a better way to identify these places, let's just call them non-churches. Maybe it's just an evangelistic event.

Acts 2:41

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

42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common,

45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,

47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

The Lord defines His **church** as an assembly of regenerate believers, totally devoted to Christ, true worshipers

gathered for spiritual purposes, engaged in the spiritual disciplines. I love this, they were continually devoting themselves, continually being the operative word, to these spiritual disciplines. This is a far cry from what goes on in the non-church today. An event is designed for unbelievers and there are a few straggler believers in the assembly of tares getting nothing to lift them up from their spiritual weakness. But the Lord **builds** His **church** from the foundation of true believers.

1. They had a Transcendent Message
2. They had a Saved Congregation
3. They had a Valiant Perseverance

But alongside that general awe or that general esteem, or that general respect, and we've all experienced that at the hands of some of the most non-Christian people, they respect us because they see virtue and manifest character, etc., etc., but alongside that while they respect us for the evident power in our lives or the evident difference in our lives, they resent us for the message. They resent us for the message. The resentment comes at the point of the truth preached and proclaimed.

So, in the modern strategy you go big with the number one idea that they like us because we're nice, and if you just pull back the message, they'll keep liking us. But if you're honest enough to give the message, the message is a damning and judgmental message. And so it was in the book of Acts. Verse 36 of chapter 2, "Therefore, let all the house of Israel, says Peter, know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus, whom you crucified." When they said, "What shall we do?" Peter said in verse 38, "Repent and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." And then in verse 40 he

goes on solemnly testifying and exhorting, "Be saved from this perverse generation." Don't go to hell with everybody else.

Acts 3:17Peter again, "Now, brethren, I know you acted in ignorance just as your rulers did also, but the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Repent therefore and return that your sins may be wiped away in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord and He may send Jesus the Christ appointed for you." Again the message clearly is repentance. And it's the same again in chapter 4, "Let it be known to you...verse 10...and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by this name this man stands here before you in good health." Again there is this continual tone of indictment.

We can't back away from the idea of sin, righteousness, judgment, calling for repentance, forgiveness, escape from hell, not perishing with the perverse generation. This is an offensive, narrow, exclusive, condemning message. It puts all those, listen, all those **who** do not believe the gospel into the category of being damned forever. And all people **who** propagate any other kind of religious idea except the true gospel are hypocritical, liars, **who** are damned themselves. There's no way around it. We are called to alarm the sinner...to alarm the sinner.

And what's that going to do? That's going to create persecution, hostility. Jesus said, you're going to have to take up your cross if you want to follow Me, you're going to have to hate your father, your mother, your sister, your brother, those

of your own household, even your own life. This message is very hostile. And the early **church** felt it big.

Ac 4:1–5

- 4:1** Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them,
- 2** being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.
- 3** And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.
- 4** However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

The **church** has a valiant endurance. It has a valiant perseverance in the face of persecution, the gates of Hades cannot stop it. The gates of Hades is a euphemism for death. Even the threat of death cannot stop the church. We don't need to mitigate the cost of becoming a Christian.

1. They had a Transcendent Message
2. They had a Saved Congregation
3. They had a Valiant Perseverance
4. They had an Evident Purity

And let me tell you what the danger in the early **church** was. You want to know what the really big danger was? The big threat to

the early church, this will surprise you, it wasn't persecution, we just read that. They arrested them and the church grew. They arrested them and the church multiplied. That wasn't it. The biggest threat to the church was this, there were so many signs and wonders, there were so many miracles attracting people that unbelievers might come to church for the wrong reasons. That's the deadly danger.

There are a lot of sick people, lots of people who were infirm, diseased, disabled. Miracles were going on in there. Signs and wonders were going on in there. Listen, this is beyond a light show. This is beyond a rock band. This is beyond a skit or a drama. This is the real deal and the fear in the church was that unbelievers would come in and they already knew that the Lord said that the devil would sow tares. The church was in danger of being leavened by the world. So the wonder of it all had to be mitigated with fear. In fact, the fear had to be so powerful and so great that it stopped non-Christians outside the door. This is absolutely upside down from modern church growth strategy. They could really draw a crowd if they chose to. But there had to become such a deadly dread and fear that unbelievers wouldn't dare go in to the church.

Acts 5, God Himself provides the horror.

Acts 5:1

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession.

- 2 And he kept back *part* of the proceeds, his wife also being aware *of it*, and brought a certain part and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.
- 3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back *part* of the price of the land for yourself?"

- 4** While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”
- 5** Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.
- 6** And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried *him* out, and buried *him*.
- 7** Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.
- 8** And Peter answered her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?”
She said, “Yes, for so much.”
- 9** Then Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband *are* at the door, and they will carry you out.”
- 10** Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying *her* out, buried *her* by her husband.
- 11** So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.
- 12** And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon’s Porch.
- 13** Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly.
- 14** And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,

You know, you have to be so careful in the church. The first instruction in the church is Matthew 18 and it says, “You would be better off drowned with a millstone around your neck than ever to lead another believer into sin.” That's what Jesus said. The first instruction to the church is don't cause one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble. You as a pastor, you as a church member never want to be responsible, directly or indirectly, for leading another believer into sin. Even the holy angels watch the face of the Father who shows His concern for His little ones and they're dispatched to their aid because He doesn't want any of His little ones to be devastated. As a pastor, I want to have joy with my people. But church is not about being a jokester, it's not about funny, clever pop jargon, it's certainly not about coarse, gross dirty talk.

It's so interesting to me to watch the flow of church growth. It starts out with sort of meeting people at their social level. They need associations, friends, singles need to meet singles, let's have restaurants for them, let's have recreation. That's the first wave that connects with them socially. The second wave goes a little deeper and says, “No, they've got all these felt needs, you've got to have 45 Twelve-Step Programs, so let's connect psychologically.” So the new wave of church growth says, “Let's connect psychologically.” And now we're in the third wave which says, “Let's connect sensually. Let's connect them at their visceral gut level, the

level of their over-exposure to immorality. Let's laugh at crudeness and rudeness. Let's tell dirty jokes and let's say explicit things on the pretense of identification, having planted evil thoughts in their minds, then trying to recover them.” The new church-growth plan seems to be to identify people with people at the level of sensual lust, explicit speech that panders to the flesh followed by a transition to the truth.

1. They had a Transcendent Message
2. They had a Saved Congregation
3. They had a Valiant Perseverance
4. They had an Evident Purity
5. They had qualified Leadership

Acts 6

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.

- 2 Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.
- 3 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;
- 4 but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”
- 5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch,
- 6 whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

- 7 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.

Re 3:14–22

“And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write,

‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:

- 15 “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.
- 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.
- 17 Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—
- 18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.
- 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.
- 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.
- 21 To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

22 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

III. Christ Plans His Church

IV. Christ Gives Purpose to His Church