

Fanning it into Flame
Sunday, January 31, 2010
The Heart of a Growing Church

To understand the heart of a growing church we must go back to the original intention of the architect and builder. The Apostle Paul tells us in **Ephesians 1:22-23** *"And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way."* God is the architect and builder according to Hebrews 11:10 and Jesus tells us in Matthew 16:18 that he is building his church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it. What did God have in mind? I believe the heart of God was to have a family that looked like him; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. His Kingdom is not so much like earthly kingdoms with pomp and circumstance, but a body formed out of the intimacy of relationship. Love will guide the way. When we lose sight of relationships we end up with a passionless organization that functions out of a systematic approach. While order and structure are necessary, they cannot be the guidance system or what defines us. They are there to serve us not vise-versa.

A similar analogy can be seen in the contrast between God's grace and the law. The law, according to Paul's letter to the Galatians, was implemented in order to be the tutor that would lead us to Christ. It was not meant as an end in itself. When we came to Christ we left behind the tutor and now are to be led by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Our motivation would come through our relationship with God and our desire to please him, not out of the fear of reprisal. Sharing our faith would come from the sheer joy of wanting others to have what we have. This can never come about by following a law of needing to share our faith or else! It just doesn't work. The law could not work because of our sinful nature. God did for us what we could not do for ourselves by declaring us as the righteousness of God in Christ. Christ as our life is what the Father sees when he looks at us. Our sins are forgiven. We are a new creation in Christ. This is not just a cleaned up version of who we were, but a brand new species if you will; a new creation. Christ is now united to us in a magnificent union that empowers us to walk in a realm where nothing is impossible. This is so exciting because in it we have the potential to become the greatest creative people on earth; the greatest doctors, lawyers, carpenters, engineers, inventors, artists, musicians, actors, and on and on. The sky is the limit! As his children he has plans for us to prosper and prevail having hope and a future.

Are you stuck in self-limiting thinking because you keep falling and then telling God that you'll do better tomorrow? That kind of thought process will keep you in the mire of mediocrity. You can never get out because you're not tapping into your real potential, Christ in you the hope of glory. We are a growing church. Believe it. Proclaim it. Live it. Start with a good heartfelt conversation with God, confessing your sins, admitting that apart from him you can do nothing. Then continue your proactive desire to live your life **on purpose** with the Holy Spirit leading you. Keep a watchful eye and an attentive ear and you will see and hear what God is doing. Then just follow suit. We are looking to obtain a new facility to house the hundreds that are coming because you have let your light shine before men, not out of your innate abilities, but according to his power that is at work within us. (Eph. 3:20)

The early church in scripture was motivated out of what God was doing. They were excited to be part of the very life of Christ. When Peter and John were released from jail they had a prayer meeting and did not ask for the persecution to stop, but rather asked to be granted boldness to preach the word in the face of adversity. Then an amazing thing happened. **Acts 4:31-35** *After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. 32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. 33 With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. 34 There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35 and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.* What an exciting life! They were used by God and became givers out of a generosity that welled up from their union to the greatest giver. Let's pray for an amazing move of the spirit where miracles occur and generosity flows from our grateful hearts longing to advance his Kingdom.