***EVANGELISM—GOD’S GREAT WORK April 20, 2014—PM***

***Gospel Meeting: Real Life For Everyone Northwest Church, New Hope, MN—Max Dawson***

*Introduction:*

1. We need to challenge our thinking about how we view the growth of the local church.

a. Do you view it as a good thing when more folks hear and obey the gospel, rather than fewer?

b. Though unspoken, some Christians may think something is wrong if a church aggressively does evangelism and grows. Maybe it would be better to convert fewer. What do you think?

2. This is “Evangelism 101.” Let’s lay aside our personal views and see God’s plan for His church.

a. We may talk about evangelism, but we need the right view of the local church in order to do it.

b. This lesson is about the basics, what we think about church growth and how we approach it.

*The Lesson:*

1. **What God wants His church to be.**
   1. See the growth in the Jerusalem church, Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1; 6:7; 8:4. Was the Jerusalem church not what God wanted—growing, aggressive, and converting many souls?
      1. Today, many brethren think anything over 200 members is “too big.” Compared to what?
      2. Size is relative. What would a Jerusalem Christian say about your congregation?
   2. It is not spiritual to be small, not denominational or liberal to be large.
      1. If a church grows today, we are almost sure something is wrong!
      2. Some have used “I like a small congregation” as a scapegoat for not working. Some have said, “We don’t want to grow. We are already big enough.” Big enough for what?
      3. We have to change our thinking. God wants all men saved, 1 Timothy 2:4.
      4. Like farmers, we have to sow more seed, Galatians 6:7b. We have a great work to do!
      5. Most churches wouldn’t want 100 new converts this year. “There’d be too many problems. Our building isn’t big enough. We don’t have enough teachers. Besides, we like it small.”
      6. Because brethren think that way, they do not aggressively seek the lost.
2. **“What about the problems of growth?”**
   1. Things that are perceived as disadvantages: “Growth brings on crowded conditions. I don’t like crowds. Too many people make things noisy. I can’t know everyone in a larger congregation.”
   2. Many things may be perceived as disadvantages—but do they outweigh our mission?
      1. Crowds may be a negative at the grocery; but a large crowd at a ballgame is a positive. For what we are doing, a crowd is a positive. Empty buildings are a negative.
      2. About the noise problem: Visit a small church where there are no kids running, no babies crying, and few people greeting one another. How much do those people enjoy it?
      3. About not knowing everyone: Did everyone in Jerusalem know everyone? Give a verse!
3. **Advantages of allowing a congregation to grow together.**
   1. *The need for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ can be better met,* Acts 2:46.
      1. Kids in small churches often find no kids their age, so they get their friends from the world, 1 Corinthians 15:33. A larger church has an advantage—lots of friends their own age.
      2. It is true among teens, college age, young married, widows, etc. At one weekend meeting with focus on teens, a church had 400+ teens present. Would it be better to have fewer?
      3. “But, when churches get big, they get impersonal.” Are you sure? See Acts 4:32.
   2. *As a church grows, there are greater \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ resources,* Ephesians 4:16*.*
      1. Consider the talent pool among ourselves. Differing abilities make this church function.
      2. If a church divides, the pool is split with two struggling groups, both lacking leadership.
   3. *In the larger congregation there are greater \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ resources.*
      1. Smaller churches may barely survive financially. They can do little outside work.
      2. In a larger church an economy of scale is reached after initial expenses are met. Excess now goes to evangelism. Doubling in size doesn’t double expenses.
   4. *In the larger congregation there can be more efficient use of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.*
      1. The smaller the church, the less media teaching it can do (radio, TV, newspaper, etc.).
      2. Like Paul, we use all means to teach, Acts 20:20. One church had a radio work and converted many; they grew and divided because they were getting “too big.” No more radio!
   5. *A larger congregation can have a more \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Bible class program.*
      1. The church is a teaching institution, the pillar and support of the truth, 1 Timothy 3:15.
      2. A larger church can have a far more diverse course of study for all its members and kids. Parents say, “I like a small church,” then moan that they have inadequate Bible classes.
   6. *There can be an increase in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in the larger congregation.*
      1. A function of the assembly is edification, 1 Corinthians 14:12, 26. At Jerusalem 10,000 gathered to praise God and encourage one another. I would rather hear 40 saints praising God than 4; I would rather have 400 than 40. God deserves more; I need more!
      2. Don’t we feel better in our assembly when many come together rather than fewer?
   7. *Simply put, allowing a congregation to grow can be an aid in reaching the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.*
      1. Don’t forget our mission, Luke 19:10; 1 Thessalonians 1:8. Listen to Jesus, Luke 16:8.
      2. Some groups, that don’t believe the truth, have seen the value of a church growing together. Are we as wise as others, or is the church supposed to be about what “I prefer”?

*Conclusion:*

1. Smaller churches have a right to exist. Yet, these attitudes among brethren may be wrong:

a. “I like a small church.” What will they do if the church grows? Will they leave?

b. “Large churches are cold, unfriendly.” Are you sure? Do you condemn the Jerusalem church?

c. “I can’t know everyone in a large church.” Is that an excuse for not working?

d. “There is no work for me to do in a large church.” Is your real work not evangelism?

e. “But I’m afraid other brethren will criticize us if we grow!” Fear God—not man!

2. These statements are not gospel, but hindrances to gospel evangelism. Let’s be what God wants!