

## **“Having a heart for the lost and growing the Church”**

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Greetings in the Name of our Crucified and Risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

I receive emails all the time from a variety of Christian organizations advertising the latest and greatest gimmicks and gadgets they have invented in order to “pack the pews.” If I will just follow their advice and adopt their principles and programs, I am assured that my ministry will be blessed and the congregation I serve will grow.

I usually just delete these kinds of emails, but every once in a while, I’ll open one and read what is being advanced by these so-called “church growth experts.” But, it never fails that, by the third or fourth paragraph, I am reminded of why I usually just delete these emails without reading them, for what they promote is not genuine church growth, but principles and programs assured to make your church more appealing to the world in order to increase the size of your membership roster.

Now, maybe I am missing something, but I have read the entire Bible a number of times (really, I have), and I have yet to come across the passage in which God urges His children to become more worldly in order to increase the size of His kingdom. There simply is no, “Thus saith the Lord: Get with the program, people! Find out what unbelievers like and give it to them so that My Church can grow!” Anyone who has even skimmed through Holy Scripture would realize how absurd such a commandment would be coming from our Lord.

And yet, this is exactly what today’s “church growth experts” and “church consultants” promote. They tell us that we need to develop “a church for people who don’t like church.” How can we develop such a “church”? Well, that’s easy. We simply give people who don’t like church what they want. And, hey, we do not even have to go and find out what it is that people want, because these “gurus” have already done that work for us. They have completed demographics studies and conducted numerous surveys and already know what people want in a church. All we have to do is follow their advice and – voilá! – instant church growth will occur.

Now, just take a moment to ponder this. What they are advocating is that the Christian Church determine what non-Churchgoers, and even non-Christians, desire, and then change in order to fulfill those desires. What ends up happening in this insane scenario is that non-Churchgoers, and even non-Christians, end up setting the agenda for what the Church does, how it worships, what programs it employs, etc. It is nothing short of amazing that people who call themselves Christians promote this utter nonsense. It is even more amazing that so many people buy into this nonsense and see the ever-changing, “new and improved,” more appealing “Christian” Church as a blessing.

Of course, when you speak out against these things, as I am here, you are accused of “not having a heart for the lost,” or of not being willing “to do whatever it takes to win souls for the Lord.” So be it! For if “having a heart for the lost” and “doing whatever it takes to win souls for the Lord” means selling out to the world, I want nothing to do with it. And, guess what. Neither does the Lord!

Our Lord does not measure our success based on the number of people we have in the pews on Sunday. He’s not into numbers – at least, not in that way. He’s into faithfulness. He always has been and always will be. He does not change. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And, He has established His Church, by means of His own Holy Blood, to be a sanctuary from the world

and its ways, and the devil and his wiles. And, while He does desire that His Church “have a heart for the lost,” He does not ask His Church to “do whatever it takes to win souls.” He has already done everything it takes to win souls by living the perfect life in our stead and by dying on the cross for our sins. Thus, He gives His Church the mission of seeking and saving the lost not by giving the lost what they desire, but by delivering unto the lost what they need – the Law to convict them of their sinfulness and the Gospel to point them to their only hope for salvation, Jesus Christ.

So it is that Christians who truly “have a heart for the lost” will never attempt to come up with new fads, gimmicks, and gadgets which have the purpose of making the Church more appealing to the lost. Instead, they will be about the business of “making disciples.” How? By “baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit” and “by teaching them to observe all that the Lord has commanded” (cf. Matt. 28:19-20). Hmm . . . it sounds to me like the Lord would have the Church convert the lost, not the lost convert the Church. For that reason, I think I’ll just continue to hit the delete button when those emails appear in my inbox.

In Christ,

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