

PERSONAL SERVICE TIME

NUMBER 115

MARCH, 2017

The net effect of many of the social and religious changes which have happened to us in recent years is that we consider church attendance and Bible class attendance as a destination. When we have attended Sunday a.m. worship and Bible class, we have done our service for Jesus. If we come Sunday night and Wednesday night, we are really doing good service.

It is doubtful that anyone actually says to themselves that I have gone to church so I have done my duty, but it seems to be the net effect. To a large extent we have an audience perspective of Christianity.

Surely this passive view towards Christianity is at least a factor in the present church decline. Further, it has been ingrained in what we do for a while, so it will be hard to change.

Whereas some may be happy with the present situation, it is doubtful that Jesus is. We frequently ask congregations what percentage annual growth rate from personal evangelism would you be happy to tell Jesus on judgment day. The only time we have gotten an answer below 10% was one shepherd who said 1% so they could have a goal they could actually meet. The most common answer is 100%

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TO A LARGE EXTENT WE HAVE AN AUDIENCE PERSPECTIVE OF CHRISTIANITY!

SPIRIT FILLED RESURRECTION

“And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.” (Rom. 8:11 NIV)

We are privileged to be the dwelling place for the Spirit of God. When we followed the pattern that Jesus gave, death to our old life, burial in baptism, and rising forgiven, we received the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit. (Rom. 6:1-10)

We want to have confidence in our belief about our resurrection and be able to share it with others. So, how do we know?

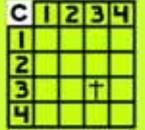
We know because Jesus Christ is our Lord and Saviour. We have declared to all that we will follow him. “If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Rom. 10:9)

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PERSONAL SERVICE TIME, P. 2

For discussion sake, let's go with 10%. This would be an aggressive goal for most congregations, but less than most church members would say.

The 10% goal would be a low goal for most small startup congregations. If ten members were to start a new congregation and convert two in a year, you are at 20%.

Most of our congregations have been around for a while. Most have "matured" to a lukewarm situation, and for most it takes more than a couple to achieve a 10% growth rate.

It is fairly easy to identify what is not going to change a congregation from being lukewarm to being a growing congregation:

1. Shepherds working harder: They are already overworked.
2. Ministers working harder: They are already overworked.
3. Some new program: New programs typically address the symptoms of the problem, not the problem.

What we are going to suggest here is that the likely solution is member involvement - or personal service time.

Consider that you have a 500 member congregation and each member decides to do 2 hours of service for Jesus each week. That would be 1000 hours available per week or about 4,300 hours on the average month. We are going to suggest at this point that everyone would agree that if you accomplished 4,300 hours of beneficial service per month that your congregation would be transformed.

We are going to suggest that this is intuitively obvious. A potentially massive productive work force, so why is everybody not doing this.

There are some reasons why this is difficult:

1. Members are sheep. Although they may be willing to do 2 hours of work per week, what to do is a major problem. Most start off with an attitude like this and then get discouraged and tend to "go with the flow".
2. Our organizational paradigm seems to be that shepherds tend towards total control and tend to disenfranchise deacons and members from leadership positions. They would usually like to delegate better, but deacons and members don't accept the charge well and accomplish the mission.

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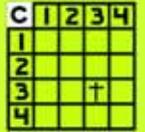
SPIRIT FILLED RESURRECTION, P. 2

We know that we shall be raised because God has guaranteed it and he has transformed us by the Holy Spirit. "Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come." (1 Cor. 5:5)

We know that we shall be raised by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit living in us. "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." (1 Cor. 3:17, 18)

"So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless." (1 Cor. 15:58)

Elizabeth Brown



PERSONAL SERVICE TIME, P. 3

3. Managing the activities of 500 members is a major task. Whereas everyone thinks they are a good manager, most are not.
4. Our structure of multiple shepherds providing alternate operating philosophies as they rotate tends to take clarity away from the organization.
5. A member who could actually organize the members well enough to be effective tends to concern the shepherds who feel when they must be in complete control.

Basically, **It takes organization.**

The answer is the same for all congregations. The congregation needs to figure out how to engage a majority of their members in some form of personal service time. This is the difference between growing and lukewarm for several reasons.

The answer is different for every congregation. How your leaders figure out how to engage a majority of your members in your situation will be unique to your congregation.

You can study what other congregations do, but you cannot implement the symptoms of their success and expect it to be successful in

THE ANSWER IS THE SAME FOR EVERY CONGREGATION!

your location. God has made us much too complex for that.

It is for sure that the organizational structure required to establish and maintain this flow of workload is significant and must be done right to be effective. This is not shepherding work. If anything, this is "deacon" work (See Acts 6). Whereas the shepherds are in charge of everything, they must pursue and effectively en-

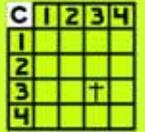
gage others in these management tasks. If they don't, they will simply be overwhelmed by the workload and not accomplish the task. (Does this seem familiar to you?)

THE ANSWER IS DIFFERENT FOR EVERY CONGREGATION!

One idea which has a lot of potential is "side door events". This is the idea of organizing members to hold events which will bring potential prospects into your facility or homes. The more times someone is in your facility "rubbing elbows" with you, the more likely they are to listen to the truth. Some potential events are:

1. Monthly weekend night party. This allows any member to know he or she can invite someone to a controlled social situation to assist in their personal contacts.
2. Financial counselling seminars.
3. Speakers on special topics.
4. Be prepared for an emergency such that you can involve your neighborhood in doing good works at your facility.
5. Teaching topics, such as English or another language.
6. Financial counselling seminars.
7. Boy or girl scouts.
8. School tutoring
9. Family photo stations for Easter, Christmas, and other holidays

It takes organization.



PERSONAL SERVICE TIME, P. 4

A soft spot to consider is whether your congregational mix is the same as your neighborhood mix. If the socio-economic mix of your service area has changed, any growth you see will likely come from that socio-economic group rather than your old one. If you keep acting like and appealing to the historic socio-economic group you are going to die. When you tell Jesus you were not comfortable with the new socio-economic group, you may well find that Jesus is color blind. Investing personal service time in engaging the new socio-economic group can be a very useful thing to do. **It takes organization.**

Many of our older congregations tend to have older members, and in a lot of cases a lot of retired members. Something the older members can do is offering baby and child sitting services. Helping with the small children of young mothers is a way to do service, and to potentially advise younger families and children. It functionally costs us nothing and can be a tremendous economic and personal benefit to some younger families. Our facilities make excellent areas for this. They are usually set up on grade level in the first place. Our goal should not be to use a portion of our facility for one hour a week. Our goal should be closer to how many times a week we can use them. **It takes organization.**

There is a difference between scriptural requirements and our traditions. If we fail to accomplish the scriptural requirements because we had holding fast to our outdated traditions, judgment day may not be a happy day for us.

As a general rule, congregational success has to be doing our part of the great commission. If shepherds try to do everything in their congregation of any size, they will fail. The work shepherds can't effectively delegate is shepherding. They can only neglect it while they do things instead that they could delegate.

This would mean that shepherds not only need to delegate, but also must help to grow church leaders they can delegate to. It is a continual process. At whatever time in the process the shepherds stop delegating and maturing others to delegate to, they have doomed their congregation.

In the short term, many jobs will seem easier to simply do themselves rather than putting up with unreliable deacons, but that is the short run. The seemingly easy way in the short term leads to overworked and under appreciated shepherds. We can all see that in hindsight. It is just hard to see it coming.

For most of our congregations now, it is not a "see it coming" problem. It is usually hindsight now but the resulting situation is hard to fix as the shepherds who need to take the lead in reversing the process are now tired and overworked.

Work of shepherds is shepherding, the work of deacons is administration. How can your congregation in its unique situation promote shepherds shepherding and deacons administering to the common good. We want to suggest to you that this is a critical step which must be taken so that your members can be effectively engaged in personal service time.

The payoff is:

1. Shepherds engaged in shepherding and oversight of the congregation rather than tending to micro-manage it.
2. Deacons and other leaders administering the goals of the congregation and organizing members.
3. Members effectively engaged in personal service time.

It will not be easy, but what you are doing now is not easy either. **It takes organization.**

IMPOSSIBLE FOR EVOLUTION #71: BABIES FIRST STEPS [4]

This is not when the baby starts walking, it is about their first steps in life. When the baby is born, it is functionally already 9 months old. In the first 9 months it has a heart beat and moves around a lot.

It gets food and oxygen and gets rid of wastes and carbon dioxide, except it does it thru the umbilical cord. It takes advantage of the mother's systems for most things.

However, there are some things it never does. Among these are breathing, eating, urinating, and pooping. The baby is alive and has never done any of these.

The most critical of these is breathing. Literally, if the baby doesn't breathe within about 3 minutes of being born, it will die. Not much chance for trial and error there. If it doesn't already know how to breathe, it dies. It pretty much means they knew how to keep their mouth shut and keep their lungs dry in the womb to be ready to breathe.

**IF A BABY DOESN'T BREATH
WITHIN ABOUT 3 MINUTES, IT
WILL DIE!**

If the baby doesn't know how to eat after the umbilical cord is cut, it will last a couple of weeks before it dies. Pretty much is the same for urinating and pooping. In humans, we have enough time and can work around these, but in the rest of the mammal world, they would just die. Functionally, they would poison themselves.

Humans are at the top of the earthly food chain, but are at least near the bottom with respect to the capabilities of babies at birth. Horses may get up and walk off when born, but human babies are totally dependent upon parents for quite a while.

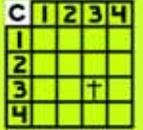
After 9 months in a cozy environment, they are introduced to a harsh new world and must immediately have some new capabilities, even if most of their needs will be met.

Breathing, eating, popping, and urinating represent four miraculous interfaces the baby must have with the environment

Not much chance at a million tries and a million years for accidental evolution. If the baby doesn't start breathing, it will die.

Benton F. Baugh, Ph.D., P.E.





OCCG THINK TANK CHURCH LEADERS WORKSHOPS

Members of the OCCG Think Tank would be pleased to come to your area and present our Church Leaders Workshop with some of the information we have been studying and developing.

Real and practical suggestions will be made on how to better engage your members in accomplishing our part of the Great Commission in our time.

Workshops are formatted as:

Area Wide Workshops meeting at the location of a host congregation,
or Individual congregational workshops.

If you would like to host a workshop for your area or would like one scheduled for your congregation, go to the occgthinktank.org website, contact us tab, and send your information.

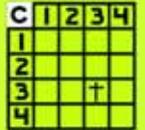
The **OCCG Think Tank** is studying how to promote methods which will return the churches of Christ to a growth mode while maintaining a firm scriptural basis. We solicit everyone's ideas on how to do this, but even more than this we need your assistance in making this a reality.

It is clear that having some ideas is different than translating the ideas to a beneficial form and communicating these ideas to the our congregations.

Whereas we would encourage all to dedicate your service time to your local congregation, if you have extra service time and energies, we need your help. There are many ways to help including:

Working on Webpage design
Microsoft Access programming
Phone app for ready access to Bible teachings
Develop Bible teachings into a standardized format
Develop standardized information regarding denominations

If helping in these areas is interesting to you, contact bbaugh@thearray.org



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Develop Bible teachings into a standardized format

(Review existing and do new topical studies to support the Great Commission)

Develop standardized information regarding denominations

(Fill out standardized questionnaires, if we are going to try to convert people, we need to understand where they are)

Working on Webpage design

(Web page exists, always needs upgrading, improving, and posting the results of the above work, see occgthinktank.org)

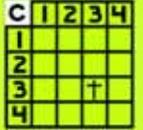
Microsoft Access programming for an office database system

(Delcon Information System exists, needs to be made more user friendly, expanded, and more versatile)

Phone app for ready access to Bible teachings

(Need to bring church work into the 21st century)

If helping in these areas is interesting to you, contact bbaugh@thearray.org



THE CATALYST INITIATIVE

GOAL: Help the kingdom grow by encouraging those without a neighborhood congregation to start one.

PREMISE: The difficulty of doing personal evangelism is proportionate to the distance you are from your congregation.

If you live far enough from your established congregation that it makes it difficult to do personal evangelism and would like to consider starting a new local autonomous scriptural congregation, let us know.

We have experienced volunteers available to assist you in starting your new congregation or to discuss the possibility.

FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE: www.thecatalystinitiative.org

Led By:

Philip Bailey, 713-304-0011, pbailey@thecatalystinitiative.org
Benton F. Baugh, 713-419-8683, bbaugh@thecatalystinitiative.org

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AREA WIDE ACTIVITIES

- Each Wed.** Northeast Houston Preacher's Meeting, Darien Loop CofC, 7014 Darien St., Houston, 11:00—1:00, Contact Cecil Herndon, aj10@ridemetro.com for more details
- 2nd Tues.** Northwest Houston Preacher's Luncheon, 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Rancho King Buffet, 5900 N. Frwy., Houston, confirm with Dale Foster at dalefost@gmail.com for info.
- 8/2018** Greater Houston Area Campaign for Christ

The Christian Array E-Magazine

This e-magazine is sent to members of the church on a monthly basis as an attempt to promote scriptural teachings, area wide activities and church growth. If you do not want to receive this e-magazine, send an e-mail to bbaugh@thearray.org and it will be stopped.

All past copies of the newsletter can be found on the website "thearray.org".

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E-MAIL ADDRESSES

A goal of this newsletter is to develop a mailing list of as many members of the church as possible and to communicate church related information to as many members as possible. In that light, we would appreciate it if you would:

1. forward the church member e-mail addresses which you have,
2. send the directory of the congregation you attend or any other directories which you might have, and
3. give us an idea of how to collect church member e-mail addresses.

The Christian Array is dedicated to support the sustained scriptural growth of the churches of Christ. It is published by BCE Publications, a 501(c)(3) organization with Benton F. Baugh, Ph.D., P.E. as editor BCE is solely responsible for the content. Any announcements, requests for publication, or comments should be e-mailed to bbaugh@thearray.org.