

Church Minded Vs. Kingdom Minded

We hear a lot today about church growth and church growth is good. A healthy church should be growing just like a healthy person should grow. A healthy church cannot help but grow!

A lot of churches are starting to evaluate every program according to how much it helps the church grow. Evaluation is good and healthy as long as we look at the big picture. The big picture that I am talking about is the Kingdom of God.

Matt. 6:33 says that if we seek first the kingdom of God that all these things will be added unto us. We do not seek his kingdom to get what we want, but as we seek first the kingdom of God our lives and ministry cannot help but grow.

Church growth cannot be the only reason we do certain programs or cut certain programs in our local churches. There is a much higher calling to grow the kingdom of God.

Jesus said in the great commission to go into all the world and make disciples. Those people that need to be reached and discipled in all the world don't just include people from our local communities that will attend our local churches.

A lot of times when people look at having a Kid's Crusade or family outreach event they count how many families return after the event and judge whether they should continue having this kind of events in the future.

A lot of times we see great growth in our local churches from such events, but sometimes it does not effect the growth of our local body however it effects the growth of the kingdom of God.

Now I am not saying that we should not evaluate the effectiveness of a certain ministry or outreach events. We should evaluate everything we do to find out if it reached the goals we had for the event and how we can be more effective in reaching these goals during future

events. However, our goal should not just be getting new people to come to our church. It should be part of it, but not the entire goal.

When I was on staff as a children's pastor, I would ask myself what is the goal of any given event and how can we best achieve this goal. A lot of times we do an event just because we have always done this event.

When looking at the event of a traditional VBS and seeing the large budget it required and the manpower from our church, I would ask myself what the goal of VBS was. Was it to encourage the Christian children in our church to grow or to outreach into the community? Being the evangelist that I am and knowing that my children were well taught in children's church my goal for most large events was outreach.

Then, I would ask myself if we were achieving that goal through the current VBS program. Most VBS curriculums are designed to teach bible truths around a certain theme for the year and not to see children born again and made disciples. VBS programs in some communities have turned into nothing more than a baby sitting service to the parents of the community. Kids jump from VBS to VBS every week during the summer just to have something to do while their parents are at work. Churches even work together to make sure that every week in the summer is covered by a different church and that everyone is not using the same curriculum. Most VBS curriculums have been watered down so that it is not offensive to anyone to get more children to attend. Sure there is a small amount of Bible in the curriculum, but in its self is not anything that will change a life for eternity.

After evaluating the program and seeing that my goal was outreach and evangelism, I decided to change to more of a Kids Crusade format. I do not call it a Kid's Crusade because the un churchd community does not understand the term and usually associate it with the crusades of the dark ages.

I have always been a kingdom minded person. Probably because Matt. 6:33 was one of the first scriptures that really came alive to me as a teen.

We will not always see church growth as a result of an event or program; however we must ask our self if the kingdom grew because of the event or program. Now I am not talking about loosely using the phrase ...

"If we touched one child it is worth it"

It is worth it to touch the life of one child. We do not know what that child will become. Maybe this child might become the next Billy Graham or something. But why should we only touch the life of one child during the event? While we are touching their live why not touch the lives of hundreds more. If only one child is reached we should ask ourselves how we can reach more next time and make the adjustments to our program, advertising, and marketing of the event to the community to reach more people.

We recently ministered at a church that had us in and had small crowds each night. Mostly church kids and a few un churchd friends attended. The same children came forward each evening during the invitation to be born again. A few people that did not attend the church came forward, but it was mostly the children from their church. I would say around 20 children were born again despite having around 50 children respond to the invitation during the 3 day event. I could see where the pastor might be discouraged and consider not having this type of event in the future because of the cost of the program and the results he saw.

No one new that a friend of mine from face book attended the service from a neighboring town one of the evenings with a group of children including her 7 year old daughter. She had seen on face book where we were going to be ministering at this church and wanted to come and check out our ministry.

After the event I received the following e-mail from my facebook friend...

"Thanks for inviting us. I'm sorry we couldn't make all three days. The kids I brought LOVED it, they want you to come to our church. My daughter who's 7 also came with me on Monday night. She has been telling people in her class and in our congregation how she is "born again" and "how

God gave her a clean heart". This is HUGE coming from a very Traditional Presbyterian Church. So thank you. You have encouraged me to change my Sunday School curriculum and change the direction of my ministry to be more evangelism based. I'll be back in touch soon after speaking with our finance committee to discuss scheduling a Jubilee Gang event at our church."

This was worth the whole event to see the lives of these young people changed and to see the possibility of an entire children's ministry at another church become more evangelistic because of the children's pastor attending this meeting.

I also received a testimony from a children's pastor in VA that was born again at a Kids Crusade at a church that he did not attend and never attended except for the Kid's Crusade where he was born again. Below is his story...

"When I was 5 years old my parents took me to see a traveling children's evangelist who was ministering in a local church. At the end of the service I asked Jesus into my heart for the first time. My family and I never went back to that church but found ourselves planted in another local church where we grew in Christ.

I often think about that first church where I found Jesus. I'm so grateful that church had a kingdom mindset when it came to outreach. Many churches see the goal of outreach as a way to boost attendance numbers. Outreaches are evaluated by measurable returns, but the Bible reminds us that we're here to build a kingdom...not just our own church.

I'm grateful for ministries like the Jubilee Gang who spend their time spreading the seed of God's word into young hearts. And I'm grateful that this first church had a kingdom mindset that allowed me to hear the gospel for the first time. Their measurable return may be considered insufficient by many churches today but I will be eternally grateful to God for them."

This is what it is all about folks! As a result of this church being kingdom minded this young child was born again and is now a children's pastor at a large church that is affecting hundreds if not thousands of lives.

It would be wrong to not give a testimony from a church that did not see growth from a Kids crusade at their church. I received the

following letter from a church in OK where a child was born again during the kids crusade and went home and told his mother about Christ and led her to the lord...

“Our pastor's wife was teaching a Wednesday night class and a mom was helping. The mom brought in her form that we have everyone fill out before they help in children's church. Pastor's wife looked at the form and saw that the mom got saved in October and asked her about it.

The mom's two kids came to the crusade and heard about being born again. The boy came to the front to pray. (That's awesome at that) That night when they got home, they told their mom about being born again and the mom got saved in her living room that night and has been faithful to church ever since.”

We would have never have know this if the pastor’s wife had not asked some questions. The kingdom was affected by this event!

When evaluating events and programs let make sure that we are not cutting a program that is affecting the Kingdom when we do not see our church numbers increase.

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