

"Why do some congregations grow and others decline?"



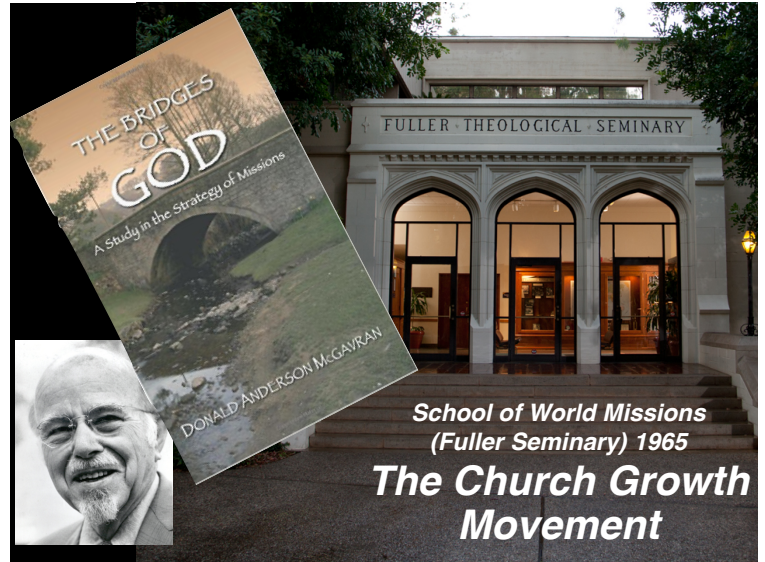
American congregations

- 50% have 75 people or less
- 90% have 350 people or less
- 1,200 megachurch have 2000 people or more (56 are in Houston & Dallas, Texas)



Why are some churches big?

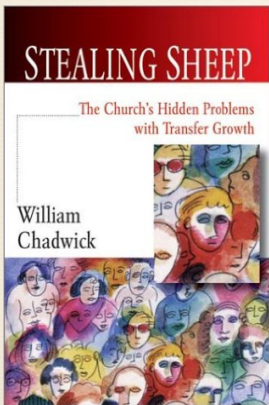
- They have a better plan for your life?
- Transfer growth "sheep stealing"?
- Follow secular marketing principles?



***School of World Missions
(Fuller Seminary) 1965***

The Church Growth Movement

The church growth moment has spawned a culture of competitive, pragmatic, fiefdoms.



Many churches are measuring success by nickels and noses.



**When is
sheep stealing
a part of God's will?**

**When Jesus
is the thief.**

**With respect to the secular culture
the church is called to be a
thermostat not a thermometer.**

**It is to shape its environment
not be shaped by it.**

***It is to be in but not of the world.
John 17:15-19***

**Is the American Christian
Church more American
than Christian?**

**With respect to the secular culture
the church is called to be a
thermostat not a thermometer.**



With respect to the secular culture
the church is called to be a
thermostat not a thermometer.

**We are critical of a communist
government forcing its values
on the church in China.**

**But seem to have no problem with
our churches willingly adopting
capitalistic values.**

American values that can affect the church



1. **God will save me with my toys and crutches.**
2. **If it produces tangible results it's of God.**
3. **God's plan is for my personal happiness.**
4. **Competition makes everything better.**
5. **Growth & size define success.**



Oz Guinness

"The Church Growth movement is much better at making mega churches than making Christian disciples because when you win folks with cultural idols it is hard to convince them that they must give them up to follow Jesus."

How to catch & keep your sheep.

- Know what people want.
- Meet felt needs.
- Target a specific market.
- Keep everything up-beat.
- Beat out the competition.
- Define tangible goals.
- Control the process.
- Demand commitment and loyalty.

*The same principles
often used in secular
business seminars.*

- **Don't read John 1:35-51.**

How John lost his disciples John 1:35-51

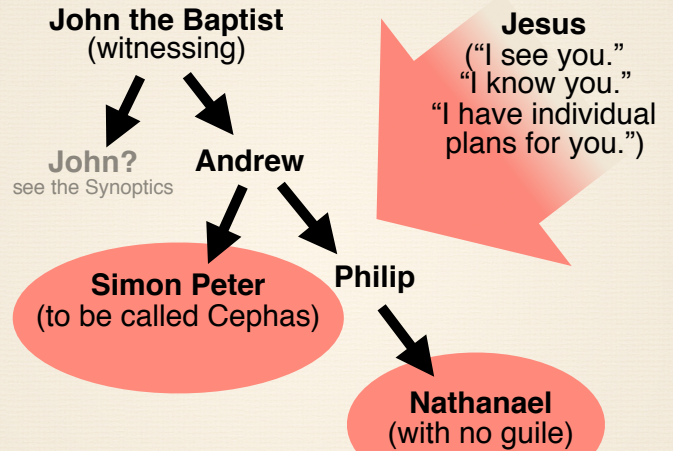
Revelation to the world of sinners	Revelation to individuals	Revelation to multitudes	Rejection by the Jewish leaders	Ministry to the disciples	Ministry to the world of sinners
1-2	3-5	6-8	9-12	13-17	18-21
Signs				Sermons	Sacrifice
Public ministry				Private ministry	Paschal ministry
Galilee & Judea				Jerusalem	
About 3 1/2 years				Only a few days	

1:35-51

John 1

"³⁵ Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶ and he looked upon Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" ³⁷ And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸ And Jesus turned, and beheld them following, and said to them, "What do you seek?" And they said to Him, "Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?" ³⁹ He said to them, "Come, and you will see." They came therefore and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. ⁴⁰ One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹ He found first his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which translated means Christ). ⁴² He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him, and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter)."

"⁴³ The next day He purposed to go forth into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow Me." ⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." ⁴⁶ And Nathanael said to him, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." ⁴⁷ Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" ⁴⁸ Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." ⁴⁹ Nathanael answered Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel." ⁵⁰ Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these." ⁵¹ And He said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.""



Matthew 4

"¹⁸ And walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰ **And they immediately left the nets, and followed Him.** ²¹ And going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. ²² And they immediately left the boat and their father, and followed Him."

This probably took place some time after the initial response to follow Jesus (John 1).
Note that Simon is here already called Peter.

Disciples left John, their vocation, and family to follow Jesus.

Three observations of good spiritual leadership

1. **Don't manipulate.** Let the Word of the Cross draw the sheep.
2. **Don't marginalize.** Welcome & encourage diversity in Christ.
3. **Don't monopolize.** Be King & Kingdom centered not pastor & congregation centered.

Fishing of men
in God's Kingdom
is strictly catch
and release.

1. Fish for sheep with the Gospel.

- Not political or military force.
- Not fun and games.

Who is Jesus?

Why is Jesus significant?

What difference does it make?

1 Corinthians 15

"¹ Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel . . . ³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that **Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that **He was raised** on the third day according to the Scriptures,"

1. Fish for sheep with the Gospel.

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Romans 10

"¹³ for "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved." ¹⁴ How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? **And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard?** And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!"

- **We must tell the story to our generation.**

2. Welcome diversity.

- Same size does not fit all.
- Seeing, knowing, and blessing encourages.

John 1

⁴² He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him, and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter)."

⁴⁷ Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!"

⁵¹ And He said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

- **We must see, know, & affirm each other.**

2. Welcome diversity.

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- Seeing, knowing, and blessing encourages.

Ephesians 4

"¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."

- **We must edify the Body of Christ by speaking truth in love and respecting the diverse functions of the Body.**

3. Wolves & shepherds both love sheep.

- John lost his disciples to Jesus.
- Keeping **OUR** sheep may be a bad idea.

John 3:30

"He must increase, but I must decrease."

Matthew 14:10

"He sent and had John beheaded in the prison."

- **When we point people to Jesus we are pointing them away from us.**

1 Corinthians 1

"¹¹ For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. ¹² Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "**I am of Paul,**" and "**I of Apollos,**" and "**I of Cephas,**" and "**I of Christ.**" ¹³ Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?"

The sheep may be in different pastures but they all wear the same brand.

Note that the first disciples :

1. Left John the Baptist
2. Left their vocations and families

What might Jesus expect us to leave if we were to follow him?

Just about anything and everything that takes on a Messianic role in our life.

- Our toys and tools.
- Our mate and family.
- Our vocation and hobbies.
- Our positions and possessions.
- Our social, political, economic comforts.

- **Shepherds** that lean on the sheep for their own wellbeing become wolves and need to leave the sheep to Jesus.
- **Sheep** that have a toxic attachment to an under-shepherd need to follow Jesus by breaking away from controlling leaders.
- **Any** confusion between the values of the culture of this age and that of the Kingdom of God must be clarified.
- **All** of us who have a messianic attachment to people, possessions, plans, & passions need to keep this stuff from displacing Jesus as our Messiah.

Our functional Messiah?

- **What do we make our greatest sacrifices for?**
- **What governs our biggest decisions?**
- **What are we most thankful for?**
- **What motivates us to get up in the morning?**
- **What medicates our pain in hard times?**
- **What monopolizes our time when we relax?**