



# Big Church Myth

## Ninety-nine percent of our churches are small churches

*"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase."* (First Corinthians 3:6)



**"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."**  
(Luke 12:32)

**One percent** of the people who attend church next Sunday will be in a large church.

A recent survey released by the *Barna Research Group of Venture California*, reported that the average church attendance in the USA *five years ago* was ninety people.

His survey revealed that black churches put the average up, as they averaged one hundred people while white congregations averaged eighty five. He reported that in the U.S.A. fundamental churches averaged about seventy-five people on any given Sunday. Obviously, fundamental churches in Canada

would average far less than those in the U.S.A.

### THE FOCUS ON THE LARGE CHURCHES

In spite of this fact, the focus is always on the one percent of large churches.

If the survey is accurate, it means as God looks down on our world next Sunday, He will see ninety-nine percent of the people attending a church in Canada will be in a small church.

It has been my experience as I travelled this country from coast to coast for many years, that our churches are maintained by small groups of sincere Christians who must *sacrifice* to pay their pastor's salary and keep the church going.

These faithful Christians do not have the financial resources larger churches have, however, unlike most large churches the same faithful people return for the evening service and the weekly prayer meetings.

**God does not consider these churches to be failures.**

Smaller churches have less available leadership to help and therefore have a much more difficult time attracting people, however, according to the Barna Group report, small or mid-sized churches have the largest number of *"born again believers."*

### LITTLE IS MUCH WHEN GOD IS IN IT

*Little is much when  
God is in it.*

*Labor not for wealth  
or fame.*

*There's a crown  
and you can win it,  
If you go in Jesus' name.*

*Does the place  
you're called to labor  
Seem so small  
and little known?*

*It is great if God is in it,  
And He'll not  
forget His own.*

*When the conflict  
here is ended  
And our race*

*on earth is run,  
He will say,  
if we are faithful,  
"Welcome home, my  
child, well done."*



The number of people sitting in a meeting may be a gauge success for man; however, as God looks at our so-called mega churches, He knows how many "goats" there are sitting among the "sheep."

**WHAT DO GOATS EAT?**

There are thirty-two noxious plants found in the state of Montana, and goats eat all of them.



Goats are used to control weeds because they eat the weeds and leave the grass. Sheep will eat weeds if that is all that is available, however, once sheep eat weeds it is difficult to get them to eat grass again.

If they are going to keep the goats coming to their meetings they will need to have food that will satisfy their cravings. Therefore, the sheep will have to learn to be satisfied with the weeds. The watchword for the mega church might be found in **Job 31:40** where we read, "Let thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockle (weeds) instead of barley."

Barna questioned the value of growth for its own sake. He said, "Jesus did not die on the cross to fill up church auditoriums, He died so that people might know God personally and be transformed in all dimensions of their life through their ongoing relationship with Him." He continued, "The goal of every church should not be numerical growth but spiritual health and vitality."

**GOD HAS SOME LARGE CONGREGATIONS**

The Psalmist said in Psalm 42:4, "...I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday." First Cor. 3:7 says God, "giveth the increase." Sometimes God increases the size of the

church, however, the majority of God's congregations are small. In Psalm 119:141 the psalmist said, "I am small and despised: yet do not I forget thy precepts."

It is great to have a multitude in church **if the increase is of God**, however, an increase that is acquired and maintained by compromise is not a successful church.

**Proverbs 15:16** says, "Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith."

**Proverbs 16:8** says, "Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right."

**A SUCCESSFUL CHURCH CANNOT BE DETERMINED BY A CROWD**

A church that has hundreds of people sitting in a building getting their weekly fix of religion while remaining spiritual pygmies is not a successful church in God's eyes.

God wants people who are capable of, "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." (Titus 1:9)

**WHAT ABOUT SERVING GOD?**

We have the false impression that a church that has a fleet of buses parked in the church parking lot is a successful church.

I have spent hundreds of hours working on bus routes and have nothing but the highest respect for those who work on buses. Someday these faithful folks will receive their reward, however, what about the ninety-five percent of those who call themselves Christians who wouldn't dream of serving God by working on buses?

If every Christian who shows up for church next Sunday picked up three

people in their cars on the way, churches could send the millions of dollars spent on maintaining buses to some missionaries.

Bus ministries have become necessary so that the majority of Christians in the local churches can sleep in a little longer, spend a little more time getting ready for church and save their new cars from getting their carpets dirty. **Does this sound like a successful church in God's definition of the term?**

The one church of the seven listed in the Book of Revelation that received no rebuke from the Saviour, was the church at Philadelphia. The Lord highly recommended them. He said in Revelation 3:8, "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for **thou hast a little strength**, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name."

The church that received the sharpest rebuke was the church of the Laodiceans. Revelation 3:17 says they were "...rich and **increased**..."

They had a crowd but where was Christ? He said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Revelation 3:20) The door is open to a mixture of sheep and goats but is closed to the Saviour and we assume that is success.

**SWELLING IS NOT GROWTH**

You can smack your thumb with a hammer and you will have swelling, however, swelling and growth are two different things. There is much swelling in the ranks of today's so-called fundamentalism,





that may be impressing people but it is not impressing to God.

**IT IS NO FAILURE WHEN PEOPLE LEAVE A CHURCH BECAUSE THE PASTOR REFUSES TO COMPROMISE THE TRUTH**

John chapter six begins with, "And a great multitude followed him." Jesus traveled on to Capernaum and we read, "They also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus."

In verse twenty-eight they asked, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" He answered their question and in verse forty-one we read they, "murmured at him." They did not want the truth, they wanted approval concerning their preconceived ideas of doing the "works of God."

In verse sixty-six we read, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." So much for the "great multitude." The ministry of the Lord was no less successful after the majority of His followers left!

**UNDERSTANDING THE DAY IN WHICH WE LIVE**



There was a time when preachers preached and God blessed. *John Wesley, Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, D. Talmage, Peter Cartwright, Charles Finney, C.H. Spurgeon, D.L. Moody, R.A. Torrey, Sam Jones, Billy Sunday, Gipsy Smith,* and others announced meetings and crowds came to listen to them

preach. Even the local newspapers reported the news about thousands being saved.

**WHY DID GOD BLESS THEIR EFFORTS THEN AND NOT NOW?**

God said, "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." (Revelation 3:8) God was pleased with **the way** the "works" were being done and He opened a door that no man could shut.

**SINCERITY IS NOT ENOUGH, GOD'S WORK MUST BE DONE GOD'S WAY!**

God's word says, "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of **the way** which I command you." (Deut.11:28)

It matters not if it is 1905 or 2005... God's work done God's way will not lack God's blessing. God said when we, "...turn aside out of **the way** which I command," therefore, we do not have the blessings that came with obedience.

**GOD CLOSED THE DOOR**

In Revelation 3:7 we read God, "...shutteth and no man openeth." Men, who are no less sincere than those who preached a hundred years ago, preach today but without the same results. God's blessings are not upon our efforts like they once were.

**I HAVE SEEN A LOT OF CHANGES**

October 7, 2005 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> year since I became a Christian. Much has changed in fifty years. I can remember when the "Pastor's

Office" was referred to the "Pastor's Study." This may seem like an insignificant thing, however, we need to honestly consider why we have made this change.

I remember when the area at the front of the church auditorium was referred to as "The Pulpit Area." Today it is referred to as "The Platform." We need to honestly consider why we have made this change.

I remember when nobody would even think of taking pictures of people praying.



Today, it is seen as another opportunity to promote the church in the next church paper. It is a sad indication of where we have stooped to, that we would take pictures of people praying without even a thought of it offending God and the person on his knees.

Some pastors will be more upset about me mentioning this, than they will be with themselves for taking pictures of people praying.

**REVIVAL?**

I remember when a revival was a time when soul-searching Christians cried out to God for forgiveness for their sin rather than a fellowship meeting for Christians, with a few sermons tossed in.

I recently saw a church ad promoting "revival meetings" at an independent, Baptist church and part of the enticement on the flyer was the revival would include a trip to an amusement park. This is our new "fundamental," degenerated, view of "revival."

**IF THIS ALL SEEMS A BIT "PICKY" CONSIDER THIS!**

A survey was recently taken among "Young Fundamentalists." Seventy-two percent of those surveyed were graduates of Bob Jones University, Maranatha Baptist Bible College and Northland Bible College.

- **49% of these "fundamentalists"** admitted to having drunk alcoholic beverages. (Only 9% said they no longer drink)
- **75% of these "fundamentalists"** did not believe drinking alcoholic beverages was Biblically wrong.
- **51% of these "fundamentalists"** were not sold on Christian schools for their children.
- **57% of these "fundamentalists"** did not use the King James Bible.
- **51% of these "fundamentalists"** said, if they started a church they would not call it a Baptist church, even though fifteen of the twenty-one schools surveyed were Baptist Colleges.
- **10% of these "fundamentalists"** felt that women could be pastors or deacons.
- **58% of these "fundamentalists"** believed in Calvinism. (That God created millions of people for no other purpose than to have them burn in hell for eternity.)
- **86% of these "fundamentalists"** had no problem with contemporary music in churches.
- **49% of these "fundamentalists"** said they were not committed to being a fundamentalist.
- **62% of these "fundamentalists"** said they believe that fundamentalists have majored in the minors.
- **48% of these "fundamentalists"** said we should not preach music standards.
- **13% of these "fundamentalists"** did not believe Hell was a literal place.

One can only guess what percentage of "fundamentalists" will not be concerned about these statistics.

There is no doubt the colleges mentioned above do not believe

these things, however, the figures do reveal a serious problem.

**Proverbs 16:8** says, "Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right."

The faithful pastor who refuses to compromise would be better to teach his people in his local church than send them off to a college that turns out students with views of fundamental Christianity seen in this recent survey.

The Word of God says in First Timothy 3:15 "...the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

**THE ONLY ORGANIZATION GOD HAS SANCTIONED FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE GOSPEL IN THIS AGE IS THE LOCAL CHURCH.**

I challenge anyone who disagrees with the statement above, to show me any Scripture that even suggests that God has approved any ministry out side of the authority of the local church for this age we live in.

If a pastor has young people who want special training, such as Christian school teachers, they should go to a college that is an integral part of a doctrinally sound local church.

In Canada, we recommend **FaithWay Baptist College of Canada** in Ajax, Ontario and **Canadian Baptist Bible College**, Winkler, Manitoba

**SILENCE GIVES CONSENT**

Jesus rebuked **the pastor** of the Laodicean church because he let the church go apostate while he was busy building the attendance. (Rev. 3:15-17) Jesus even cursed a fig tree for not doing what it was created to do. (Matt. 3:10; John 15:2)

In the parable of the talents, Jesus described a man who did nothing with what was put at his disposal. Jesus said he was a "wicked and slothful servant." (Matt. 25:26)

**OPEN REBUKE IS BETTER THAN SECRET LOVE**

(Proverbs 27:5)

We read in Galatians 2:11, when Peter was guilty of doctrinal error Paul, "...withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed." Peter was openly opposed and reproved for his error.

Verse fourteen says, "...when they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel." Peter was rebuked, "before them all." Apostasy has flooded our churches because maintaining our friendships has become more important than defending the truth.



**A PERSONAL WORD**

Nothing in this article should be interpreted as suggesting we should slow down our efforts to win lost people.

Jesus said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, **even unto the end of the world.**" (Matthew 28:19-20)

**The end of the world is not here yet!** This is a time to redouble our efforts in presenting Christ to the unsaved. Apostasy is no excuse for disobedience.

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