



## There are Better Questions than “How do I get my Church to Break the 200 Barrier?”

July 13, 2018—Vol. 12, No. 28

Have you ever experienced three different worship experiences on the same morning? I have. I was traveling in a different time zone a few weeks ago which caused me to awaken early in the morning (like 4 a.m. early) because of the fact that my body was still on Eastern Daylight Time.

I took advantage of the extra time and decided to join a couple of our eastern/Midwest churches for worship via their live streams. I’m finding that more and more of our congregations are offering some type of live video of their services. Later that morning I attended a worship service at one of our CGGC churches near where I was staying. I’ve been reflecting on the experience for a couple of weeks.

Three different churches, three different worship experiences. Two of the congregations were larger (over 200 in worship) while the third congregation was smaller (under 50). There was a contrast of styles between the three congregations – from unplanned and spontaneous to very organized, orderly and with each move or transition carefully planned out. Different styles of worship, different styles of preaching, and a diverse range of people were represented across these three different congregations in three different areas of the country.

Over the years I’ve heard a lot of discussion around the idea of success in ministry or who’s really doing “church” the right way. I’ve seen larger congregations look at smaller congregations in a pejorative manner as if to say they’re not measuring up because of their lack of numbers. “Those churches aren’t serious about reaching people for Christ.” I’ve also seen smaller congregations dismiss the work of larger congregations, often with the sense that growth requires selling out, watering down the Gospel, or doing something that is less than God honoring. “We may be small, but we’re going to grow deep with God rather than buy into the shallow stuff their selling down the street at that big church.” Both of these positions are wrong, misinformed and not helpful.

Here’s what I witnessed that Sunday: three different congregations all being faithful to do what the Lord has called them to do. Here’s the other thing that I’ve observed as well: they’re all bearing fruit. They are seeing people’s lives being transformed by Jesus.

How do I know? The congregation I had the privilege to worship with in person had a number of men present who had been homeless in the recent past. It was really quite amazing. Because of the congregation’s size, these men made up a significant percentage of those gathered for worship. These men had been on the streets but as a result of the ministry of this church, they were now on a different

### Author

The weekly eNews is provided by CGGC Executive Director Lance Finley.



life path and following Jesus as they walked the journey. This small church was bearing some significant fruit.

I'll admit, it might be difficult to get a sense of fruitfulness from a distance or from viewing a livestream of a worship service, but the other two congregations are fellowships that I know fairly well. I've been to each church in person and I interact with their leadership regularly. Each of those congregations are seeing peoples' lives changed by the Good News of Jesus Christ. People are being delivered from addictions and brokenness, lives are being restored and redeemed and people are becoming disciples of Jesus. Neighborhoods and cities are being changed and transformed as a result of what God is doing through his people in these congregations. As a matter of fact, it occurred to me that the real transformational work taking place in all three of these congregations isn't taking place on Sunday morning, but it's all throughout the rest of the week. People are being deployed as the people of God, to bring the Good News of Jesus to their friends and neighbors while they do the work of His kingdom.

I witnessed three congregations who are being faithful and bearing fruit for the kingdom of God. Here's the tricky part; sometimes, you'll find people who are being faithful but yet they don't see much fruit. People are doing the right things, they're demonstrating and proclaiming the Gospel faithfully, but it may be that they're just in a particularly difficult place and the results come slowly.

Sometimes we may be faithful, but we're not faithful with the right things. Faithfully keeping the church doors open and the lights on is noble, but I don't think that's the summation of what Jesus called us to when He told us to take up our cross daily and follow Him. Faithfulness is more than showing up every seven days at 10 a.m. Are you faithful in the work God has given you?

Then there are also situations where there's no fruit because there's no faithfulness. Sadly, I've seen some of these too. Have you gotten tired and given up or have you embraced a false gospel? There are times when a lack of fruit points to a lack of faithfulness.

We need to be examining our lives and our churches by the measurements of faithfulness and fruitfulness. Let's abandon the silly arguments about style and size. Are we bearing fruit? Are we being faithful? Are we doing what the Lord asks of us?

If we aren't bearing fruit, why aren't we bearing fruit? Are we being faithful to our Lord and doing what He's asked us to do?

These are the questions we need to be asking.

Christ's Peace,

**Lance**