

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Our Strategy for Church Growth (Part 1 of 4)

Scripture: Various

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: October 7th, 2007



Our Strategy for Church Growth **Church Membership**

PP 1

1 Corinthians 12:27 (NASB)

Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.

Ephesians 4:1-4

I, THEREFORE, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, ³ being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

Introduction As a church, where are we going? Why are we here? Is there any method to our madness and is there any map for where a person fits in to our church plan, and does God even care about our specific church? Does it matter to Him where each person is at in his or her faith walk, while they are here, fellowshipping at this particular church?

PP 2

We are going to take the next four or so messages to lay out a map of how we envision the growth of our church happening in the coming years. Every church has several groups of people in it: occasional people from the general community, regular attenders (the "crowd"), members (the "congregation"), MATURING members (the "committed"), and the leaders or "core." It is really about how you, as individual Christians, grow and a map to think of. It is not the only map of the Christian life that there is. But what you are going to see is what we, the elders of our church, feel reflects the major areas of Christian growth that God intends for all disciples and how you can look at your life. I do not want you to fear that someone is going to start score-carding you on these things, because we are not. But if you have ever stopped and asked yourself, "where am I going in the Christian life? Am I growing?" these are four areas you can use. They are so important that we're attaching the very direction of our church to these things. I hope you will prayerfully sign on to these areas. We're excited about having come to the place where we are in one accord and see the clear sense of these things to focus upon.

PP 3,4

I am calling this little series “Our Strategy for Church Growth.” Now right at the outset you might be leery of the word “**strategy**.” You might think, “Hey that’s not a word found in the Bible, and it sounds more like business or commercial talk than it does something Christians should talk about. But when I use the word, all I mean is a **plan** or a **methodology** for working with and even stimulating growth in DBC. Perhaps then, the word **growth** concerns you. No, we do not want to grow in numbers “willy-nilly,” without deepening as we widen. But without a strategy for growth, we would have an accidental and random response to people who attend our church. We don’t want to be accidental OR random. We think the business of disciple-making and outreach should have some sense put to it. Our “purpose statement” which we put together 15 years ago, states: THE PURPOSE OF DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH IS TO HONOR GOD BY GROWING IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM AND ONE ANOTHER THROUGH A BALANCED FOCUS ON WORSHIP, DISCIPLESHIP, FELLOWSHIP, MINISTRY AND EVANGELISM.

PP 5

Our church began in 1963 with maybe 20 people or so. When Renée and I arrived in 1983 there were about 60 people fellowshiping around DBC and the church had gone from being a Baptist church to being a Bible church. Now we are ministering to around 320 people, total (including the dog.) The church has grown, as churches should. If a church exists for 45 years and *doesn’t grow* you have to wonder what is wrong? Any community of God’s people should grow and multiply and win and enfold more people into their ministry. The Gospel is that good! And we have grown. And I expect that unless we “shoot ourselves in the foot” we will continue to grow. But how do we plan for that growth? Is it spiritual to make NO plans and just see what happens and make all our decisions on the fly? Or is there some sense to seeking a plan, doing some thinking in advance and managing the growth that God brings us?

PP 6

Admittedly, I want to say up front that we have CHOSEN to use some of the thinking from Rick Warren’s *Purpose Driven Life* and *Purpose Driven Church*. We have spent the last three years absorbing and evaluating those two books, and while there are surely short-comings, things left out, and even just opinions in those two books, we like a lot of what is said and we think it is a good model for how to think about growing our church. But be rest assured, everything we do is based—we hope intelligently—on a good exegesis and faithfulness to the Scripture.

We don't want anyone to NOT grow, who is part of Dartmouth Bible Church. We know growth is not always something you can measure and it doesn't always happen at the same speed for everybody. Spiritual growth doesn't happen according to some simple formula. We know these things well. But we do hope for and pray for everyone within and around our church to be growing closer to God, developing a closer walk with Jesus Christ and to avoid stagnation. To NOT be growing, means something is wrong. If someone is part of a Christian community—a healthy one at least—and they are around the Scripture, around good brothers and sisters in Christ, around *other* people who are growing and struggling with the Christian life, and that person is NOT growing at all, something is not working right. Growth is a thing that is normal. And we want very much to be a “growing” community, by means of each person IN that community growing in Christ, and growing in grace.

We are putting out to you the idea that membership in our church is a good first step, at least so far as outward commitments go. Church membership is not the goal of being a Christian. It is a first-step means commitment that is a good thing and meaningful.

Now, is the very idea of church membership a thing that the Bible talks about? In short, no. We do not find a verse in the New Testament which says, “Thou shalt become a church member.” There are also no church buildings, no Sunday School, no electric guitars, no denominations and no AWANA or Word of Life or Baptists or seminaries or Christian schools, either. All these are things which have grown out of the church's growth and need for new ministries. Church membership IS, however, a thing the Bible anticipates:

- The first century church DID keep lists of members apparently, especially those with particular needs... 1 Timothy 5:9,11 ***Let a widow be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, having been the wife of one man... But refuse to put younger widows on the list, for when they feel sensual desires in disregard of Christ, they want to get married.***
- The first century church expelled people from their ranks for creating dissension and for blatant sin. 1 Corinthians 5:13 ***But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.***
- Paul's and Peter's New Testament writings are letters of specific instruction to churches in specific locations, with official elders, leaders and organization, as we see in 1 Peter 5:1-5 for instance... ***THEREFORE, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, ² shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with***

eagerness; ³ nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. ⁵ You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

But the main reason we hope you will consider joining DBC is to add to a sense of belonging and ownership. I don't mean something TOXIC where you are OWNED. Not at all. But it is natural to want to feel like a place is a home for you. And to feel like this ministry is YOUR ministry and that you own the place, with its blessings and cooperative effort and struggling and praying, sometimes for years for various things, AND its weaknesses, problems and mutual dependence on God's grace! JUST LIKE A FAMILY!

We are envisioning MEMBERSHIP as a first step for people in our church, and as a time in your life when you said, "Hey, this is my church. It may not be where the Lord has me for the rest of my life, but for now, this is my church. I am part of THIS family. And a family is energized and run on RELATIONSHIPS not on rules. Remember that I said that, please! Relationships are not always easy but a church *without* relationships—GOOD ones—is a dysfunctional place, I think. Good relationships mean FRIENDSHIPS and dependability. They mean kinship and a certain loyalty between us. No, they're not the end-all of life, and if God leads you to another place, we will honor that. But we want everyone God leads us, to feel WELCOME to join, and warmly invited. The church membership is not supposed to be a clique or a special elite club or a power-group. It is ideally the whole body.

You may feel like you're not "together-enough" to be a member. Well, join the club! We've all got problems and issues. We're all struggling to know God's plan for us individually. But the New Testament so very plainly pictures the body in CORPORATE ways: as a physical body (Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:12; Eph 1:22-23; Col 1:24), as the Temple of God (1 Cor 3:16; Eph 2:19; 1 Pet 2:5f), as the Bride of Christ (2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:22f; Rev 19:7; 22:17), as the flock of God (John 10:22f; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2), as a well-designed building (Ephesians 4) and as a vine and branches (John 15.)

PP 7

We envision more places on our map of church growth too: choosing maturity is a process and a decision we hope each member will make. Then we envision every member as becoming equipped and encouraged to minister. We see ALL church members as *ministers* not just staff pastors. And lastly, at least in this model, we see missions as a thing every believe develops a heart for. Why? Because the Gospel is for the whole planet! It is for all. God decides WHO

will be in the bride of Christ, but He has called all of us to dedicate all our years to looking for ways to get the good news in front of people, as many people as possible. That's what missions IS.

PP 8,9

To become a member, here's what is involved:

- Be a believer in Jesus Christ
- Have been baptized as a believer
- Be in harmony with the purpose, doctrine, policies and spirit of DBC (see *Constitution and By-Laws*)
- Be at least 18
- Attend DBC 101
- WANT to be a member!

Consider joining DBC. Talk to us. Take the DBC 101 class. If you don't want to, fine. We're not going to punish people who stand off. That's a thing we know lots of people, especially if you've been hurt in the past in a church, are inclined to do. But after you've healed a while, consider joining our church. It is a big encouragement to those who are already members, when a new person says, "Hey, you people are all right. I'd like to hang with you for a while..."

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Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Our Strategy for Church Growth (Part 2 of 4)

Scripture: Various

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: October 21st, 2007

Our Strategy for Church Growth **MATURITY**

PP 1

Introduction When you're young, you dream about the future. You look forward to getting your license, to meeting that special someone, to finding your calling, to growing. You wouldn't want to stall at any one age. You want to MATURE and grow.

PP 2

When we hear that salvation is a free gift, and it is, according to the Bible, we rejoice—when we really hear that in our hearts. It would be the supreme IRRATIONALITY NOT to rejoice. And so some of us embrace that free gift with joy and faith and excitement. We join the **body** of Christ, become part of the **bride**, enroll in a nation of **priests** as Peter put it. We are like the kid showered with presents on Christmas morning, each one fabulous and with the awareness that each one was chosen and designed specifically for me! We get excited about this new program and we begin to devour stories in the Gospels about Jesus, almost like we can't get enough of Him. And, we can't! Some of you were raised with Jesus in your family. There was NEVER a time when Jesus was not head of your home, celebrated fully at Christmas and Easter with no mingling of the world into those holidays. Those holidays were about HIM every year—coming at Bethlehem, going on Calvary, returning in the Garden, ascending on Olivet, and one of these days you were told, returning again to Olivet! Glory!

Others of us learned about Him later, and later we fled to Him out of some swirling vortex of confusion of not having heard about Him, or having heard wrongly about Him. And we're a little ticked about that. But then we too heard about the Jesus Christ of the Bible, pure and simple. We heard, and sensed deep inside our hearts an exquisitely pure Christology! And we loved it—we loved Him! Like merging on to 128 from 24North, we too, joined those raised with the Gospel early on their lips, to become that great channel known as 93North! That is the Church. And in this church there's more of us grafted in than there's of you who grew up as part of the tree... No matter. We're all part of this salvation-is-a-free-gift club, party, team.... Family.

But that euphoric feeling of newness and fabulous joy and anticipation sooner or later gives way. It gives way to a hard realization that it is a battle to stay a Christian. Some of us were seered with a background of lust; others of us were looked down on so long we were permanently scarred from that. Others of us come into the movement so full of ourselves with the inescapable conviction that We Are Number One, that it is hard to learn lessons of serving and submission. AND SOONER OR LATER EACH OF US IN THE BODY OF CHRIST REALIZES THAT WE NEED TO KEEP GROWING IN HIS GRACE. We sing songs of praise about being SAVED by grace but we are almost depressed when we realize we still need much MORE grace.

PP 3

You're not saved long but that you realize that your sin is still there. At least the shadow of your sin is still there. The echo of your sin still calls to you in your head. The guilt of your sin still whispers to you in the night. You realize, you need much MORE grace. You figure out pretty quick you need to KEEP GROWING.

PP 4,5

You're not a Christian for very long, when you discover it is a battle to stay a Christian. And it requires a certain maturing to keep the faith fully meaningful. Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians in 2 Cor.13:9 ***For we rejoice when we ourselves are weak but you are strong; this we also pray for, that you be made complete.*** In that familiar passage that we have gone to so many times, Ephesians 4:11-16 ***And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. ¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 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.***

Spiritual growth is NOT AUTOMATIC once you are born again. Sometimes in the New Testament, people came into the faith but *then stopped* growing. We read in Hebrews 5:11 - 6:1 ***¹¹ Concerning [Christ] him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. ¹² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. THEREFORE leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to***

maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God.

The way we hope our church will become—is to somehow communicate that a NORMAL and early step is to become a member of our community. It doesn't mean we own you or that you have to stay here for the rest of your life. The *alternative* to that is to hang back, stay on the edges of body-life; play it safe. Now let me assure you we're never going to become the Gestapo about membership. But we hope that everyone the Lord brings us, when the time is right, will WANT to join our church. And we hope more and more of you who are not yet members will say, "Hey, I guess this is my church and I need to take ownership."

PP 6

Then we envision a church where everybody's growing, spiritually. Actually, we hope that you each will make a personal COMMITMENT to keep growing, spiritually and to become mature. I'm amazed at how much can be accomplished if we COMMIT ourselves to something. And I guarantee you that if you will commit yourself to growing spiritually, no matter what the obstacles, you WILL mature in your faith. It's not supposed to be to just a select few; it doesn't come magically or by some simplistic formula or "key," it isn't just about getting more knowledge about theology. It isn't just about you and your Bible and it doesn't happen by just staying off by yourself. God intends us to grow TOGETHER.

There are lots of good HABITS that contribute to spiritual growth and we want to be a church that helps people develop good habits that help you grow: habits like getting into God's Word, developing prayer in your life, developing giving in your life and always seeking to find and give fellowship. Also there's the habit of sharing your faith. All of these, and others, help you and me grow in our walk with Christ, always moving towards maturity.

We wish to have a church where our ministries contribute in one way or another to the spiritual maturing of everybody here. Sometimes, I think we can get discouraged though. We wonder, does sanctification really happen at all? Do we really grow spiritually, get closer to Jesus Christ, become better people? Are genuine and authentic changes *really* occurring inside of me and inside of you?

Now, some of you may be thinking, "Well that's all well and good. But spiritual growth and maturing in Christ isn't something we can just have because we say we want it." Yes, but if you don't at least SAY you want it, and make a commitment to mature, where do you begin? We all need a map to go by and this is the map we want to be clear for everyone. Some people may come to our church for a season but they don't REALLY want to grow. They may like one thing or another that we have; but personally, they don't really want to grow. They just want a church. We will never chase anyone like that away. But the

core of our church needs to be the people who **are** growing and maturing and we need to do everything we can to help people grow, spiritually.

PP 7,8

Now here's Rick Warren's set of perspectives that are a good summary of what a mature believer has:

1. DOCTRINE – the teachings of the Bible, interpreted reasonably, are the primary lenses through which we get our perspective on life.
2. GOD – He is bigger and better than I could imagine.
3. JESUS – God showing Himself to us.
4. The HOLY SPIRIT – God lives in and through me now.
5. REVELATION – The Bible is God's inerrant guidebook for life.
6. CREATION – Nothing "just happened." God created it all.
7. SALVATION – Grace is the only way to have a relationship with God.
8. SANCTIFICATION – God's will is for us to grow in Christlikeness.
9. GOOD & EVIL – God has allowed evil in the world to provide a choice to people. God can bring good even out of evil events.
10. The AFTERLIFE – Death is not the end but the beginning. Heaven and hell are real places.
11. THE CHURCH – The only true world "superpower" is the Church (the body of Christ). It will last forever.
12. PRAYER – Prayer can do anything God can do.
13. SECOND COMING – Jesus is coming again to judge the world and gather His children.

PP 9

What is Dartmouth Bible Church about? We want everyone who comes into our church to COMMIT to growing in Christ. A stagnant religion, is just that—religion. We're about a living, breathing relationship with God through Christ and we want and hope for everybody to MATURE in their faith and in their walk.

OTHER VERSES on MATURITY

1 Corinthians 14:20

Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be babes, but in your thinking be **mature**.

Ephesians 4:13

...until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a **mature** man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ.

Hebrews 5:14

But solid food is for the **mature**, who because of practice have their **senses** trained to discern good and evil.

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Our Strategy for Church Growth (Part 3 of 4)

Scripture: 1st Corinthians 12:12-26

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: October 21st, 2007

PP 1

Our Strategy for Church Growth **Every Member a Minister**

1st Corinthians 12:12-26 (NASB)

For even as the body is one and *yet* has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴ For the body is not one member, but many. ¹⁵ If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not *a part* of the body," it is not for this reason any the less *a part* of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not *a part* of the body," it is not for this reason any the less *a part* of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. ¹⁹ And if they were all one member, where would the body be? ²⁰ But now there are many members, but one body. ²¹ And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²² On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; ²³ and those *members* of the body, which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly *members come to* have more abundant seemliness, ²⁴ whereas our seemly *members* have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that *member* which lacked, ²⁵ that there should be no division in the body, but *that* the members should have the same care for one another. ²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if *one* member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

Introduction Here's how it spun out for me: I always believed in Jesus, but as soon as I was confirmed in the Lutheran church, church life (and any paying attention to Jesus) became completely irrelevant. That's six years until I heard Josh McDowell talk about Jesus like He's alive today. It really clicked. So I re-became a Christian and soon I began to **attend** a church. Didn't want to at first because I had an attitude that church would be boring. When I DID go, it wasn't boring at all. I liked the pastor and his teaching and preaching, didn't mind the hymns too much, the people were pretty friendly and soon I became a young churchman. Bottom line though, things HAD to be relevant. And the more I read about Jesus, He NEVER seemed irrelevant. Then as I was instructed in the Bible, I could see I needed to be **baptized**, so I was. Then the church made a general invitation to **join** it, and so I did that too. Felt natural—became a member of College Baptist Church. My parents didn't understand or appreciate

what was happening in me and were very skeptical of it. Nonetheless, I continued on.

PP 2,3

I started going to Bible studies both on campus and at my church—small groups! (one small group especially.) That was the place where I started giving of myself a little—and that felt right too—and gradually saw my circle of friends change. Started hanging out with other people who had a hunger for the things of the Lord—not ONLY with people like that, but regularly. And I was challenged about some things in my life, and I started to want to change, to **mature**. And I started to **grow**. That felt right, too. It felt like progress, forward movement, the way it was supposed to be... I'm *still* growing, becoming slowly more sanctified as time passes. I'm not there yet, but I am maturing. And I *want* to keep growing—seems like that's the natural thing to do, as a Christians... Like Paul wrote to the Philippians, ***...forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*** (Philippians 3:13b,14.)

Another checkpoint on the map of maturing in Christ, is to see yourself as a **minister**! And this is an ideal, a goal, a value and our intention in this church. According to the apostle Paul, really every member is a minister. The clergy is a thing that developed *after* the New Testament but in the N.T. we see every person being *visualized* as intentionally placed there by God, and for a purpose. In the New Testament days, many of them are ministering to each other—under the oversight of the original people who knew Jesus. But they depended on each other. They HAD to. Things were dangerous.

This is where we part ways with the New Testament today. Things aren't dangerous and we can go WEEKS without needing each other. Maybe even months. But they needed each other so much—even between churches—that the apostles could start seeing what it was God was doing. He was creating an ORGANISM; a living, breathing body. And the parts of the body needed each other.

PP 4

In 1st Corinthians 12 there's a lot of talk like this. In the reading today, we see some principles that apply to us just as they did to those early Greek Christians in the first century:

PP 5,6,7

1. We're supposed to care about each other. 1 Cor. 12:21,25
2. God has designed things so we need each other. 1 Cor. 12:7,17
3. How we view *ourselves* matters. 1 Cor. 12:15,16 & Romans 12:3
For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

4. How we view *each other* matters. 1 Cor. 12:21

5. God's system of value is inverse-proportional. 1 Cor. 12:22-24.

Something like this: If someone is important by a factor of "x" to US, in reality he/she is important by a factor of 1/x. Or, if someone is important by a factor of 1/x to US, in reality he/she is important by a factor of "x."

PP 8

There is an **INTENTIONALLY DESIGNED-IN CONNECTEDNESS** between true Christians. God has engineered it this way and it isn't some sort of automatic Christian super-glue or magical love drug we all take so that we all like or love each other. No, I'm afraid it's hard work. The connectedness God intends us to have and to feel, the mutual **NEED** for each other we're supposed to experience, is by way of the **MINISTRIES** that each of us develops. God intends for every Christian to supply what a body part does—**ITS OWN FUNCTION**.

PP 9

Also in 1st Corinthians 12 and 13 and 14 there is a fair amount of information about "spiritual gifts." Here's the ones we're pretty sure about: Administration/leading/government, encouragement, evangelism/missions, exhortation, faith, giving, helps, mercy, pastor-teacher, and teaching. There may be *others too* but these are the ones we're pretty confident exist today and are needed by every church. I notice that Christians like to dialogue and hypothesize and sometimes argue about the gifts. If I could (and I can't), I would impose a new rule on the church: You can't talk about the gifts unless two conditions are in place: a) you know what yours is, and b) you're using it faithfully for the building up of your brothers and sisters in Christ.

With these gifts, each person sets to work to contribute their part into the work of the body of Christ. The church is supposed to be **RUN** by all the members. Now, I know some of you are tired. You've got lots going on. You've got a job and sometimes that job's stressful. You're in school and you've got deadlines. Maybe you have a spouse and maybe even a kid or two. And they take 37.9% of your available "kilojoules" for any day. And you will say, I need the Patriots, Sox, Bruins and Celtics too and **THEY** take some kilojoules too.

No, I really understand that you're tired. We get tired and overstretched in this crazy culture we're living in. But I have to ask you, "Do you think God is impressed with that argument?" I don't think so. I think the Corinthian believers—who **DID** possess lots of wealth in the area of spiritual gifts—were also tired and stressed. I think they couldn't throw something in the microwave. I think **ALL CHRISTIANS** are supposed to be ministers and that is a major source of the joy of the Lord.

PP 10

On Michael Patton's blog called, "Parchment and Pen," he has a list of problems that he sees evangelicalism is struggling with these days. One of them is listed as **"the loss of the concept of meaningful church membership and the rise of the "audience only" model of church participation."** That is very true today I think, and it is counter to what we want to develop in DBC.

Church members that are maturing in their walk with Christ have a sense of **OWNERSHIP** in the body. If there is progress and forward-movement in the life of the church they members can look at it and say, "Hey, by God's grace and blessings, and by **OUR WORK** we did that!"

Just one example: Lordwilling, and to His praise, in one year we expect this building to be paid off. God gets the credit. It is here, where there was once a scummy little pond, for HIS glory and ministry. But a group of you did it. Over the years you paid it off. A small team designed it, planned for it over about ten years (1988-98.) *Since* Dec. 1999 there have been countless examples of painting, yard work, electrical work, plumbing, heating and air conditioning, decorating, cleaning, room construction, furniture building, A little bigger group gave some money in the beginning months. And then over what will be just nine years, a little bigger group will have paid it off. That alone, even if no other ministry has been done, has been a work of this body, contributing to this ministry by what each member supplies. Add to that the Bible studies, small support groups, DIBS classes, outreaches, concerts and coffeehouses, Sunday School classes, prayer groups and ministry teams, baptisms, weddings, memorial services and hundreds of pot-luck suppers, and you have a living-monument to the participation of the body of Christ in ministering to each other!

The fact of the matter is, we need your ministry. We need the ministry of everyone here. Some of you can teach or learn to teach and work with children or with communicating among adults. Some of you are servers and mercy-givers. Some of you are planners and coordinators. Some of you have musical or public-speaking or even dramatic abilities. Others of you are wired so very well for sharing the Gospel and making an impact among non-Christians around us. I believe a few of us might be able to go into missions and what an exciting thing that would be to send our first person into missions from within our own body! Others can counsel and give guidance. **EVERY** one of the Christians God sends us in this body has **SOME** function they can perform and part of your maturing in Christ is to find out how you can assist.

PP 11,12

You do it within the confines of the time you have available, your level of maturity and the specific needs we DO have. But you DO it. And God blesses the rest of us, and you enjoy the blessing of what everyone else gives. That's how its supposed to work, and that is how we want our church to grow in coming months and years. May the Lord Jesus Christ enable, motivate, sanctify, equip, encourage and embolden us to do His work, together!

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Our Strategy for Church Growth (Part 4 of 4)

Scripture: Acts 17:1-15

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: November 4th, 2007

PP 1

Our Strategy for Church Growth **Every Member a Missionary**

Acts 17:1-15 (NASB)

¹ NOW when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. ² And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³ explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." ⁴ And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a great multitude of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women. ⁵ But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and coming upon the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. ⁶ And when they did not find them, they *began* dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also; ⁷ and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." ⁸ And they stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. ⁹ And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them. ¹⁰ And the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea; and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. ¹¹ Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, *to see* whether these things were so. ¹² Many of them therefore believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men. ¹³ But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there likewise, agitating and stirring up the crowds. ¹⁴ And then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there. ¹⁵ Now those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed.

Introduction This is the fourth message in this little series about what we hope our church will be like. Let me say that Membership, Maturity, Ministry and Missions are not the only qualities we hope will be evident. We hope we will have the character of Jesus Christ. We hope we will feel "safe" to hurting people. We hope to have an intense love of Scripture, not just for Scripture's sake or so we can boast about having lots of Bible knowledge, but because Scripture is the key to knowing the heart of God. We want to be in on that. We want to impress our kids and our young people with the best possible picture of the heart of God. WE ALSO HOPE TO BE SOMETHING OTHER THAN "ALL THE SAME." This would be controlled by whom the Lord brings us and by who stays, not by human engineering.

But if God brings us average people from Dartmouth, great.

If He brings us people from Westport, or New Bedford or Somerset or Freetown or Marion, great.

If He brings us people from U.Mass.Dartmouth, great.

If He brings us down and out drug addicts, great.

If He brings us bank presidents and lawyers and military commanders and tattoo artists, great.

If He brings us African Americans, great.

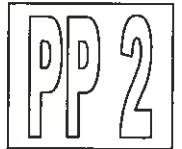
If He brings us Chinese, great.

If He brings us rich people, great.

If He brings us really healthy, spiritual-minded, mature believers all of whose children are missionaries, great.

If He brings us non-Christians who swear and smell of Budweiser, great. And their kids, great.

WE HOPE TO BE SOMETHING OTHER THAN "ALL THE SAME," but look around you some time and see who God brings to 52 Morton Avenue. That's who we are. Among all these people we hope to impress and train with these Four "M's." Why these four "M's" you might ask? Aren't there OTHER "M's" equally important? Sure.



But we think these are four excellent checkpoints for what a growing church should be: **commitment to each other** (that's membership.)

Commitment to personal growth (that's maturing in Christ.) **Commitment to ministry** (that's taking ownership of the whole ministry here.) And today, commitment to **missions**. If a church can keep its sense and priority on these things, along of course WITH prayer and mercy and discipline etc., it will do well.

What is the thing that you feel is the **greatest privilege** you have, if you are a Christian? There are many blessings we possess which are privileges of knowing Christ. What is the biggest one, to you? Is it **prayer**? Having your own **copy** of the Bible? Those **invisible realities** the Bible says are there, that we can only imagine? Or is it perhaps the honor of sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with someone who has never heard?

Let me ask you a second question. What is the thing that you feel is the most embarrassing thing in your faith? Is it scandals that happen within evangelical ministries? Is it some of the beliefs you hold, that you know your non-Christian friends just wouldn't understand?—

your belief that heterosexuality is the only approved form?

Your belief that the term "**144,000**" is real, that there really is a place called "**the bottomless pit**" and that there will be **locusts like horses**

prepared for battle; and on their heads, as it were, crowns like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men (Rev. 7:4; 9:1,7) ???

Or is it maybe *the same thing* as the greatest privilege, the Great Commission, to go and make disciples, baptizing them and teaching them—the part of our faith that calls us to tell other people about Christ?

Here's a part of a Letter to the Editor from this week's local newspaper:

October 31, 2007 6:00 AM

Avoiding a one-church world

PP 3

James G. Borden of New Bedford makes a valid point when he writes in his Oct. 27 letter titled "On religious conversion" that we should not be offended when someone tries to interest us in joining their particular religion any more than carnivores should be offended when wooed by vegetarians, or vice versa. We each have a right to select or reject suitors of any persuasion.

However, we should — we must — protect that right by being wary of those who claim theirs is the only "true" religion which we all must accept. Information about a religion is one thing; the Roman Inquisition was quite another.

This week I saw Presidential candidate Mike Huckabee being interviewed by Bill O'Reilly, and Bill asked Mike, "Do you believe Jews and Muslims who do not believe in Jesus are all going to hell?"

I wonder how many of us REALLY believe that Jesus is the only way? I do. I have staked everything on that principle. I know that it is very politically incorrect today and I walk nervously because of that. But not because of the belief itself. I am completely comfortable with the idea of one God, providing one Savior for all people, accomplishing everything that the predicted one Savior needed to accomplish to achieve one means of rescue sufficient for the entire human race.

This is the basis of missions. It was no easier in the first century for Paul and the apostles to market this idea to their world than it is for us in ours. In fact, I think this is probably the one thing that keeps us from being more personally aggressive about evangelism: we're embarrassed about it.

PP 4,5

Look at Acts 17 and what we see there, from Luke's pen. Paul generally spends three weeks in each Jewish community that he approaches, and he goes through the synagogue. Some will respond, many will not. No matter, he works with those who do. From there to Berea, and all along the way there is opposition and trouble. But they keep going? It is SOOOO politically incorrect to do missions for Paul and Silas and Timothy. And it costs them pain sometimes. But why do they keep doing it? Because what they are saying about Jesus is true. Because that news holds great benefit for those who embrace it by faith. And because He TOLD them to take that news to everyone they could. Those three reasons: the news is true. The news is good. And they're under orders to transmit and communicate the news.

That is missions. That is something every Christian TODAY is supposed to be about. We want our church to have that as a primary feeling and urgency in it. We don't want a spectator-sport mentality about evangelism and missions. We want YOU to be about missions. I want to hear some stories of some conversions. I appreciate all the support work that needs to go into missions, but I want to hear about people coming to faith in Christ! They're out there. And there are thousands of people coming to genuine, life-changing faith in Jesus Christ and truly being born again! I need to hear about that.

PP 6

How do we get missions into our lives? Here's eleven ways:

- ▶ Look for opportunities to share Christ, yourself
- ▶ Ask God to give you one person this week to share Christ with
- ▶ Ask God to create within you a heart for missions
- ▶ Obtain a copy of *Operation World* and read in it weekly
- ▶ Pick 1 missionary to support and support them!
 - Request letters/e-mails, Pray, Give, Remember birthdays/anniversaries
- ▶ Read one missionary biography/year
- ▶ Watch missions videos
- ▶ Subscribe to a missions magazine
- ▶ Join **Windows to the World** [DBC's missions support org.]
- ▶ Support those who go on short-term missions trips
- ▶ GO on a short-term missions trip

PP 7

Our reason for existing as a church is what our purpose statement is about. It reads,

The purpose of Dartmouth Bible Church is to **honor God** by growing in our relationship with Him and one another through a balanced focus on Worship, Discipleship, Fellowship, Ministry and Evangelism.

PP 8,9

A balanced focus means one fifth of what we are about is evangelism. That's missions. Let's be that. Let's take the Great Commission seriously and let's rejoice in the privilege we have to bear that news to people all around us. Its nothing to be ashamed of. Salvation in Jesus Christ is offered as a free gift to anyone and everyone in any place at any time who will receive it.