

General Topics :: Megachurch - not of God?

Megachurch - not of God?, on: 2016/10/31 18:47

A cell goes through mitosis and divides into two cells, but there is no schism; each has with the other has. And so two become four, then four eight, and eight sixteen, and so on. This is normal and healthy - as God designed it.

It seems a healthy church also operates the same way: while it grows in numbers, it also grows in leadership as many of its congregants mature in the faith and enter into the calling that God has upon their lives. New church plants are the normal outworking of such churches, and there is no schism, lack, or competition between the older and newer churches. The process continues to repeat itself over time and Christ's earthly kingdom expands.

However, I have seen megachurches arise where new leadership is largely discouraged and people are permitted to serve only in certain capacities which in no way rival or excel the existing pastoral staff. A small, elite group keeps a tight, controlling grip.

I'm not talking about "prosperity gospel" megachurches or false anointing megachurches - I'm speaking of megachurches where (much of) the Word IS preached and the worship music is reverent and Christ-exalting. However, in these same churches the pastors have secretly become wealthy while many of the overworked staff are living on starvation wages. It is sickening, but the majority of the congregants are "blissfully ignorant" of the state of affairs.

I've heard people claim that the church at Corinth was a megachurch in Paul's day. Was it? I've yet to see any historical evidence. Even the ruins of a building reputed to be that church do not suggest such largeness.

When I read such verses as these...

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. Hebrews 5:12

This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. 1 Timothy 3:1

For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. 1 Corinthians 14:31

...I am further convinced that Word encourages us to come into spiritual maturity so that we can minister within and without church walls, not as unaccountable freelance agents, but with the "amen" of godly leadership who want to see the kingdom expand, and not to merely draw men to themselves.

Kind regards in Christ Jesus,

Alec

Re: Megachurch - not of God? - posted by ccchhhrrriiss (), on: 2016/11/1 1:00

You make some good points, Alec.

I've been to large churches where the worship felt like a concert (complete with fancy spotlights and even fog from machines), the outreach consisted of dozens of selective "you-can-fit-in-here-and-belong" group programs, the message was little more than a short feel-good lecture on some non-offensive, motivational topic complete with more modern anecdote than actual citation of Biblical passages and the basis for salvation was believing in God and "doing your best."

In fact, this seems to be the primer for modern megachurches. If you have (or hire) talented musicians to lead the worship, funny and charismatic personalities to be leaders of children, youth and adults, offer many programs that will maximize group involvement and base sermon messages in an almost political type of selectivity when it comes to the choice of words (as to attract the most potential attendees without offending or scaring off many others) with the goal of motivating the audience to enjoy themselves and return the next week, then you are almost assured to build a "megachurch."

I remember hearing Leonard Ravenhill quip that Dallas boasted many of the "fastest growing churches" in the state but t

hat, ironically, Jesus had the fasting shrinking group as evidenced by John 6:60-71.

Of course, there are many not-quite-megachurches that follow a similar format as the one I mentioned above. I don't think that there is anything intrinsically wrong with having a building, talented worship leader or a pastor with a "big" personality. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with programs either -- particularly if the programs endeavor to proclaim or share Christ. There is nothing wrong with encouragement at all -- unless that encouragement encourages the hearers to be oblivious to the condition of the heart and the need for holiness.

Still, I discovered long ago that I feel better in smaller fellowships than large ones. The best church that I ever had the privilege to fellowship with was beneath a tree or in a cave with Tarahumara believers high in the rugged Sierra Madre Occidental in Mexico. I've been blessed in outdoor services or in small groups that met in homes, dorm rooms or in empty buildings.

When we first moved to the Silicon Valley, we visited quite a few local churches. We eventually began going to the same one every Sunday for nearly a year -- only to still be asked if we were "first time visitors" many months after attending faithfully. While my feelings certainly didn't get hurt by it (it was actually kind of funny), I couldn't help but think that I was missing the encouragement of the brethren.

We all know verse 25 in Hebrews chapter 10 that is used to express the importance of fellowship with believers. Verse 19-23 explains why there is no need to go to the physical temple anymore (as was the tradition of God's people) since the veil was torn and we are a part of the Body of Christ and Christ is our "high priest." Yet the next two verses also explain something that is missing from many congregations -- particularly larger ones:

"24 And let us consider one another to PROVOKE UNTO LOVE AND TO GOOD WORKS: 25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; BUT EXHORTING ONE ANOTHER: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

In a megachurch, I suspect that this is far more difficult. In fact, I think that it can be easily argued that the megachurch sort of becomes a modern "temple" for the meeting together of believers rather than the notion that believers can meet together daily since "today" is a "Sabbath rest" for the people of God (Hebrews 4:1-11).

Re: Megachurch - not of God? - posted by Sree (), on: 2016/11/1 7:21

Quote:

A cell goes through mitosis and divides into two cells, but there is no schism; each has with the other has. And so two become four, then four eight, and eight sixteen, and so on. This is normal and healthy - as God designed it.

It seems a healthy church also operates the same way: while it grows in numbers, it also grows in leadership as many of its congregants mature in the faith and enter into the calling that God has upon their lives. New church plants are the normal outworking of such churches, and there is no schism, lack, or competition between the older and newer churches. The process continues to repeat itself over time and Christ's earthly kingdom expands.

Thank you for your wise words brother. I am very thankful to God that he has kept such a church even in our generation. I am so thankful that he has also placed me in such a church. The CFC Churches planted by Brother Zac Poonen are such churches. The new churches are planted as an outworking of other surrounding local churches. Still each churches are independent under the headship of Jesus, not competing with one another.

Re: Megachurch - not of God? - posted by Sree (), on: 2016/11/1 7:30

I was born again in a mega church that preached the word of God to certain extent. I do not believe these Churches are according to will of God. But I also believe God uses them. I myself is an example on how God used such a mega Church to bring me to Christ. A Godly Church in Chennai India that I was part of when I was staying there, had most of its members coming from a mega church there. All most everyone I asked there had their beginning in a particular mega church.

So I do not consider mega Churches even as a Church. They are only evangelical units that can evangelize someone, like how I was reached. But to be part of it does not represent being part of a local body of Christ. Such mega churches are not a representation of body of Christ. God still uses them though.

Re: Early megachurch - posted by docs (), on: 2016/11/1 13:48

40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." 41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day three thousand souls were added to them. (Acts 2:40-41)

46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:47)

4 However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand. (Acts 4:4)

14 And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,... (Acts 5:14)

Re: , on: 2016/11/1 14:53

"...breaking bread from house to house..." There's the small group dynamic. Yes, three thousand were saved at Pentecost, but they met daily in their homes, and not long afterwards the church at Jerusalem was persecuted and most of the believers were scattered, bringing the Gospel to other regions.

"How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying." 1 Corinthians 14:26

If the church at Corinth were a megachurch then the above verse would not be possible to fulfill...but in smaller groups, yes, absolutely.

In Nigeria, West Africa there are some mega-mega churches...and thus the (sad) expression, "In Nigeria the Gospel is a mile long but only an inch thick," meaning that just about everyone in the southern half of that nation professes faith in Jesus Christ---and yet it is regarded as the most corrupt nation on the face of the planet. Such disparity should not be.

As for some of the other responses, yes, God can use anything and He can save anyone in the midst of any circumstance (without endorsing such circumstances).

In the USA many small churches aspire to be megachurches and follow the latest "trends." A friend told me about a megachurch in Florida where the members of the worship team come to the building wearing normal clothes, then go backstage to change into some hipster/rock 'n roll garb when they go onstage. It's pathetic and short-sighted. The fashions of subculture change very rapidly and become laughably dated, whereas the Word of God is eternal and above all cultures---therefore, why cater to a shallow aspect of the outward man which is perishing? Such are the schemes of the fallen nature, but "ye have not so learned Christ."

Re: , on: 2016/11/1 15:00

It probably will be persecution that drives us to smaller fellowships. Such venues where two or three are gathered in His name He is present.

-bbs-

Re: - posted by Sree (), on: 2016/11/1 16:05

Quote:

It probably will be persecution that drives us to smaller fellowships. Such venues where two or three are gathered in His name He is present.

Ha ha... Satan should have lost his mind to persecute the mega churches! If AntiChrist brings a world order then mega churches will be the first to follow his order, why will he divide and persecute people who are waging no war against him or his kingdom?

Re: Megachurch - not of God? - posted by AbideinHim (), on: 2016/11/1 16:16

It is not the size of the church that determines whether it is of God or not, but the question has to be asked: what foundation is this church being built on? Is the church growing in size because of man's programs and using church growth formulas or is it the Spirit of God that is adding members to the church?

Is evangelism and discipleship main priorities in the mega church? Are the saints growing up into Christ who is the Head? Is the measure of Christ increasing or decreasing in the church?

Are the saints being equipped to do the work of the ministry and then being sent out to advance the Kingdom of God?

Many mega churches were started by gifted men that built the church upon their own ministry, and they are seeing their own vision being fulfilled instead of being humble servants to the Body of Christ to see God's will and purpose fulfilled.

There can be true growth that is by the Spirit that evolves into a large church, but home churches and smaller fellowships should spring out of these larger churches. It is not all about the pastor.

Many denominations came into existence as a result of some truth that the Holy Spirit was restoring to the Church, and God will use these denominations as much as He is allowed to for His purposes, but for the most part they bring division and disunity into the Body of Christ.

The true Church of Jesus Christ does not grow by organization, but grows organically as each member holds fast to the Head, and receives the life of the Vine. Only Christ can build His Church, and praise God that He allows us to be co laborers with Him.

Re: Early Megachurch - posted by Sree (), on: 2016/11/1 16:19

What is the characteristic of a mega church? It is not the huge numbers, it is the lack of quality and the importance given to Quantity. Messages that are made to attract masses. Compromising on quality to increase quantity. It is this spirit that distinguishes a mega Church. If they were willing to share messages on carrying the cross that Jesus emphasized then these churches will shrink in no time.

A person can be wealthy but if he has no love for money then he will be saved. But a wealthy with love for money, salvation will be like camel entering through eye of needle. So it is not presence of wealth but where your heart is present, will determine salvation. Similarly it is not number that makes these mega bodies.

The early church consisting of 5000 believers cannot be compared to modern day mega church. First and foremost they

were people who were persecuted for their belief. They came out of their Jewish faith hence the synagogues would have put them out. Their property would have been taken. Show me 5000 such people who were gathering in the midst of such persecution, I will join them as well.

It was not a single Apostle who was pastoring these 5000 believers. They appointed elders to divide the work of shepherding such a big flock. But modern day mega churches are often pastored by a single preacher.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2016/11/1 20:19

Sree wrote: "Ha ha... Satan should have lost his mind to persecute the mega churches! If AntiChrist brings a world order then mega churches will be the first to follow his order, why will he divide and persecute people who are waging no war against him or his kingdom?"

Then again, why would Satan bother persecuting little house churches that no one notices? How would that result in the worldwide persecution we keep hearing about?

I have often wondered if Satan is stupid. Why would he do something (persecute Christians) when he knows this results in stronger Christians? He must see the fruit of his labor whenever he persecutes. So why does he keep doing it? Or maybe it isn't him doing it?

Re: - posted by Sree (), on: 2016/11/2 14:58

Quote:

-----Then again, why would Satan bother persecuting little house churches that no one notices?

The house churches no one notices because they choose to be like that. For example in my church, we want God to send people to our place. Yes we also invite our neighbors and colleagues. We do personal evangelism, but our main trust is in God to bring those whom he wants to be part of our fellowship. I have witnessed those who have real longing to be in a true body of Christ, finding our Church. Just like how Jesus kept hiding himself but people seeking healing found him. It is based on the need of their heart they will find a true body of believers.

It is written that Herod kept trying to find Jesus but he could never find him. The leaven of Herod is wordliness.

Now answering why Satan will persecute a church of such small number of believers whom most of the worldly Christians do not care about? The answer is in Job, why did Satan sought the permission of God to persecute Job who was the only blameless man living in that generation?

2 Timothy 3:12-Indeed, all who desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Starting from Job who lived before the time of Abraham to our time, true body of believers, will get persecuted. Even in the book of Revelation, the only 2 out of 7 churches that stood for God were persecuted Churches. Satan only cares about those who want to take a stand for the Lord even if they are few in number.

Among multitudes of so called Christians who sit in dead denominational Churches where Jesus is present outside, there will be true disciples of Jesus who will be longing to be part of his body. They will suffer persecution.

I do not believe 99.99% of so call Christians today will ever be persecuted. Because they do not want to live Godly life. They are already compromising. What is the use of persecuting them to test whether they will compromise, when they are already compromising their faith for worldly luxury?

Irrespective of which preachers say that all Christians will suffer persecution, I will believe what Bible says, only those who want to live a Godly uncompromising life will suffer persecution.

I know this because I suffered persecution for my faith when I came out of Hinduism. If I wanted to be a compromise then none including my own parents or siblings would have ever treated me the way they did.

Re: , on: 2016/11/4 19:21

Thank you for the replies, everyone, especially Sree---thank you for your transparency! God bless you, brother.