

## BUILDING A HEALTHY CHURCH

Text: Matthew 16:18

**Key Word:** Healthy

**Key Thought:** There Are Vital Keys to Maintain a Healthy Church

Jesus birthed the Christian Church into existence in order for it to grow healthy. For centuries the Church grew and became effective in reaching the known world with the gospel message. In the third century, the Church took a turn for the worst. This brought in what was known as the Dark Ages (375-1066 A.D.). In 313 A.D. Emperor Constantine declared through what was known as the **Edict of Milan** a restored freedom to worship God. Over the next few years this new Roman Emperor restored any confiscated property to the Church; subsidized the Church by the State; exempted the clergy from public service; and banned soothsaying on Sunday setting it apart as a day of rest and worship.

Constantine's sons continued the policy of favouring the Church by banning pagan sacrifices and even attendances at pagan temples. **In 380 Emperor Gratian issued an edict making Christianity the exclusive religion of the state.** The problems came when the government in return for position, protection and aid demanded the right to interfere with spiritual and theological matters. **The Church grew to become as arrogant as did their former pagan authorities.** **The church lost its focus and foundation and soon began to crumble.** Today the Church is in danger of once again getting off track.

**\*\*\*** When Sharon and I went to Hawaii in 1978 for our "late honeymoon" we visited some of the local tourist attractions and I also tried the sport of surfing. I followed the instructions that another vacationer said and "oiled my body" so I wouldn't get a sunburn while waiting for the waves to come. I had no idea what I was doing as I went greased went to rent a surfboard.

I stood in line while some of the local "muscle men" were explaining to other tourists a few "tricks" about surfing. Those tourists were a lot like me. They really didn't want to take the time to be taught the art of surfing. They paid their renting fee and headed out to the ocean to "CATCH THE WAVE." I basically followed in their footsteps. I couldn't wait to catch the excitement of this **simple** sport.

I made my way quickly to the storage area of surfboards and discovered my first misconception. I thought the boards were only about 10 lbs. I struggled to get this awkward piece of fibreglass into the water. I remember looking around to see if anyone saw me struggling. I looked like a complete idiot but I wouldn't give up because I had committed myself to the task.

\*\*\* I moved my body into position on top of the board and began to paddle out into the deeper water. I noticed how slippery the board felt but I thought, it will only add to the challenge. I reached the area where the other surfers were waiting for the waves to come. The sun began to beat down on my oiled body. I felt like a hot dog on a rotisserie. I was too proud to go back to the safety of the shore.

The waves began to come. I waited until one of my size began to build. I began to paddle with all my strength toward shore. At just the right time, I tried to stand up. My well-greased body and board worked against each other. I recall that I lasted approximately three seconds before tumbling off the board, hitting my mouth in the process. The salt water began to penetrate the cut which was bleeding slightly. I looked around after coming to the surface and noticed my board was about 100 feet closer to shore than I was.

I swam gracefully through the waves, feeling almost totally exhausted. I reached the board just before it touched the shore. Was I going to give up that easily? NO WAY. I foolishly went back again and returned humbled by a repeat performance. A few days later I tried “**Body Surfing**” which was also quite challenging because I didn’t know the power of the undertow. It took me more than 20 minutes to swim the final 30 feet to shore. When I reached it, the waves knocked my feeble body over and slid me up the sandy shore line. \*\*\*

I’ve been concerned at certain points over the years that the Church has been trying to **ride THE WAVE that God is supposedly producing.** Facts have shown me that foolish leaders and congregants actually made temporary “**Wave Pools**” because they thought (when you can’t have the real thing) you need to still be able to enjoy the thrill of it. RIGHT! What’s going to happen when God sends a real wave of His Spirit? Will we know what to do? Will we use the right equipment and keep in balance? **The Church has accepted a new teaching about “How to build a Wave!” instead of preparing ourselves for the inevitable wave of God’s glory that is about to sweep across this land.**

“It is not our responsibility to make waves but to recognize how God is working in the world and join him in the endeavor.”

Rick Warren  
“*The Purpose Driven Church*”  
p. 14

I do not believe we need gimmicks or carnal marketing techniques to bring about growth in God's Church. We simply need to find out what is hindering spiritual growth from taking place. God birthed His Church. He expected it to be healthy. He desired for it to grow normally. God doesn't birth something and then leave it to grow on its own and perhaps die.

"The task of church leadership is to discover and remove growth-restricting diseases and barriers so that natural, normal growth can occur."

Rick Warren  
"The Purpose Driven Church"  
p. 16

We have been focussing our efforts for several decades upon Church growth. I am convinced that growth should be a natural outcome of a healthy church. A better focus for us is maintaining a **HEALTHY CHURCH**. We need to ask ourselves, "**What will it take for me to add to the health of THIS church?**" God may give you an answer that you DON'T feel prepared to handle without His help. That is actually good.

"I knew a man who grabbed a cat by the tail and learned forty percent more about cats than the man who didn't."

Mark Twain

**I. UNITY**  
**II. COMMUNITY**  
**III. IMMUNITY**

**I. UNITY**

The possibility of forming a healthy church when it has such a wide variety of ideas, lifestyles, preferences, ages, genders, racial backgrounds, languages, monetary levels, convictions and commitments almost seems impossible. But let us not allow the obstacles to stop us.

*"Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap."*

NIV  
Ecclesiastes 11:4

*"If you wait for perfect conditions, you will never get anything done."*

Ecclesiastes 11:4  
Living Bible

## I. UNITY (Contd.)

\*\*\* Many years ago, two students graduated from the Chicago-Kent College of Law. The highest ranking student in the class was blind man named Overton, and when he received his honour, he insisted that half the credit should go to his friend whose name was Kaspryzak.

They had first met one another in school when the armless Kaspryzak had guided the blind Overton down a flight of stairs. This acquaintance ripened into friendship and a beautiful example of interdependence. The blind man carried the books that the armless man read aloud in their common study, and thus the deficiency of each individual was compensated for by the other's ability."

Michael Green  
*"Illustrations for Biblical Teaching"*  
#196, p.66

We often form as a Church and are like Overton who cannot initially see the value in others who are walking around challenged by their disabilities.

\*\* "You probably heard of the golfer who instead of having a handicap was told that he was **"stroke challenged."** \*\*

\*\*\* Years ago we began collecting the tabs from pop cans to purchase a specialized wheel chair for a young girl. I remember the day I received a call from Liz Taylor at Leon's furniture saying that she had some tabs if we wanted them.

When we picked them up, the bags filled half our trunk. She told me the staff had all worked together for this worthy goal. I picked up another huge amount of pop tabs. We were saving for an 18-year-old by the name of Yves Paquette from St. Albert. After five months of intensive therapy both his legs were still paralysed. It was a motorcycle accident that he'll never forget. With everyone working together in unity, he got his needed wheelchair.

## II. COMMUNITY

A second indicator of a healthy church is the **sense of a community.** While unity is usually seen around **a cause**, community is witnessed among **a group of people.** We cannot have community without many people working in unity. Unity can be made with just a few people. Community stretches out to encompass more people. **A community is simply a vivid expression of unity showing itself in a larger group.**

## II. COMMUNITY (Contd.)

Webster's dictionary gives us a definition for the word "**community**" as

"A body of people with something in common."

Webster's Dictionary

I've found that our enemy tries to stop us at being unified. If he can't stop the unity of the Church he then works fervently to break up the community of the Church.

The early Church grew because it formed a community of born again, spirit-filled, water baptized believers, who committed themselves to serve each other.

*"They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

*43. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.*

*44. All believers were together and had everything in common . . .*

*47. Praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."*

*Acts 2:42-44,47*

"Our sanity and survival depend upon developing a workable process to turn seekers into saints, turn consumers into contributors, turn members into ministers, and turn an audience into an army. Believe me, it is an incredibly difficult task to lead people from self-centered consumerism to being servant-hearted Christians."

Rick Warren

*"The Purpose Driven Church"*

p. 46

### III. IMMUNITY

I believe that a Church that is living in unity and clearly seen to be a community of believers will find a wonderful blessing to follow. That blessing is immunity. **Churches will remain healthy - immune from spiritual sicknesses, diseases and death, if they practice the first two areas of life.** It is not easy to destroy a Church that has built up strong, spiritual immunities to overcome the wickedness in our world.

When viruses pass through our land and enter our bodies into our blood stream, doctors' realize that certain patients are more susceptible to become ill than others. Some people have built up a strong immune system to ward off the effects of certain types of sickness. They are still in the same environment but they are not affected or infected with the antigen because they are effective in opposing the disease causing agents.

\*\*\* “Any agent perceived as foreign by a body's immune system is called an antigen. The responsibility of the immune system is immense, and it must encompass a vast diversity in order to react appropriately with the thousands of different and potentially disease-causing antigens that invade the body. **Once the antigen is *destroyed*, the immune system is primed to respond more effectively if that same kind of microorganism should invade again.**”

The immune system has six major components, three of which are different kinds of cells and three of which are soluble proteins. All six components can be found circulating in the blood in some form.\*\*\*

"Immune System," Microsoft (R) Encarta.  
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The Bible tells us as well . . .

*“The life of a creature is in the blood (the flesh).”*

*Leviticus 17:11*

God wants His Church to be healthy. We need to be able to ward off the things that will destroy us from within. It seems to me that the most destructive weapon used against the Church comes from within. If we have a Church that recognizes that it exists only because of the life-giving blood of Jesus - we are at least have a fighting chance to survive the “antigen” of sinful agents.

### III. IMMUNITY (Contd.)

I urge you to do your part to make this assembly “Alive in Christ.” If you have allowed something to creep into your life that will bring sickness or perhaps spiritual death to either you or someone else, then be honest enough to admit it and do your best to rectify the problem. Your attitude will make all the difference in the continued healthy growth of this Church.

We don't want to win the argument and lose the war. Perhaps we need to be the bearer of a gift to someone we've had wrong feelings about if they are sincerely wanting to change! Maybe we need to talk to them or write them an encouraging letter noting the positive things we see in their lives.

If they don't listen, you've done your part. But don't give up because God may be ready to introduce a new recipe for bringing health once again.

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Date: Apr 11/21

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30Am

Song: This Kingdom - E

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