

# Don't Be Impressed by the Numerical Growth of a Church

by Zac Poonen

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*God is not impressed by numerical growth if it's not spiritual, and leaders must focus on presenting every man perfect in Christ.*

**Scripture:** Romans 15:16

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Church Leadership"

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## Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of spiritual growth over numerical growth in the church, highlighting the responsibility of leaders to ensure the spiritual health of their congregation. He stresses the need for humility and self-examination when faced with carnality or worldliness in the church, urging leaders to present every individual as acceptable and perfect before God. Poonen warns against seeking personal glory or recognition in ministry, emphasizing the importance of building the Body of Christ with pure motives and a desire for God's approval above all else.

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## Transcript

We must remember that God is not impressed by the numerical growth of a church, if it is not growing spiritually. Paul told the Christians at Corinth that God would humble him through their carnal state (Read 2 Cor.12:20, 21). Why should Paul feel humiliated by the carnality of the Corinthians? Because Paul was their spiritual father. And God holds fathers responsible for the spiritual state of their children. When we see carnality in our assembly, God is showing us our own failure as leaders. We are the ones who should humble ourselves then, instead of blaming the brothers and sisters. When we see worldliness in our children, God is showing us our failure as fathers. We must humble ourselves instead of blaming our children. If we are hirelings, we will criticise the brothers and sisters when we see their failings. But if we are men of God, we will humble ourselves and say, "Lord I have failed. Forgive me."

Paul had a great burden that the heathen whom he had brought to Christ should be "so sanctified that they could be offered up as a pure offering to God" ( Rom.15:16). Under the old covenant, the priest had to examine every sacrifice that the people brought to see that it was without any blemish (Deut.17:1). That was the priest's responsibility. He could not offer to God what was maimed in any way. (Read Malachi 1 and 2 to understand how serious a sin that was in God's eyes) Now under the new covenant, all those whom the Lord calls to His service in the church have the same task. The people they present to God

must be acceptable to Him. That was why Paul laboured "to present EVERY man perfect in Christ" (Col.1:28).

At the judgment seat of Christ, everything will become manifest. What profit will it be to us even if everyone thinks we are doing a great work for God, if in that day it is seen that all our labours were shallow and carnal? The elder in Sardis was foolish to be satisfied with man's honour. Do we desire to get a name for ourselves - through our children? Maybe it's going well with them. Praise the Lord for that. But do we want others to notice that, so that we get some glory from it ourselves? Do we want others to know what wonderful fathers we have been? Are we bringing up our children for our own glory or God's? Certainly, we all want to bring up our children to be wholehearted Christians. But shouldn't it be enough if God sees that? And if God has seen it, why do we want any man's approval? What does it matter even if others think our children are worldly? We have to answer to God alone ultimately. It is good to have a sober estimate of ourselves and of our church.

There is a great lust in the flesh to show others the result of our labours. If we don't put that lust to death, Satan will always take advantage of us. Wherever he sees the slightest desire in any elder's heart to get a name for himself, Satan will take advantage of him, and deceive him, even while he is preaching about discipleship, holiness and the Body of Christ. Such an elder will build only another branch- church of Babylon!

It is impossible to build the Body of Christ if we are seeking a name for ourselves. The only one who can build a new covenant church is the one who has no desire for name or fame among men. If there are only 3 wholehearted disciples in your church after many years of labour, because you refused to make the narrow gate any wider than a needle's eye, you don't have to be ashamed of that. God will say to you one day, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

It is far better to have 3 disciples in a town who are a pure testimony for Christ than 3000 compromisers through whom the Name of the Lord is blasphemed. But when our numbers are small, we can be tempted strongly to lower our standards in order to impress others with better statistics. If we don't battle that lust, we will end up like the elder in Sardis.

I want to add a word of warning here, however, to those leaders who may find a false comfort in these words. It is possible that your church is not growing in numbers, because God Himself cannot recommend it to other needy people.

It is the Lord Who adds to the church (Acts 2:47). And in the early days, He did add large numbers to the church (Acts 6:7).

It may be good for you to pray something like this: "Lord, we are not asking You to increase the numbers in our church with a multitude of compromisers. But we do pray for ALL those in this town who are seeking to live a godly life. Lord, please do one of these three things: (1) LEAD THEM TO US so that we can help them; or (2) LEAD US TO THEM; or (3) SHOW US WHY YOU CAN'T RECOMMEND US to them."

The Lord may then tell you that He cannot recommend your church to others, because it is so legalistic and cold and Pharisaical!! He may also tell you that the reason why your church is like that is because you yourself are like that as an elder!! Then the only thing for you to do is to mourn and repent.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/dont-be-impressed-by-the-numerical-growth-of-a-church/>

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