

# **Church Renewal**

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## Introduction:

- A. There is a difference between absolutes and non-absolute.
  - 1. Absolutes involve function.
    - a. The church broke bread.
    - b. The Bible does teach function but not form.
    - c. We cannot absolutist something that is incomplete.
  - 2. Function can be described without form.
    - a. We are told to teach but not told how to teach.
    - b. Where we have function we have form
  - 3. Form becomes principles.
  - 4. The church is an organism.
  - 5. It takes method to communicate a message.
  - 6. Tradition is a non-absolute.
  - 7. We often absolutize the form not the function.
  - 8. In the absolute column we have supracultural, what worked in every culture.
    - a. Christianity is different form all other religions in this manner.
    - b. We are free.
- B. Beginning our ministry in Dallas we decided to employ new forms.
  - 1. We didn't change just for change.
  - 2. We didn't follow old forms just because of tradition.
  - 3. What works for us may not work for you, its not sacred.
  - 4. I talk about principles to encouraging others to experiment.
  - 5. Church conferences try to copy other successful ministries.

- a. If they copy something without understanding why it works for another it may not work for you.
  - b. There are personality factors involved.
6. Our structure was based on two one hour and fifteen meetings in three parts.
- a. Bible teaching.
  - b. Coffee break where we would introduce new people.
  - c. Return for fellowship and sharing.
    - 1. All these elements were important.
    - 2. Only in the third part was everyone involved together.
7. We wanted to provide people an in depth experience once a week.
- a. First priority was the family.
  - b. Many people felt they had no time for family.
  - c. We wanted to bind families together.
8. We wanted to provide opportunities for small group time.
- a. This was quality time.
  - b. This was important to minister to others.
9. We wanted to share Christ with the world.
- a. Many Christians are so involved in church they have no time to share with unbelievers.
  - b. I can give you a dozen reasons why I cannot share with unbelievers.
  - c. It takes time to develop relationships with non-Christians.
10. These things are absolutes.
11. Our program for children was called the learning center.
- a. They meet in small groups with teachers using a variety of media to provide a quality experience.
  - b. Building into the lives of children is crucial.
- C. Today we have this structure multiplied times four.

1. We have also started branch churches.
2. Garland now has two services.
3. Bethany Bible Fellowship now has two services.
4. Richland Bible Fellowship.
5. Bent Tree Bible Fellowship.
6. Fellowship Bible Fellowship at Park Cities.
7. These all came into existence with people wanting to make a difference.
8. In addition we have mini churches; groups of 10-20 people under the leadership of an elder.
  - a. These are located geographically.
  - b. They are shepherded by the elders.
  - c. Some meet once a month for fellowship and other times for Bible study.

D. This is our form and there is nothing sacred about it.

I. The speaker takes questions.

A. Since we have different men preaching on different weekends people should not fixate on any one person but to relate to several elders as shepherds.

1. Some might gain more prominence but this is natural.
2. In the beginning I did most of the teaching but now I take breaks and others pick up the slack.
3. At one point I was away from the main church for over a year.
4. We still grew.

B. Is there much moving around from one service to another?

1. No, people seem to gravitate to one service.
2. They develop a loyalty to one service.

C. How do we train elders?

1. We have evolved in this area.
2. I am developing leadership training.

3. I want to take the next two years to do this.
4. In the early days of the church the Lord brought us great men.
5. Now we have certain requirements of elders in training and reading.
6. The final step is to take the MMPI personality test to see how they will fit in with others on staff.
7. We also have a test for husbands and wives to take.
8. Elders need to have solid marriages in order to minister to others,
9. We also encourage elders to function along side other elders.
10. This gives us a chance to mentor new elders and to evaluate elders.
11. We are trying to develop new Christians in the area of leadership.
12. Elders are managers of the flock; oversepherds and teachers.
13. Elders are really pastors.
14. The body is led by two kinds of elders.
  - a. Those worthy of double honor - paid by the church.
  - b. Non-staff elders who work full time in a vocation but pastor the flock.
  - c. These non-staff elders handle the mini churches.
  - d. Deacons serve in cultural aspects of ministry.
    1. The New Testament does not describe the function of deacons.
    2. The role of the deacon is absolute but his function is not.
    3. There is freedom in the role of deacons.
15. We use a multiple leadership concept.
  - a. We don't have Christian gurus.
  - b. We have ministry directors on staff but we don't have a hierarchy.
  - c.. We are all servants.
  - d. The more mature Christians you have leading the more impact you can have.

D. How do we arrive at the number of staff elders?

1. This is determined by the size of the church.
2. As the body grows we add staff.
3. Two staff elders handle most of the teaching for the adults, but we also have a youth teacher and an evangelism teacher, and a business manager.

E. What happens during the sharing time?

1. We may have music.
2. We may have testimonies.
3. We basically try to encourage one another.
4. Now we have expanded to one hour and thirty minutes with a coffee break at the end.
  - a. We begin with music then teaching then body sharing.
  - b. Some Bible teaching lends itself to three kinds of response.
    1. God works in their hearts.
    2. Relational responses.
    3. Questions.
  - c. The coffee break in between breaks the continuity.
  - d. Now we go right in to a body response to the message.
    1. I preached on Nehemiah dealing with discouragement.
    2. The body response time included sharing and ministering among others.
    3. Some share Scripture that means a lot to them.
  - e. Cultural reasons led us into change.
    1. We began to have four services in a week.
    2. Sunday afternoon in Dallas is not a good time for church
    3. Sunday night.
    4. Friday night.
    5. We changed to two Sunday morning services 8:00 and 1:00 but the early service was space while the afternoon service was packed.

6. So we shortened the services and changed the time to 8:30 and 12:30, now both are packed.

7. We had to change our structure as we grew without changing our principles.

a. Before we changed I preached on how to change.

b. I had to prepare people for change.

F. Where are our people coming from?

1. We get some that drop out of other churches.

2. We get some from liberal churches where people never hear the Gospel.

3. Liberal pastors are glad to get rid of evangelicals and we are happy to get them.

4. Many people come to us by invitation from our members.

5. We don't pressure people for money or decisions, etc.

6. We want a non-Christian to sit in the service and be convicted yet not turned off.

7. We have about 300 people at each service.

8. Some say this is too much for body sharing time.

9. We might have to change our form because over 150 people makes it difficult to have open sharing for all.

10. If the room dynamics is right it can work but it is difficult.

11. We have removed our pulpit and employ an overhead projector.

12. We don't want to be above the people.

13. A church growth advisor told us an attractive factor in our ministry is our adult to adult communication.

14. Educated people don't like being treated like children.

15. We don't talk down to them.

16. I don't tell people you better get right with God; I tell them we must get right with God.

17. In blue collar areas the pastor becomes more of a spiritual parent and treating them adult to adult is frustrating.

18. It is Scriptural to be adult to adult but it frustrates some people.

19. We have not tried to reflect on other churches.
20. We have not attracted people from other good churches.
21. We have a great relationship with other successful churches.
  - a. First Dallas is interested in what we are doing.
  - b. At first many thought I had gone off the deep end in this ministry.
  - c. Now many are emulating our informal approach to ministry.
  - d. Communication is very important.