

The Discipline of Church

Hebrews 10:23; Matthew 9:35-36

COME ON IN AND STAY AWHILE

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess,
for he who promised is faithful.

Hebrews 10:23 NIV

I'm convinced that there is no better place to be on Sunday mornings than at this church. I'm not against any other church in the area. I just believe that as a part of this church, I'm committed to being in attendance on Sunday mornings. Since I have that commitment, I would like others to join me here.

Imagine a husband and wife who didn't truly believe that their marriage was the best for them. They would be continually looking for something better. Oh, that sounds like our society today. That is the problem.

It's easy for us to fall into the trap of thinking that there is something better out there. We get a lot of people who visit us and are just shopping for a church. I've never been of that mindset.

Before I was in the ministry, Dorry and I needed to find a church home. We visited a church, liked it and just stayed. We never even thought that there might be something better out there. We went to small churches because we wanted to get involved. So, we purposely chose to become members and dove right into the work. Whether it was cleaning the church, tithing, mowing the lawn, visiting new people or whatever, we just wanted to serve the Lord.

Our philosophy has always been, if you like it, stop looking around.

What is the purpose of Christians holding unswervingly to the hope we profess?

To hold unswervingly carries with it the idea of moving steadily forward with purpose.

...holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith.
1 Timothy 1:18-19 NIV

I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

Revelation 3:11 NIV

The author is encouraging Christians to stay on course, even in the face of difficult challenges and temptations.

We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.
Hebrews 6:11-12 NIV

Diligence = to make haste or to be in a hurry

Our faith is based upon the One who cannot lie.

"I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it."

Ezekiel 17:24; 22:14; 36:36

But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.
2 Peter 3:13 NIV

EBC will hold unswervingly as long as we do the following.

1. Maintain a commitment to the Bible as our sole authority for life and godliness.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 NIV

2. Maintain a commitment to the Great Commission.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded

you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Matthew 28:19-20 NIV

3. Maintain a commitment to our mission.

The mission of EBC is to share the truth of God’s Word with all people, equipping them to become faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

4. Maintain a commitment to building up the church numerically.

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Ephesians 4:16 NIV

The early Christian Church had its priorities right, which is why the church in Ephesus could grow from a small handful of believers to well over twenty thousand in just three years.

M.S. Mills, *The Life of Christ : A Study Guide to the Gospel Record*, Three Volumes: 1. The Advent of Jesus 2. The Beginning of the Gospel 3. Jesus Presents Himself to Israel. (Dallas: 3E Ministries, 1999).

Building up the church is the work of the whole body.

...and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

Ephesians 4:11-12 NIV

Each member has a unique role in building up the church.

Spiritual gifts

Natural abilities and talents

Passions and desires

Let’s look at Jesus’ view of people and numbers.

Jesus loved people – even ones he didn’t know.

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had

compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Matthew 9:35-36 NIV

Jesus’ love for people drove him to meet their needs.

A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.” Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!”

Immediately he was cured of his leprosy.

Matthew 8:2-3 NIV

Jesus’ love for people attracted them to him.

Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.

Matthew 19:2 NIV

Jesus saw the large crowd and taught them.

While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable:

Luke 8:4 NIV

On the day that Jesus established the church, it experienced growth.

Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Acts 2:41 NIV

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Acts 2:47 NIV

We need to understand our own biblical and unbiblical views of church growth.

Unbiblical views:

Big churches must have compromised in order to get that big.

Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls.

Romans 14:4 NIV

Small churches are better because they’re more personal.

“Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them

come in, so that my house will be full.

Luke 14:23 NIV

Biblical views:

The church is not about me, it's about Jesus.

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Matthew 16:18 NIV

Since Christ established the church, it must be important.

...Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.

Ephesians 5:23 NIV

Church growth was important to the Apostles.

Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.

1 Corinthians 14:12 NIV

Ingrown never equals growing. Many churches establish an antigrowth climate without even realizing it by allowing their predominant focus to become the needs of those already in the church... When the church climate is one of genuine concern for those outside the church, growth can happen.

Marshall Shelley, vol. 2, *Empowering Your Church Through Creativity and Change : 30 Strategies to Transform Your Ministry*, 1st ed., Library of Christian leadership (Nashville, Tenn.: Moorings, 1995), 53.

What is the potential for numerical growth at EBC?

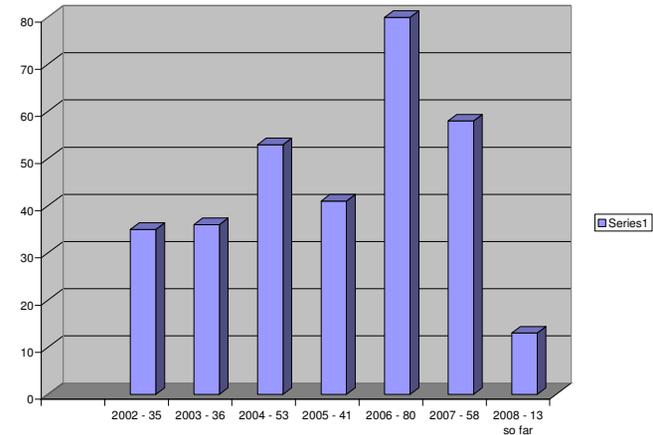
We are currently in a period of numeric growth.

Our average attendance for 2007 was 75.

So far in 2008 our average attendance is 86.

Nearly every week we have new people visit EBC.

The following graph represents the number of visitor card received for various years.



Of the first-time visitors who live in the church's ministry area, three of every ten should be actively involved within a year.

Larry K. Weeden, vol. 15, *The Magnetic Fellowship: Reaching and Keeping People*, The Leadership library (Carol Stream, Ill.; Waco, Tex.: CTI; Word Books, 1988), 119.

In Matthew 25, we find the parable of the three servants. One was given 5 talents, another was given 2 talents and the final steward was given 1 talent.

As we know in the story, the first two servants doubled their talents. The last servant said that he was afraid, so he buried his talent so that it wouldn't get lost. When the master heard what he had done, he did not commend the servant but condemned him as wicked and lazy.

We all want to be like those first two servants, so we have to determine that we are going to work at doubling our own attendance by inviting others to join us at church on a regular basis.

We must truly believe that our church is the best place to be on any given Sunday morning.