

Introduction:

1. In the past several years I have visited a large number of local churches. I have seen a few churches that are holding their own, and some that are dying. I have also seen some that are doing very well; they are growing and prospering. How do we account for these differences?
2. It is apparent that successful churches are doing some things that others are not doing.
 - a. Book: “If you want to become a millionaire, you need to do the things millionaires do.” (Or concert pianist, Olympic champion.) What are successful churches doing that make them successful?
 - b. Whatever successful churches are doing—that’s what we need to do. This is not rocket science; nor does it involve things beyond our capability. We can do this!
 - b. There are certain things that great churches do that make them great—hence, our title. Here are seven critical elements that make for a great church. These things start with leaders!

The Lesson:**I. Stand For Truth Without Compromise.**

- A. The church is the pillar and support of truth, 1 Timothy 3:15.
 1. Churches must not depart from the truth of the gospel, Galatians 1:6-8.
 2. Not every church stands for truth. If we don’t get this right, nothing else matters. Some churches believe they will succeed if they water down the gospel. Succeed at what? In the final analysis, churches that don’t stand for truth do more harm than good.
 3. Teaching on salvation, authority of the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit, the nature of Christ and the church must be crystal clear. We cannot run from any controversial issue.
- B. Great churches grow and thrive by tackling tough issues and addressing them with truth. Satan hates both the stand and the growth—but God loves both the stand and the growth!

II. Promote An Evangelistic Culture.

- A. Evangelism is God’s great work! It is a work given to us, Matthew 28:19; 1 Thessalonians 1:8.
 1. We are on a mission from God...really! We answer the call, Matthew 9:37-38.
 2. Some churches—and their leaders—do not take seriously the work of saving souls.
 3. Does God want more evangelism or less? What does the devil want? What do you want?
- B. Great churches have leaders who set the tone in evangelism. Here are four simple things you can do to promote an evangelistic culture: Shine, Speak, Invite, and Welcome.

III. Consistently Practice Church Discipline.

- A. This is the point where some people want to balk at God’s will.
 1. The local church and its shepherds have obligations to souls and to God, Hebrews 13:17.
 2. God commands that erring Christians be addressed, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15
 3. It is commonly believed that obeying God’s will on this matter will cause a church to decline. Actually, churches that do this fare much better in the long run!
- B. Great churches know that God’s way is best and right. They do God’s will, not the will of men.

IV. Reject Cultural Barriers.

- A. Sunday continues to be the most segregated day of the week.
 - 1. In some towns there are black churches and white churches. Is that God's will?
 - 2. God's will is expressed in texts like 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27-28.
 - 3. God's church is the answer to racial issues in our culture. It is not the problem!
- B. Great churches are made up of people from every cultural background, people who have a common bond. That common bond is our faith and love toward Christ Jesus.

V. Promote A Spirit Of Excellence.

- A. Our God is an awesome and excellent God! He deserves our best, Malachi 1:6-8, 14.
 - 1. I am troubled when I see kingdom work given a half-hearted effort: dirty church buildings, passionless singing, sermons thrown together. Dare we insult the great God—our God?
 - 2. In no place in Scripture do you find that God is pleased with mediocrity!
- B. God is great. Great churches are made up of people who believe “good enough is not good enough.” Striving for excellence must begin at the top; leaders set standards!

VI. Promote A Spirit Of Unity.

- A. It is not just strong teaching that produces unity; it is determination on the part of brethren.
 - 1. It is leadership that says, “With God's help we can solve every issue and stay together.”
 - 2. It is our obligation to promote unity, Ephesians 4:1-3. It requires diligent effort!
 - 3. It is not our obligation to quickly divide and start a new congregation down the street!
- B. Great churches are made up of people who have the rugged determination to hang in there, stick together and work out problems and disagreements by following the Scriptures.

VII. Have Growing Leaders.

- A. There are a lot of churches that have leaders who love God, truth and souls. But one of the things that sets great churches apart are leaders who know they have not yet reached the pinnacle. Those churches have leaders in every rank who know they need to grow.
 - 1. Those kinds of leaders want to do their jobs better; they study Scripture that addresses their work; they talk through strategies for handling difficult issues and situations; they hold each other accountable as they strive for excellence, Hebrews 13:17; Acts 20:28-32.
 - 2. This must be done at every level of leadership. We must motivate one another.
- B. This is something great churches do. They have leaders who are completely satisfied with God's pattern and will as revealed in Scripture. But they are unsatisfied with mediocrity and their own present level of knowledge and accomplishments. They are determined to grow!

Conclusion:

- 1. These are seven things from the word of God. And these things are observable in great churches!
- 2. I will add one more that may be the sum of all seven. It is faith, trust in God that His ways are best and right; it is belief in the success of God's kingdom; belief that it will all work! Do you believe?