

# What Makes A Church Strong?

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It should be no surprise that strong churches are not necessarily large churches. It seems some have confused the two. They think large numbers make strong churches. There are multitudes of examples in the Old Testament that show that numbers have nothing to do with strength. Our strength is from the Lord, and the Lord taught most people would reject Him (Matthew 7:13-14).

Actually the answer to the question depends upon our definition of strong. Are we speaking of strong physically, strong academically, strong in assets, strong emotionally, or strong spiritually? I am, of course, speaking of being strong spiritually because that is the only thing that really matters. The things of this world along with the works thereof will one day be consumed with a fervent heat (2 Peter 3:10).

There are certain components within a congregation that makes it strong spiritually. Again, it has nothing to do with numbers, and it has nothing to do with money although they may or may not result from being strong spiritually. To be strong spiritually means to have the following components:

## **Christ as Her Head**

In Colossians 1:18, Paul taught, “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.” Since Christ is the head of the church, by implication that means we are to be subject unto Him. A strong church will have Christ as her head and will be subject unto Him in all things.

Christ is the only one worthy to be the head over the church. It was Christ who built the church as He prophesied in Matthew 16:18. “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” It was Christ who purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). It is Christ who is the only mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5).

## **The Gospel as Her Message**

Sadly, the message in many churches is “make me feel good in my sins” and “give me an emotional high to get me through the week.” Often the sermons have little or no scriptures.

The Bible teaches quite the contrary. By inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Peter declared, “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 4:11). To the young evangelist Timothy, Paul decreed, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season;

reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2). In the following verses, Paul warned about changing the message. “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:3-4). Fables are stories with moral applications, and this is the message of many churches today.

Strong churches will not tolerate a watered down, weak, story telling message. Strong churches demand “Bible toten’, Bible quoten’ preachers” who preach the gospel of salvation. They are congregations of God’s people who are “not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16). Thus, they demand their preachers to be the same.

### **Disciples as Her Work Force**

The term disciple means a learner in contrast to a teacher. It denotes one who follows one’s teaching. Christians are disciples of Christ because they abide by His teaching. Jesus said, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed” (John 8:31).

Strong churches realize the work of the church is not for just a few. They endeavor to get disciples involved in the work. However, they do not try to involve everyone — only those who are faithful to God in their lives. Paul instructed, “I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (1 Timothy 2:8). In this passage, Paul taught that men in contrast to women were to pray every where. Further they were to do so “lifting up holy hands.” This is a figure of speech referring to the holy life of the one leading prayers. The prayers of one who persists in sin is not heard past the four walls of the church building.

Strong churches perform only those works authorized by God. The church of the Lord has a threefold work: evangelism, edification, and benevolence. Any thing other than these are not authorized by God and, therefore, should not be done by the church. It is not the churches’ responsibility to entertain youth or anyone else. It is not the churches’ responsibility to be a social club. It is the churches’ responsibility to “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). It is the churches’ responsibility to edify “itself in love” (Ephesians 4:16). And, it is the churches’ responsibility to “do good unto all men” (Galatians 6:10).

There is much talk these days about whether or not the church will survive the twenty-first century. As long as we keep Christ as the head of the church, the Gospel as the message of the church, and disciples as the work force of the church, the church will survive. It will more than survive this world of death, pain, and sorrows. It will abide in eternity for it is the eternal kingdom of God. That, my friend, makes it a strong church, one that endures the test of time.