

Multiplication

Intro – Great progress, in varying degrees, in all the branches. Some just to be open for business, others all the way through to multiplication. Much progress in teaching, leading, facilitation, etc. Small group life is alive and well. We're learning Skills such as casting out demons, ministering salvation, water baptism and Baptism in the Spirit. Branch leaders are baptizing, new people being absorbed. Need to turn our attention to the most important group function of all: Multiplication!

Gen 1:26-28 - 26 Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like ourselves. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground." 27 So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. NLT

From the beginning, God wanted humans to biologically reproduce and fill the earth. We need to consider this. The first command God gave to mankind was to multiply. This certainly meant physical multiplication. God wanted perfect humans to have kids and keep having kids until we filled up the earth. What would God do then? Maybe create another earth?? Who knows? It certainly would have been good, whatever He did. But, along came sin and the fall of man. Everything, including the birth process got corrupted. We have no human births under perfect conditions in the Garden. All examples of human birth happened to fallen mankind. Stillborns, miscarriages, barrenness, and kids with birth defects began to appear. Many people decided not to give birth, even though they had a mate and could, fearing the sacrifice involved with giving birth. Others never found a suitable mate due to the manifold social conflicts occurring in the mate selection process. Humans began vying for supremacy within their gender in order to win the optimum mate from the opposite gender. Some chose to be celibate to dedicate themselves to God's work on the fallen earthly battleground. Some just lost out. People began dying early. Even though the earth's population seems to be presently exploding, it is way below the real goals God had for us to "fill the earth."

John 3:3-8 - Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God." 4 "What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?" 5 Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. 6 **Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life.** 7 So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again.' NLT

This idea of "filling the earth" certainly applies to *spiritual birthing*. "God is not willing that any perish" means that he wants to see all humans experience a spiritual re-birth as well as a physical birth. If God wanted there to be so many humans that the earth couldn't hold them all, He certainly wants all those masses of people to be reborn or born again also. This, also is lagging behind God's goal of all humans experiencing a new birth.

1 Peter 5:1-4 - 5 I warn and counsel the elders among you (the pastors and spiritual guides of the church) as a fellow elder and as an eyewitness [called to testify] of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a sharer in the glory (the honor and splendor) that is to be revealed (disclosed, unfolded):² **Tend (nurture, guard, guide, and fold) the flock of God that is [your responsibility], not by coercion or constraint, but willingly; not dishonorably motivated by the advantages and profits [belonging to the office], but eagerly and cheerfully;** ³ Not domineering [as arrogant, dictatorial, and overbearing persons] over those in your charge, but being examples (patterns and models of Christian living) to the flock (the congregation) ⁴ And [then] when the Chief Shepherd is revealed, you will win the ^aconqueror's crown of glory. AMPC

John 10:15-16 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 And other sheep I have, which are not of **this fold**: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be **one fold**, and one shepherd. KJV

Tend = nurture, guard, guide, fold according to the classic version of the Amplified Bible. *Folding* is the part the modern church is weak on. It means to bring the sheep from a windswept, open area (1st word for fold) to the flock that is Christ's (second reference to fold). Every group of Christians is a flock belonging to Jesus. As a collective whole, we are Jesus' flock, and as a local small group, we are also Jesus' flock.

Q: How do we "fold" the sheep Jesus is saving?

A: We can't just go out and individually convert people; our zeal will soon fail. It must be done by the Spirit. The entire process uses the Body of Christ, not just an individual. We do it as a group. Old-style street corner evangelism never really did work. When we start a branch group, it is as if we are building a small flock of people. The Bible refers to it as a *house* (*oikos* is the Greek word in **1 Tim 3:15**).

Just like you plan concertedly to build a physical house for yourself, we must plan concertedly to build a house for the saints. One disease which will keep us from planning and executing a building is *koinonitis*. The Greek word for fellowship is *koinonia*. This is the most common disease which keeps us from multiplying and giving birth to other branch groups. This disease has several symptoms which can be easily heard from the infected saints: Fellowship is wonderful, safe and comfortable. Why disrupt it by separating ourselves from each other? After all, we need to really get to know each other! We don't know each other yet! There are still needs in our midst which are unmet! We have to wait until we know more! God hasn't spoken to us to do this!

The saints which follow these exhortations will experience weariness like parents whose children never leave the nest. Just think if all of our children never left, started reproducing and living on their own, but instead lived under our roof forever! The human race would dry up after a generation or two. Parents would become tired of providing. *It is the same thing with spiritual birthing!*

Here are some suggestions for the branch you are leading regardless of whether it is a specialty group or a regular branch:

1. Pick a co-leader who has the vision to split the group with you. You have a major part in instilling this vision by talking about it and planning for it. If you don't, you will burn out.
2. Early on, set a date for multiplication. The knowledge and burden to multiply is only a dream if does not have a target date. It will never happen.
3. Keep it in front of the branch group as a regular part of your meeting. ***It actually should be the foremost thing!*** We do well at teaching and facilitating discussions about Bible subjects, praying, and worshiping. Very little time is given to planning, team selection, logistic preparation, etc. for the birth of the new group. People should be lining up with your co-leader almost from the first time they attend your meeting.
4. As the date approaches, plan for the whole church to participate in the birthing.

Conclusion – God wants us to give birth whether we feel completely prepared or not. Human parents are given mostly a powerful biological urge to start the reproductive process. They are not given all the resources to be financially secure and endowed with all wisdom. They just breed! They work out the logistics with the help of God. God wants us to have the same drive to fold His flock. He is saving people every day and wants to bring them into the little houses we build!