

## BUILDING CROWDS OR BUILDING PEOPLE

Is your goal to build a church or to build people? Be sure you keep the distinction clear.

If your goal is numerical growth, you are more likely to sacrifice any number of Bible convictions in order to gain that end. If building people is your aim, staying close to the Bible is your best and safest route.

Somehow, our Lord managed to change the world by conducting large preaching meetings and by individual training of a few faithful men. Everything God does seems to be through unique relationships with individuals.

### **Numbers were not the focus.**

When God set out to create a nation, later to be His chosen people, God called one man, Abraham. He was asked to leave family and friends to go to "a place" (without much more instruction than those few, vague words). Abraham obeyed, and the most amazing nation in history came into existence.

*From riding our buses to serving with her husband as missionaries in Belize, this young lady on the right is a product of building lives, not numbers.*

**Time was not the main focus,** nor was God in a hurry as was seen in the seemingly slow development of God's chosen people. Abraham was at the century mark before bringing the chosen son of promise into the world.



I am for "Big Days," and we have enjoyed some wonderful ones, yet I am also very concerned about getting the most out of every day. In the work of the Lord, investing long hours is not just a necessity, but a pleasure: people matter, one at a time. When we forget people, the ministry fails.

I am amazed at the number of pastors who spend little or no time with their teens. The fact is, if a preacher plans to stay at his church for a long time, his youth department comprises the training ground for future deacons, staff members, Sunday school teachers, and quality church members.



*Climb a water fall, ride white water, kayak, or plan a cruise for your couples, but do something that allows you time to develop relationships with your young people.*

It does seem that many preachers love preaching, but do not love people. The Lord has called us to be ministers, and that call demands a closeness to people. Take time with your people, invest energy planning activities and visiting them. Relationships are the reason most people will attend a church.

*Hiking on a men's trip with some friends -- these men are former military who are now Sunday school teachers, and two are college students. The pleasure of my life is to get close to our men.*



One day I enjoyed lunch with two men and their families. One man is an adult Sunday school teacher and deacon; the other is a bus captain and deacon. Both men were former teens at our church, and they know me well; together we have done about everything you can name. We are friends; I am their preacher, and they love, respect, and honor me -- and they treat me so very well. After getting close to God, getting close to your people ought to be your main priority.