

## **The Main Thing: Short and Simple**

**By Bob Young**

Most have likely heard the anecdote about the preacher's wife who sent him a written note while he was preaching. On the paper were written only four letters – K I S S. The preacher finished his sermon, greeted the congregation, and on the way home asked his wife about the note. There are at least two versions of her reply: "Keep It Simple, Sweetheart" or "Keep It Short, Sweetheart."

I often need to be reminded to cut it short. My goal in this article is to do both – be short and be simple.

Friends, the church only has one task. There is only one thing the church must do. God planned the church, and Christ died for the church, for one reason. One task, God's plan, Jesus' purpose, the main thing, evangelism!

Each local church is a combination of context, history, and complex dynamics with unique challenges, but every local church has been commissioned for the one main thing. Short and simple, it's not all that hard.

Here are some things I know after 55 years of working with local churches.

Evangelism must be priority number one—first, last, and always. The preacher, the leaders of the church, regardless of other matters, must make evangelism the church's highest task. Evangelism must set the church's mindset, mission, and ministry. What is the short and simple way to grow a church? Evangelism. Mission work short and simple – evangelism!

Even when the "main thing" is evangelism, it is easy to lose sight of the main thing. In our daily lives, urgency trumps priority. Energy is frittered away in peripheral, tangential matters that often do little to advance the gospel. The preacher forgets to preach evangelistically, the atmosphere of the church is not characterized by evangelism, church leaders do not take the lead in evangelism, members are not expected to evangelize. The church develops a host of "ministries" instead of focusing on the main thing.

When evangelism is the main thing, the church grows, adding and then multiplying as the gospel touches hearts and unbelievers come to Jesus. The church can double or triple in a short time when the main effort is on bringing lost souls to Jesus.

Keeping evangelism as the main thing is not easy. The demands of planning, meetings, sermon preparation, counseling, and shepherding do not automatically disappear. Ministry, church leadership, is always a balancing act. Another thing I have learned, "Waves on the baptism solve a host of church problems." Church members that have learned consumerism are quickly convinced and converted, learning to give rather than to receive, when evangelism is the main thing.

Carey Nieuwhof wrote about nine things that are no longer effective in the church. Each of the things he mentions is resolved in the church that is focused on evangelism. I share my summary of his list: thinking visitors will automatically return, motivating by guilt rather than by gospel, doing church better than others, attention-getting events and gimmicks, leadership from a distance, self-centered ministries, unfocused random ministries, assuming people know how to become disciples of Jesus, failing to make faith fresh and new.

Short and simple -- woulda, coulda, shoulda!

There are many things a church would do. There are many things a church could do. There are a few things a church should do. There is only one thing a church must do.

We must do what Jesus told us to do. "Go make disciples, baptizing them and teaching them."