

How Jesus' Definition of Success Differs From the Church

What defines a win for you in your ministry?

There was a church in the community where Wanda and I were pastoring in the early years of our ministry that was renowned for their "Singing Christmas Tree" every year. Huge crowds attended every performance, with leading citizens in attendance. That was their win.

I attended the Mid-America Sunday School Convention at Cobo Hall in Detroit, Michigan for a number of years. The focus of the conference was church growth. Each year, awards were given to the churches that had the fastest growing Sunday schools and church attendance throughout the mid-west. That was their win.

We don't hear much about choirs today because the emphasis is on worship teams. But the measure is the same. Great care is given to stage presentation, lighting and sound systems that theaters and concert halls would be proud to own. Musicians and singers are of the highest quality possible. That is the win.

Systems and structures have changed. Few churches have Sunday schools today. The emphasis is on morning worship attendance, with a choreographed program and stage presence that will hopefully draw hundreds or thousands to our church. The win is the same.

For others it is miracles, signs and wonders that define their win. Their entire program is centered upon spectacular healings, dead raising, or another form of miraculous sign. That is their win.

Let's ask an important question.

How did Jesus define a win?

The Lord made a special trip north from Jerusalem *"He needed to go through Samaria."* He had a divine appointment with a woman at the well in Sychar. Jesus would lead her to "living water" and she would be the first to learn heavenly Father is seeking worshippers. *"They that worship must worship in Spirit and in truth."* **Jesus did not say that is how you define a win.**

Jesus began drawing huge crowds at his meetings. He would feed them miraculously and the miracles increased the numbers. He also made it very clear the crowds could just as quickly go away. Indeed, at one point He asked the twelve men closest to Him, "Do you also want to go away?" **Jesus did not measure a win by the size of the crowds.**

When Jesus ordained the original 12 disciples He commanded them to preach the kingdom of heaven, heal the sick, cleanse the leper, raise the dead and cast out demons. When He ordained an additional 70 disciples, He also commanded them to preach the kingdom of heaven to heal the sick. When they returned from the evangelistic meetings and gave Jesus a report of their work, they said, *"Even demons are subject to us in Your name."*

Jesus response is very interesting and very telling.

"He said to them, 'I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Look, I give you authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy. And nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven'" (Luke 10:18-20).

Jesus did not measure a win by the quality of music or worship. He did not measure a win by the size of the crowds or by miracles, signs and wonders. All of these are important and

they should be a regular part of the ministry of the church. But that is not how Jesus measured a win.

“Rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” That is a win!

The church is to measure the success of ministry by how many disciples are being made. We can have huge crowds, even thousands, but how many are truly disciples of Jesus Christ?

We many have thunderous worship, dancing and shouting, but how many of those singing, clapping and dancing were “hooking up” on Friday night or singing karaoke and drunk on Saturday? They worship Him with their lips, but their hearts are far from Him.

We may see healings and miracles and even have people raised from the dead, but remember Jesus said many followed Him only because He gave them something to eat. The psalmist declared, *“He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the people of Israel”* (Ps. 103:7). ***Father wants us to know His heart as well as His power.***

Get as many people as you can in that building on Sunday.

Ask God to give you creative and innovative ways to draw crowds.

Seek excellence in all that you do.

Make your worship celebrations exciting and filled with life-giving music, praise and dancing.

Fast and pray for the miracle power of God to be present.

Our love and compassion for people should seek to see them healed and delivered. Jesus said, *“These signs shall follow them that believe. In my Name...”*

Don't make that your win. Your success should not be measured

by how many are in the building; how excellent your music is; or when your last miracle was. Your win, the measure of your success, is how many new names were written in heaven.

How many authentic disciples are being made in that crowd you draw on Sunday morning?

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