

## I Will Build My Church – Part 7

**Matthew 16:18-19 (KJV)** 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. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

- This series is about discovering God's blueprint for building His church!

### **PRINCIPLE #10: CONNECTING WITH OUR CULTURE**

(Acts 8:4, 11:9, 11:17, 15:28)

**Acts 8:4 (KJV)** Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.

**Acts 11:9 (NLT)** "But the voice from heaven came again, 'If God says something is acceptable, don't say it isn't.'

**Acts 11:17 (KJV)** "If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?"

**Acts 15:28 (KJV)** For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things.

- For the first few years the church existed, only Jewish people were evangelized, mostly through the ministry of the Apostles. If that trend had continued, WE WOULD NOT BE IN THE CHURCH TODAY!
- What changed? Watch the transition: God used internal circumstances (conflict over ministry to the widows) to teach the church that they needed to SHARE MINISTRY. Then He used external circumstances (persecution) to teach the church that they needed to EVANGELIZE EVERYWHERE. In doing so, it was necessary for them to reach beyond current church culture to impact the world around them.
- THE CHURCH BEGAN TO MODIFY THEIR METHOD IN ORDER TO REACH THE GENTILES. If they had not done so, they would never have been able to reach anyone but Jewish people. This "cultural change" within the church had nothing to do with changing the **CONTENT** of the gospel, but everything to do with changing their **PRESENTATION** of the gospel.

- There was more opposition to this change (from a Jewish Jerusalem Church to a Gentile Roman Church) than any other, but as the New Testament saints began to TARGET their efforts into reaching the MAJORITY of their culture, God gave them an incredible harvest!

### **The Biblical Concept Of Targeting**

- No single congregation can reach everyone due to geography, language, music, custom – and even personal preference! (That is why we are part of a worldwide fellowship.) The type of fish we catch will depend largely on the bait we use! Whether they are made consciously or unconsciously, our congregation's choices today determine who we will reach tomorrow.
- A church (or even a radio station!) that continuously tries to appeal to everyone's preference will wind up offending everybody and reaching nobody. To be successful, we must determine who lives in our area and how we can best reach them, and then intentionally go after them – that is targeting!
- **The Bible determines our message, but our target determines how we communicate that message.**
- Targeting is a Biblical principle. Jesus targeted His ministry to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24), and instructed His disciples to do the same (Matthew 10:5-6). Peter targeted his ministry to the Jews, while Paul targeted his ministry to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:7). We even have four gospels because each one of them was written with a specific target in mind – Matthew wrote to the Jews, Mark to the Romans, Luke to the Greeks, and John to the Church. **God Himself invented the concept of targeting!**
- No missionary to a foreign country would try to reach people without first understanding their culture and "language" and communicating with them on that basis. It is just as crucial to understand the people of Fredericton, New Brunswick if we want to evangelize them!
- **We don't have to agree with our culture, but we do have to understand it in order to reach it.**
- **Jesus' Standard Approach: "Start Where People Are"**
  - He talked to the Pharisees about the law
  - He talked to farmers about seed
  - He talked to fishermen about fish
  - He talked to the rich young ruler about money
  - He talked to the woman at the well about water

- **Paul's Standard Approach: "Become All Things To All Men"**

**1 Corinthians 9:20-22 (GN)** To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews ... In the same way, when with the Gentiles, I became like a Gentile, in order to win the Gentiles. I have become all things to all men, that I may save some of them by any means possible.

**1 Corinthians 9:21 (NLT)** When I am with the Gentiles who do not have the Jewish law, I fit in with them as much as I can. In this way, I gain their confidence and bring them to Christ. But I do not discard the law of God; I obey the law of Christ.

**1 Corinthians 9:22 (LB)** Whatever a person is like, I try to find common ground with him so that he will let me tell him about Christ and let Christ save him.

- The fundamental question at the Church Council in Acts 15 was this: "Does a Gentile have to adopt Jewish customs to become a Christian?" The answer was a resounding "NO!"
- The fundamental question for the church today is this: "Does a Sinner have to adopt all our church customs to become a Christian?" And again, the answer is a resounding "NO!"
- We must continually ask ourselves: "Who are we trying to impress?"
  - Our primary goal is "SERVICE"
  - Our primary goal is not "SERVE US"
- All too often we have "church for the church," when our goal should be to have "church for the unchurched."
- Paul taught the NT church to adjust their worship services when unbelievers were present in order to reach them (1 Corinthians 14)
- This is not "caving in to culture" – it is just being POLITE! In fact, **we ALWAYS cater to culture**, but we must make sure it is CITY culture and not just CHURCH culture.
- Do you expect our church services to run according to YOUR PREFERENCE and our ministries to operate according to YOUR CONVENIENCE, or are you more concerned about our visitors' preferences and their convenience?
- The New Testament church found out that some things are essential (THEIR MESSAGE), but that other things are non-essential or even detrimental (THEIR METHODS).

- **IT ALL DEPENDS ON WHO YOU WANT TO REACH!**

## WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO!

- **2 Corinthians 5:14a (NLT)** Whatever we do, it is because Christ's love controls us.

### In essential beliefs — we have UNITY.

**Ephesians 4:4-6 (NLT)** We are all one body, we have the same Spirit, and we have all been called to the same glorious future. There is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and there is only one God and Father, who is over us all and in us all and living through us all.

### In non-essential beliefs — we have LIBERTY.

**Romans 14:1,4,12,22 (GN)** Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters ... Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls ... So then each of us will give an account of himself to God ... So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God.

### In all our beliefs — we show CHARITY.

**1 Corinthians 13:2 (GN)** If I hold in my mind not only all human knowledge but also the very secrets of God, and if I have the faith that can move mountains — but have no love, I amount to nothing at all.

# Our Target

## Freddy Ricton

He is a high school graduate with some secondary education.

He is in his middle thirties, married with one child.

He likes upbeat and contemporary music.

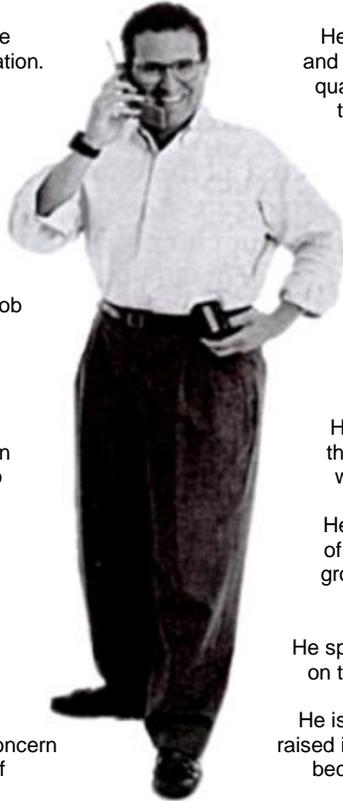
He works in a white collar service industry, and his wife also holds down a job to help make ends meet.

He prefers the casual and informal over the formal.

He is content with his station in life, and feels fortunate to have a job when many Atlantic Canadians do not.

He never complains when faced with unfriendliness or something he dislikes, but he does vow silently never to return.

He instinctively trusts those who are unselfish in their concern for others, but is skeptical of organized religion.



He grew up in New Brunswick and wants to stay here because quality of life is more important to him than pursuing wealth.

He is a great neighbor and a frequent volunteer for community projects.

Conflicting schedules are a major source of stress for him and his wife, interfering with their desire for more family time and recreational activities.

He lives in a modest home in the urban area, and is careful with his hard-earned money.

He is relaxed in a small group of friends, but prefers a larger group in unfamiliar settings so he can remain anonymous.

He spends over 25 hours a week on the internet, TV and movies.

He is loyal to the religion he was raised in, but never attends church because it doesn't speak to his spiritual needs.

