

Do Little Numbers Mean Little Faith?

All over the world, there are groups of Christians that meet every Sunday to worship. Many of these groups are small in number. This could be for any given reason. Whether it be a rural area, a new work that was just started, or even a false doctrine that split the church, or only a faithful few remain; the fact still stands that there are many groups out there that are small in number.

However, does this minor fact mean that a group of this description also bears with it little faith? Do only large groups have the strength to do the work, and little groups just don't ever make a difference? The scriptures state that the answer to both of these is "No!"

The Old Testament, while it is not our standard to follow this day and age, still holds many relative lessons for us. We read in Judges 7 the story of Gideon. Gideon had nearly 32,000 men with him to go up against the Midianites. But God first chose out 22,000 of the men to go home, after which he chose the rest and left Gideon with a total of 300 men. The Midianite and Amalekite army were described as numerous as locusts, and as the sands of the seashore (vs. 12). The numbers were stacked supremely against Gideon and his men; however, Gideon had another weapon on his side, the Lord God Almighty! Gideon's faith was not in numbers, he knew his strength was in the Lord, and that the battle would belong to the Lord. This is what indeed would happen, with Gideon being victorious over the Midianite camp. Though Gideon and his men were small and few in number, they accomplished a momentous task by not trusting in numbers, but by trusting in the Lord.

Sometimes, the attitude is, "We are just so small, what could we accomplish?" Brethren, this is the attitude of one who has forgotten who is on their side. The scripture states, "*Is anything too hard for the Lord?*" (Gen. 18:14). We must always realize that no matter what the numbers, we ARE the Lord's church in that area! There is always a work to do. Ephesians 4:11-16 states, "*And he gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature, of the fullness of Christ, that we should no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love may grow up in all things into Him who is the head -- Christ -- from whom the whole body, being*

joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." This is the recipe for a congregation to grow spiritually, after which, if each part does its share, will cause the body also to grow numerically. So instead of having the attitude of the quote from the start of this paragraph, let us brethren apply the message of Ephesians 4:11-16.

Little numbers do not mean little faith, but rather always let it mean a growing faith, that you may mature and lead others to Christ. Remember what the Lord said to Paul about his weaknesses: "*My strength is made perfect in weakness.*" (2 Corinthians 12:8-10). Paul would later conclude, "*For when I am weak, then I am made strong*" (vs. 10). Also, "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*" (Phil. 4:13). Do not carry your faith in numbers, but rather carry your faith in the Lord, that He may help you, and you become strong through Him.

Scott Vanderwood