

Back to School: Math Class

Welcome/Prayer

Introduction

Our congregation has created a five-year plan which we call our #2020 Vision. It includes some quantifiable goals such as reaching 2,020 people for Christ, increasing our average worship attendance to 2,020, doubling our involvement in discipleship and mission activities, and eliminating our church debt.

1. What are your thoughts about the #2020 Vision plans?

We want to make our lives “count” for Christ. Consider the fact that God seems to be fond of math Himself. The very first words He uttered to human beings were the following:

“Be fruitful and multiply.” (Genesis 1:28a)

Then after most of humankind was destroyed in a flood, God told Noah the same thing:

“Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth.” (Genesis 9:1 NLT)

God continued this mathematical theme in the development of His people: Israel. To Abraham, He said:

“I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore...And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed.” (Genesis 22:17-18 NLT)

Through Moses, He spoke these words:

“May the Lord, the God of your ancestors, multiply you a thousand times more and bless you as he promised!” (Deuteronomy 1:11 NLT)

2. What is the connection between God’s blessing and multiplication?

The Old Testament concern for physical multiplication took on a spiritual dimension in the New Testament. After the birth of the Church recorded in Acts, we’re told:

“In those days, the number of the disciples was multiplying...” (Acts 6:1 HCSB)

There was also a multiplicative effect taking place among individual congregations:

“Then the churches throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and were built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.” (Acts 9:31 MEV)

As a result, “The word of God grew and multiplied.” (Acts 12:24 NKJV) Or, as it is put in another translation: “God’s message continued to spread and reach people.” (Acts 12:24 NCV)

God’s desire is that none should perish, but that all should come to repentance and a knowledge of His Son. That requires for His message to be spread throughout the whole earth so that every living being is reached with the good news of salvation. The way the Lord has chosen to accomplish that task is through the mathematical operation called multiplication.

3. How does knowing God does not want anyone to perish affect your daily life?
4. What does it mean to you that you are part of the mathematical equation to “go and multiply” the believers of Christ?

It’s exactly what the Apostle Paul told his young protégé, Timothy in his 2nd Letter:

“Timothy, my dear son, be strong through the grace that God gives you in Christ Jesus. You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.” (2 Timothy 2:1-2 NLT)

5. Discuss the principle of multiplication at work here: there are four generations of believers involved. Paul → Timothy → those he teaches → others those persons teach.

Break It Down

God’s Mathematics

1) **Multiplicand- *Receiving God’s Message***

We each have a life, so the starting number is 1. You represent the multiplicand (number being multiplied).

We begin the mathematical operation by: receiving God’s message.

“You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses.” (2 Timothy 2:2a)

Before Timothy could give away God’s message, he first had to be taught it. This was the role Paul played in his life.

1. Who first taught you about the message of God’s salvation and love?

2. Discuss what that person did to present the message in a meaningful way.

Before we can get involved in the multiplicative process, we too have to be taught God's message and then receive it by faith. That learning takes place in a variety of settings: at home, in worship, in Sunday School classes, Bible studies, life groups, one-on-one interaction with believers.

3. What settings were the most effective in your learning of God's message?

God wants to use you to fill the earth with His Good News, but you can't give away something you don't have, so receive God's message (i.e. the multiplicand).

2.) The Multiplier: *Sharing God's Message with Others*

Paul goes on to tell Timothy: "Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people..."

Take what you've received, and share it with others.

This the sticking point for many, but that's because they make it harder than it is. Some of the finest education takes place far away from any formal classroom. It occurs in everyday situations – at home, at work, at leisure, through casual conversations.

1. Discuss some of the most memorable lessons you have learned outside of the classroom.

In a similar way, we are all called to share God's message with others. One of the best ways is by getting together with one or more other persons. Find another person or a few other interested parties and agree to get together weekly for an hour or so. The only curriculum needed is the Bible; read it daily, share one insight from the week with the others, and then pray for each other. Another option is to use the weekly sermon study guides. Review the message content, answer the discussion questions, and hold each other accountable to practice what has been preached.

2. What has been experience in meeting with other believers in a small group setting? Has it been positive? If so, why and how?
3. What are some obstacles that can keep people from getting together with others to share God's message?
4. What are some ways to overcome these obstacles?

So we take our life as the multiplicand, and we employ a multiplier by sharing God's message with others. If we stop there, the mathematical operation is simply additive, but if we continue the process and the others follow suit, it becomes multiplicative.

3.) The Product: *Others Telling Others about God's Message*

Paul finishes his exhortation to Timothy with these words: "...who will be able to pass them on to others." (2 Timothy 2:2c)

Those with whom we share God's message can then tell others and thus reach many more folks than we ever could alone.

It's how the gospel has spread to us 2000 years removed from Jesus. It all started with Twelve → 120 → 5000 → "grew and multiplied."

1. Think about other examples in history/your own life where you have seen the power of multiplication in effect.

One person alone can never fill the earth with God's message and reach the whole world for Christ, but each of us can share God's message with someone who can then share it with others.

This lesson from math class is the key to fulfilling our #2020 Vision goal of recording 2020 professions of faith in the next five years. If the task is left to one person, he'd have to lead 404 people to Christ each year (> one a day). But consider what would happen if 32 people decided right now to reach one person this year. Then next year, those 32 and their 32 converts each lead another person to Christ. If that process continues annually, by 2020, our number will have grown to 2048 (i.e. $32 + 32 + 64 + 128 + 256 + 512 + 1024$). Better yet, if this trend continued for 25 years, we'd reach over 2 billion persons for Christ! To God be the glory!

2. Think about one person in your life who does not know Christ. Commit to praying every day for that person to receive Christ.
3. Discuss with your group how you can look for ways to share God's message of salvation with that person. Discuss the obstacles that you may have to overcome.

Conclusion

Here's the formula for fulfilling our God-given purpose of being fruitful and multiplying:

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{My Life} \\ \times \text{Others' Lives} \\ \hline \text{Countless Lives for Christ} \end{array}$$

1. How will you use what you've learned in math class today?
2. Share anything you heard in the message that grabbed your attention, then pray for God's Word to continue to grow and multiply so we can reach 2020 people for Christ (if not 2 billion).

Close in prayer.