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Radical Trust | Romans 3:21-26, Genesis 21:1-7 & 22:1-24

And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."

Should we Pray for 1000?

A few questions have been asked by people about my mention of 'praying for 1000' in a few contexts, not least the AGM and my report there. The concerns have mostly been around the idea of a number goal - that this is above our pay grade, and only God is in control of how people respond to the Gospel. After all, we can plant and water, but it's God who gives the growth (1 Cor 3:7). Therefore aren't we setting ourselves up for discouragement and failure if God doesn't give growth?

What is it? First, what I mean by the number:

it's not that I would like to see a building that size, or even that I'm suggesting prayer for 1000 to attend across all our gatherings over each weekend: it is that we would pray for a growth in our ministry that we go from 600 engaged with the Gospel through us, to 1000. Just as the 600 we have currently doesn't mean 600 attending on any given week (we top out at about 400), the 1000 might mean, say, 600 attending each week.



It is that we would pray for a growth in our ministry that we go from 600 engaged with the Gospel through us, to 1000 ... it's a basis for a vision-enlarging prayer.

Notice, it's not time constrained like a KPI. It's not a goal that we might pass or fail against. Instead it's a basis for a vision-enlarging prayer, to keep us looking out and discontent with the thousands walking to hell right here in our town. We should be grateful for all the Lord has done through our church over the years, and grateful for the community he has gathered and fruit that has grown. Nonetheless, we should have an ache for the lost that makes us long to see more and more gospel growth. Growth is people, and people are numbers. 1 person is not 10 is not 100. More really is better, because hell is real and God deserves all glory.

Not only should we have an ache for the lost, but we should be optimistic, humanely speaking, of a greater harvest through us if we plan and work for it.

Why 1000? A few reasons. Yes, it's a nice, round, paradigm-challenging number, but there's more to it than that! It's actually based on census and other data, which tells us that (if Armidale is the average Australian town), 4000 people here attend church monthly. It's hard to tell, but I don't think that's the case in our town. Further, if Armidale is average, just over 12,000 people in this town

consider themselves 'Christians'. They may not come to church, but label themselves this way.

Under God, We're responsible for 'inputs', with an eye to maximum 'outputs' (disciples). We're to do it well, intensively, with prayer, stewarding the resources and opportunities God gives us to the best of our ability.

One more: 10% of the non-christian population (approx. 2700 here) say they are 'very interested or quite open' to exploring religion.

Friends, that's a lot of low-hanging evangelistic fruit! Compare those numbers to the 350 or so who gather each week with us. What a wonderful community we have! But being joyful about what we do have shouldn't leave us content to see people lost in sin. Not only should we have an ache for the lost, but we should be optimistic, humanely speaking, of a greater harvest through us if we plan and work for it.

But doesn't God take care of the numbers? Notice I said optimistic! There's no guarantee - God remains sovereign! So He 'owns' the numbers, but that doesn't mean we ignore them. Numbers are people, and we want people to be disciples. In Matthew 28, Jesus doesn't simply say, 'be faithful', he says, 'make disciples'! So in places like 2 Cor 4:15 and Acts 2:41 numbers matter and are mentioned. In 1 Cor 3 we learn that we're to be careful how we build: there's a result of our labours. So, in 2 Timothy 2:1f the good gospel worker is the focussed soldier, the hardworking farmer, the disciplined athlete.

In other words, God gives the growth but we plant and water! Under God, We're responsible for 'inputs', with an eye to maximum 'outputs' (disciples). We're to do it well, intensively, with prayer, stewarding the resources and opportunities God gives us to the best of our ability. This will mean we have a constant eye on where we're up to.

This means we should look at data like that and plan, with prayerful dependance, to reach as many as possible. God gives the growth, but does it through our planting and watering. I believe 1000 is vision expanding and challenging but actually reasonable if we plan and strategise appropriately. I hope this makes sense. Let's keep the conversation going. Would you join me in praying for 1000?



Upcoming & Notes

• **Helpers for International Students' Bonfire & BBQ 5.30-8.00pm THIS Friday Sept 1** > Come and connect with students. Free. At Matt & Kay Knights' place 10km out of town. Contact Polly Wong 0431 406 371 or polly@stpetersarmidale.org.au

• **Young Life Dinner NEXT Sat Sept 2** > St Peters Cathedral Parish Hall 6.00pm for 6.30pm. Cost \$20. Table hosts or catering help call Gillian Traise 0414 674 519 gill@ioha.com.au



• **'Family Feeds' (formerly Dinners for 8) Fri-Sun Sept 8, 9 & 10** > This is an excellent way to get to know your brothers and sisters from the wider St Marks uneChurch family a little more. It's all about spending easy time over a meal, meeting people you don't know well (or at all) and building bonds of friendship and fellowship across our church. There will be a variety of times available from the Friday evening to Sunday lunch, even Saturday morning. Please check your calendars and save the date. **Sign-up at the Connect Table Sunday Aug 27 Aug & Sunday Sept 3.** NOTE: If you'd like to be a back-up host (in case we are overwhelmed with takers), please email Kay Knights mattandkay@bigpond.com

• **'Fast Bowling for Freedom' with Henry Olonga @ Drysdale Room, Wright Centre UNE Fri 7pm Sept 15** > Come and hear Henry tell his amazing story and the role his Christian faith played in his stand. **Invites on The Connect Table.**

• **'Death: The taboo topic of our community' 2pm-4.30pm Saturday Sept 16 @ St Marks** > We'll hear from a doctor, a nurse, a socil worker and a minister. All welcome. See Jan Berkley for more or **info on The Connect Table.**



SHED MEN
Plan them from steel, as true as hardest iron.

When: **Saturday 23 September 2017**
Time: **7:30am** for 1 hour
Where: Robin Dobos'
122 Kelly Plains Road Armidale
Feature: The new shed & pocket hole
carpentry (the Kreg Jig)
RSVP: Facebook: Shed Men Armidale

• **Invite your mates! Shed Men 7.30am Saturday Sept 23** > *'Pocket Hole Carpentry (the Kreg Jig)'*. @ Robin Dobos' new shed - 122 Kellys Plains Rd. Gold coin donation. Flyers out now.

• **Confirmation with Bishop Rick Lewers October 22** > Contact Matt in the Office 6787 4015.

Family Prayer

• **Grieving** > The McClenaghan family at the passing of Luke.

• **'Tent' Wear & Repair** (2 Cor. 5) > Bill Bruce; David Meares; Owen Chapman.

• **Betrothed** > Ben Lukins & Laura Millican Dec 9. • **SunAM Prayer Ministry** > See Robert Baker.

