

## How Big Is Too Big?

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**M**any modern churches have adopted a “mega-church mentality.” In other words, bigger is better. I have also noticed a similar attitude among some brethren in the past few years. Is bigger necessarily better? How big is too big?

There are no direct statements in the Scriptures addressing the size of a congregation. This is one of the many areas where God allows human judgment to determine a proper course of action.

Some may cite the thousands in the early Jerusalem congregation in support of large churches, but that situation was both artificial and temporary. God allowed Jerusalem to be whittled down by persecution so the people would not huddle together and fail their mission (see Ac 8:1, 4; 11:19ff).

There are some practical considerations that relate to size. A church that is very small often lacks the encouragement and resources that it desperately needs. There is no virtue in being too few.

On the contrary, very large churches can lack a closeness that fosters inner strength. People get lost in the shuffle. Recognizing this, many mega-churches are now implementing programs to break up their congregations into smaller groups to solve the problems of bigness.

“Up to 60 percent of churchgoers come merely to observe. Consequently, a majority of believers never engage in personal relationships with others outside their immediate circle of friends” (*Focus on the Family*, 1/97, p 3).

Any church, regardless of the number of its members, which takes pride in its large size is too big – for its britches. If we think God **needs** size – say, to impress the lost – then we have lost sight of what truly converts sinners.

In some circumstances it may be profitable to create size by merging two smaller groups into one. Conversely, to divide a strong, healthy congregation and create two weak ones in its place is often disastrous. Some may say that such a statement is a lack of faith. I prefer to think it is facing reality.

The 1950s climate of religious fervor has waned. During that decade new churches were growing like weeds in many cities like Birmingham and Orlando. But today we are in the spiritual doldrums and the temptation is to do what the mega-churches are doing to attract a crowd.

In a sense, Hueytown is too small as long as there are still lost people in this city. It is too big if we are not family, the elders are taxed beyond their resources, or we think that “the group” will get the job done.