

A banner with a green and yellow background featuring a blurred image of a field. The text is centered and reads: DR. LAMAR E. SMITH CENTER FOR EVANGELISM & CHURCH GROWTH.

## DR. LAMAR E. SMITH CENTER FOR EVANGELISM & CHURCH GROWTH

I was in Zimbabwe, with the church where I served doing mission work at a school. Our team was at the school providing food and medical care to many orphans. At this site was a new small church served by Pastor Kenneth, a Methodist Zimbabwean pastor. Pastor Kenneth took me on a tour of his new church. The tour didn't take long, as it was a small building made of mud bricks, windows with no glass, there was an opening for a door and planks as pews on the concrete floor. While he is telling me about the new building, a crowd begins to gather. I asked him why they were gathering, thinking that a service was about to begin. He said to me, **"They have come to be blessed."**

I discovered they had seen this Methodist pastor from America come through the door, and they were coming for a blessing. So I prayed a blessing over each one and took home a greater blessing than I could ever give any of these men, women and children who sat on the wooden planks expectantly.

I believe that most people come to church **"to be blessed."** Churches that understand the human condition are typically going to grow. They understand the hurt, need, brokenness and even lost nature of so many people and that a blessing just might be the answer. They understand that Christ is at the center of that blessing. Yes, they come for other reasons too, but a blessing trumps every other reason.

The question in preparation for next Sunday and every other Sunday might be, "How are people who walk through the door this week going to be blessed?" The guest and the long-time member, the already disciple of Jesus Christ and the one who might become a disciple — the family, the children, the grieving and the searching.

When people came to Jesus, He often challenged and taught them, but He very seldom failed to bless them. He healed the sick, cast out demons, fed the hungry, forgave sins and even blessed the

children. People came to Jesus very human and very hurting, and they left blessed. He met them where they were and by His amazing example showed them where they might be. Churches that connect to people this way are almost always going to grow.

Sometimes, people come to church and they need the clergy to be a pastor, sometimes a teacher, sometimes a prophet, sometimes even a preacher, but they always hope they will be blessed as they are led to experience the very real presence of a loving God. The human condition is always in need of a blessing from God.