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Mr. Winters

Ed Task

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I've been a Network News correspondent for 15 years and my last assignment was the most exciting I've ever had. I was sent out to gather information and report on the increasingly popular Generic Churches that are spreading across our nation. Although the brass at Network canned my story before it was aired, the research I did has really changed my attitude toward churches. I used to attend back in the 70's but quit after I entered college. It all seemed so old and stuffy to me. Now, I'm involved again and very active in the programs at First Generic Church of South City. The Generic Churches began to appear in the early 90's and their purpose is to carry out the 3 prime directives given by God in the New Testament: exaltation, edification, and evangelism.

Exaltation deals with our worship of God. We only have one worship service at First Generic. It is on Sunday morning and differs greatly from traditional services. We start at 8:00 AM and the service lasts until 9:30. One of the three church Elders opens in prayer and leads several congregational songs. After this, the service is opened for "sharing". This sharing may take the form of a personal testimony, or someone may request a favorite song, or another person may feel led to praise God in prayer. It is really moving to hear one person after another praising God for His wonderful attributes. Many times I have gone to church on Sunday morning feeling down and as folks around me share their testimonies and praise, I find myself

becoming more concerned with God and less concerned with myself.

The primary purposes for the gathering of the church are to worship God and to edify the Saints. We have an extensive edification program at First Generic. After the morning Worship Service we have our Sunday Elective Classes. All new members are required to attend Orientation during this time. Orientation is a 6 month program of extensive training and application relating to church life and the Christian witness. After a new member completes Orientation, he may then choose his electives. The electives last 1 month and are taught for 3 consecutive months. At the end of the third session, the teacher becomes a student for three months. This prevents "burnout" and allows fresh ideas and people to "spice-up" the different programs.

Sunday evenings are Fellowship Nights at First Generic. We start the Sunday evening service at 6:30 and divide into three groups (depending on where we live). Each of the three Elders takes one group and presents a 30 minute Bible study to his group. The Elders are rotated between groups each month so that we can get to know all three. We assemble at 7:00 in the Fellowship Hall for coffee and "chit-chat". Around 8:00 we start family activities in the Athletic Center. First Generic offers a pool, tennis courts, 3 basketball courts, a softball field, and a supervised playground for the kids. The emphasis is on Christian fellowship between families. I've been able to get to know

many people very closely during this time on Sunday evenings.

Wednesday evenings are scheduled as Prayer time. Some of the church members meet at the church for prayer and Bible study. Others of us who live a distance from the church or who work late stay home and use "PrayerNet". All modern homes are equipped with computers and the church owns and operates a digital video communications system which we call "PrayerNet". By dialing into the church computer, I can get a listing of the prayer requests for my prayer time. I can also take extension courses for credit, use "mailbox" to send greetings to another member, and transfer my offering to the church account. Ten of us get together at my cubical on Wednesdays for prayer and we are working together on a Bible degree also. I'm taking 3 courses via "PrayerNet" which means I spend several hours per week in front of the tube. I only work four days per week like most folks these days, so I have plenty of time.

The last aspect of First Generic's outreach is evangelism. Our church supports a host of missionaries and missions training is included in our elective offerings. This year alone we've sent 10 families to mission fields. Those of us who stay at home pray and give so that these precious folks can have what they need. All of First Generic's members are expected to be involved in personal evangelism. We try to live Godly lives and take advantage of opportunities to witness to neighbors and coworkers. There are several neighborhood Bible study groups within our church

family. Five to ten of us will get together and invite our unsaved friends to study with us. We have one on Friday nights in my neighborhood and it has been well received. When I lead a person to Christ, he becomes my responsibility. I spend time "disciplining" him and take him to church with me. Our church is really growing as these unsaved friends accept Christ and become a part of the church.

Things have sure changed since the 70's. Now church really helps me walk closer to God and equips me to serve Him to the best of my abilities. The environment at First Generic is so life-related and enjoyable. I wish churches were this way when I was a teen.