

The Growth of the Church

Introduction

1. **Beginning this afternoon we will have a series of lessons on the “Growth of the Church”**
 - A. **Today we will talk about the importance of growing up and the things that we must do to help make the church strong.**
 - B. **The following lessons will be on:**
 - 1) **“The Problem of Sin In the Church”**
 - 2) **“Church Growth By Keeping the Church Pure”**
 - 3) **“Church Growth By Right Relationships”**
 - 4) **“Church Growth By Faith”**

Only WE can begin to build a strong church

Growing into Maturity

1. **Everyone can relate to babies growing into adults. As long as good solid progress is being made one is considered to be “normal” in their progression.**
 - A. **The same can be said of Christianity. As long as good solid progress is being made one is considered to be “normal” in their progression.**

Hebrews 5:13-14 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Growth

1. **One can only Grow if one learns. The church will only grow if we take what we have learned and share it with others.**

Acts 2:41 Then those who **gladly received his word were baptized**; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

Acts 2:47 praising God and **having favor with all the people**. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were **being saved**.

2. **It grew in the first century.**

- A. **We have many examples of this in the book of Acts.**

Acts 4:4; 5:14; 6:1; 6:7; 8:4-5, 12

- B. **However growth is conditional.**

2 Peter 3:18 but **grow in the grace and knowledge** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.....

1 Peter 2:2 as newborn babes, **desire the pure milk of the word**, that you may grow thereby,

- C. **The conditions of this growth must be met -- that we are desiring to be more mature as a Christian.**

- 1) **We saw this in Hebrews 5:12-14. At a time when we ought to be teachers we are still in need for someone to give us the very basics of God's Word - We should be maturing, moving on in our Christian service to God in all aspects of our life!**
- 2) **Some have been Christians for many years and still need for other Christians to teach them. There comes a time that we MUST grow and be ready, willing, and able to teach others.**

3. Church growth requires a UNITED EFFORT.

A. Jesus prayed that there be unity.

John 17:20-21 I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; **that they all may be one**, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

1) We know how close Jesus and the Father are - they are as one. Are we longing to be that unified within the Lord's church? To get there we must:

a) Be of the same mind.

1 Corinthians 1:10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be **no divisions** among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Philippians 1:27 Only let your **conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ**, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,

b) Walk by the same rule.

Philippians 3:16 Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

c) Work for peace and edify one another.

Romans 14:19 Therefore let us **pursue** the things which **make for peace** and the things **by which one may edify another**.

NOTE: Send Cards, Make phone calls of encouragement and appreciation - especially appreciation!

4. Be Steadfast.

A. Notice Acts 2:42:

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

1) In Doctrine; Fellowship; Breaking of Bread; Prayer.

- a) Can you picture any time limits on the message being proclaimed, the songs that were sung, the prayers that were being uttered?

B. Abound in God's Work. (Abound - Overflowing; Plentiful > Webster)

1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be **steadfast**, **immovable**, always **abounding** in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

5. Have faith in what we teach.

A. Paul was a clear example of this in his life.

2 Timothy 1:12 For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless **I am not ashamed**, for **I know** whom I have believed and **am persuaded** that He is able to keep what I have **committed to Him** until that Day.

B. Be grounded and settled (steadfast in the faith) **Colossians 1:21-23**

- 1) Our faith needs to be grounded in the truth so we can be concerned about **saving people**, instead of pleasing them!

Galatians 1:10 For do I now **persuade men**, **or God**? Or **do I seek to please men**? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

6. We must sacrifice.

- A. This means we must be willing to give of ourselves to the service of God, when needed and when we can.**

2 Corinthians 8:5 And not only as we had hoped, but they **first gave themselves to the Lord**, and then to us by the will of God.

Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

- B. When we have given of ourselves to God, then giving of the means that He blessed us with will be easier because we will have a willing mind.**

2 Corinthians 8:11-12 but now you also must complete the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to desire it, so there also may be a completion out of what you have. For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.

7. Uphold the light.

- A. We need to always remember that we are a light in this dark world. Paul said:**

Philippians 2:14-16

- B. Let your light SHINE!**

Matthew 5:16

Conclusion

- 1. Do we want the church here to grow and remain strong?**
- 2. If so, what are we willing to do to ensure that it does?**
 - A. Are we willing to have unity?**
 - B. Are we willing to be steadfast in the faith?**
 - C. Are we willing to believe what we teach?**
 - D. Are we willing to make sacrifices along the way?**
 - E. Are we willing to let our light shine EVERYDAY?**
 - F. Are we willing to work at making this church strong and to grow both numerically and spiritually?**
- 3. The efforts that all of us put into the church now will reap big dividends for this group and the Lord later.**
 - A. Someday we will be able to look back and say “Remember when we only had 7 and then 20 people here?”**
 - B. The key to the growth of the church is to remain united, steadfast, faithful, teaching the truth, being sacrificial, and to always let our light shine for others to see!**
 - 1) Before the church can grow – we must grow!**

