

Growing the Church

Introduction

Scripture Reading: Acts 20:17-32

1. Some ask, how can the church grow.
 - A. The answer to that question is revealed to us in the New Testament.

Different Ideas About Church Growth

1. In the denominational world primarily, it could be about gaining money, prestige, and popularity.
2. To God, the most important aspect of church growth is spiritual maturity, making more teachers to help teach others.
Hebrews 5:12-14

2 Peter 3:18 but grow in the **grace and knowledge** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

The Work of a Local Church is the Greatest Work

1. To save the lost.

1 Timothy 3:15 but if I am delayed, I write so that you **may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God**, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

A. Results in future growth.

Matthew 28:19-20 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you**; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

2 Timothy 2:1-2 You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, **commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also**.

2. Building up (edifying) the saints.

Ephesians 4:11-16

Effects of Human Wisdom on Growth

1. Appealing to the flesh.

A. Entertainment and Recreation – with little Bible teaching.

2. Sermons that lack the essentials for spiritual maturity.

A. Without a constant diet of truth, saints never mature in the faith.

3. KEY ISSUE:

A. Results in little time to develop spiritual maturity.

B. Money and time are wasted.

4. Numbers increase – but not because sinners become mature saints able to teach the lost.

New Testament Preachers Always Appealed to the Spiritual

Acts 3:6 Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

1. To the lost.

Mark 16:15-16 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."

2. To the saved.

2 Thessalonians 2:15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.

3. Human ideas are carnal.

1 Corinthians 3:1-3

4. God rejects the unfaithful.

2 Thessalonians 3:6 But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.

5. **Sometimes growth results when numbers are reduced.**
(Acts 5:1-14; 1 Corinthians 5:1-11)
 - A. **Honest people, seeking the truth, don't want to be part of a church that harbors sin.**
 - 1) **Sin tolerated in a church affects its growth.**

How Did New Testament Churches Grow?

1. **First and foremost by preaching the truth!**
John 16:13-15

Acts 2:36-38 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." Now when they heard this, **they were cut to the heart**, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

2. **The church grew, even in adversity.**
Acts 4:29-31
 - A. **When persecutions and false doctrines arise, it will not matter how many members a local church has.**
 - 1) **If they are not mature they will weaken, go into apostasy, divide, become denominational, or disperse.**

What About Today?

1. The gospel appeals to the heart, because God made both the heart and the gospel.
2. If people don't listen to the gospel it is because they have not heard it, OR have hardened their hearts.
Acts 28:24-29
3. The first problem is eliminated when mature Christians teach.
 - A. The second is solved when sinners decide to obey God.

Conclusion

1. Are we doing all we can to be mature teachers to cause the kind of growth that God wants?
Matthew 5:13-16
2. Church growth comes when Christians mature to teach the lost.

