

Back to the Basics

"And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47).

Many books have been written and seminars taught to teach various methods used in bringing about church growth.

It would be good for us to understand, we cannot cause the church to grow. We can witness, conduct evangelism, pray, fast, build a church building, but none of these will ensure that our church will grow.

Paul said, "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6-7).

Paul made it clear we are merely "labourers together" with the Lord who builds the church.

Rick Warren in his book, *The Purpose Driven Church* states, "church leaders should stop praying, 'Lord, bless what I'm doing' and start praying, 'Lord, help me do what You are blessing.'"

We cannot bring about church growth but we can learn to understand what God is doing and blessing and work accordingly.

Rick Warren advises us to ask, "What is keeping the church from growing?" Instead of, "What will make the church grow?"

God wants His church to grow. Since the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, God has been making a way for bringing lost people back into a correct relationship with Himself. The Gospel provides this. It is being presented

throughout the world, and we have the option of accepting or rejecting it.

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

In this Scripture God wants everyone to repent instead of perish. This was the reason why Jesus came to earth, was tempted, died on the cross, resurrected, and has ascended. This is understood in John 3:16-18.

Jesus made His purpose of being on the earth clear when He said "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). Jesus loves the church and gave His life for it.

We have established three truths so far:

1. First, we cannot bring about church growth.
2. Secondly, God causes the church to grow.
3. Third, He wants the church to grow.

We cannot put our confidence in man made methods. Paul said our confidence should be in God (2 Corinthians 3:4-5). He warned against using excellency of speech and wisdom. He claimed this would be enticing people. Instead he proclaimed we should be "declaring the testimony of God" (1 Corinthians 2:1). This is the reason why he wanted to know Jesus Christ instead of any other thing and operated in the power and demonstration of the Spirit.

Methods change but principles do not. Methods can change according to culture, location, circumstances, and time. Warren Wiersbe said, "Methods are many, principles are few; Methods always change, principles never do."

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Principles will apply to all people, everywhere, in all situations, and throughout time. There is danger in copying the approach of other churches and men.

We should look for principles that do not change and will be effective. It is time to go back to the basics. We like to compare ourselves with other churches.

We measure our revival against no revival in another church. We copy methods hoping to reproduce the same results. Some even copy the styles of other preachers and singers. We compare our success or lack of it with others.

Paul warns us in 2 Corinthians 10:12, "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves; but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."

There is no better place to study church growth than the Book of Acts. Here we find the acts of the church, and the God who made it grow. The Lord was the one who added to the church.

Following the New Testament pattern and principles will produce New Testament churches. We need churches that are patterned after the New Testament example. New Testament preaching will also produce New Testament results.

The best way to study church growth is to go back to the basics of the Word of God. It would be best for us to measure ourselves against the Word of God, the only measurement of truth. We should measure our church with the church established in the Word.

Jeremiah wrote, "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths,

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where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jeremiah 6:16).

Study Questions

1. Who causes the church to grow? _____

2. How should we pray when it comes to church growth? _____

3. How do we know that God wants His church to grow? _____

4. What are the differences between methods and principles? _____

5. What was the purpose of Jesus Christ on the earth? _____

6. What book of the Bible gives the best study of church growth? Why? _____

7. Following the New Testament pattern and principles will produce what? _____

8. How can we measure church growth and the progress of the church? _____