

An Introduction to Church Growth

By James G. Poitras



...And the Lord added to the church daily....

Acts 2:47

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Introduction To Church Growth

Excerpt from *God's Plan for the Church – Growth* by Michael Hamilton:

Donald McGavran, a missionary to India in the early 1930s, discovered a growth principle that was to have great impact on all future church growth evangelism. He called it finding the bridges of God. The premise is that churches grow faster as they reach out to people with whom members already have contact in their existing social network.

A “bridge” to folks who otherwise would have been reachable. The “bridges of God” principle is a New Testament principle. Andrew, after meeting Jesus, went to get his brother, so he too could experience a life change others also followed this New Testament pattern.

We are living in a time of mistrust. People are cautious about giving of themselves to anyone or anything. We must find common ground in reaching people. Bridges described here may arise from a work experience, a common need, or an achievement. Family ties, social structure, or educational background may help build the bridge. Churches and individuals are making this principle work. We must find the bridge to those in our area of ministry.

We must Develop a Church Growth Consciousness

This, simply stated, means determining in our own hearts that it is God's will for the church to grow, and applying our efforts and planning to encourage that growth. As we develop a concern for church growth, we will see the need to apply our energies to winning the lost and helping the believer mature.

The individual with “church growth eyes” can look at his ministry area and see needs. He can also see ways of meeting and fulfilling those needs. One healthy sign of a church with “church growth eyes” is that it continually looks for new outreach ministries.

There are different kinds of church growth.

Internal Growth

This can be described as the growth of the body of believers – church health.

Expansion Growth

This is the growth of the church by reaching lost persons. Basically this is the planting of new churches.

Bridging Growth

This is establishing new churches in significantly different cultural and geographical areas.

Defining Church Growth

Origin of the Term “Church Growth.”

According to Peter Wagner of Fuller Theological Seminary, church growth was first introduced in the United States by Donald McGavran in 1972.

McGavran was a third-generation missionary who spent 30 years preaching on the mission field of India. He noted that some methods common to the traditional church in the United States did not work in foreign lands. He stated that while serving as a missionary on foreign soil, he became aware of God's great plan for the Church. That plan was to not only reach the lost, but also make disciples.

During his years on the mission field, McGavran developed certain concepts and strategies that worked. Looking for a term to describe what he was talking about, he came up with two words that describe what he was talking about, he came up with two words that are familiar to all churchmen: church and growth. This new term, church growth, then meant to reach the lost and disciple them. In McGavran's opinion, this is our commission today. McGavran and others soon discovered that the reaching-discipling adventure was not just for the foreign field, but was also a workable plan for American churches.

I visited with Dr. Melvin Hodges, former assemblies of God missionary to Latin America and a close friend to Donald McGavran. According to Dr. Hodges: “Church growth is the conscious effort to establish the church and the extension of the church through evangelism and teaching.”

He further stated that every church should grow in two phases: first, the witness of its members; and second, an organizational structure for growth

Designing Church Structure for Growth

Concerning organizational structure, Dr. Hodges stated the following: “Most church

structure is designed for maintenance. All organization must be designed for growth.”

Understanding Today’s Opportunities

The Church is a hospital that ministers to human needs. One of the most beautiful and tragic scenes painted in the Bible is found in John 5. John tells of the man lying by the pool of Bethesda. According to the Bible, the man had been ill for 38 years. At certain seasons, an angel came to stir the water and whoever got into the pool first received healing. Can you imagine the competition as folks struggled for position? Just to be first into the water!

One day Jesus came on the scene and inquired of the man about his condition. Verses 7-9 tell us: Jesus became the Man on the scene to bring life back to this pitiful man. The Church is a healing station today. I am convinced that the local church is a hospital whose purpose is to touch, heal, and change lives.

The Church Is Reaching Out Through Individual Witnessing

The concept of “people webs” – touching those people with whom we have established credibility – is a proven method of evangelism.

Friends are sharing their faith with friends and others. Personal evangelism (one-on-one contact) is still the greatest outreach tool of the Church today.

The Growing Church and Christian Education

If it is true that adults are flocking back to the classroom, Christian education is a great growth opportunity today.

The following is taken from *Your Church Can Grow: Seven Vital Signs of a Healthy Church* by C. Peter Wagner:

What Is Church Growth All About?

BIBLICAL ROOTS OF CHURCH GROWTH

“For the son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost,” The Lord is longsuffering, Peter adds, “not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

“Where are you?” (Genesis 3:9). Ever since then, He has actively been seeking people separated from Him by sin. (John 3:16)

The provision God has made for bringing lost people to Himself is the gospel preached to every creature. The difference between those

who perish and those who are saved is their response to the gospel. God has not chosen to make the gospel known all by Himself.

We human beings have a tremendously important responsibility in the execution of God’s plan for the world. The disciples waited and prayed. But once they were endued, they didn’t wait anymore. They exploded into action on the day of Pentecost, and church growth began right then and there.

Lesson 1 - Bound To Grow

All other notes by James G. Poitras

(Acts 12:24).

Joyful Way Inc. is a youth ministry with emphasis on music and missions. They recently hosted a concert celebrating thirty years of ministry in Ghana, West Africa. Close to the end of the performance a young man gave a ten-minute presentation of the ministry's history. Throughout his narration from past to present he repetitively said, "A seed sown in good soil is bound to grow!"

The Baby Church

Acts records the explosive birth of the church, its steps from its base in Jerusalem to the uttermost parts of the world. This account of the church's first thirty years details its growing pains, setbacks, victories, and progress. The baby church was destined to be a powerful force in its world. Why? "A seed sown in good soil is bound to grow!"

C. Peter Wagner in *Your Church Can Grow* has conducted a study on church growth in the Book of Acts. What happened when the seed was sown in good soil?

Peter spread the seed through preaching the Word. He concluded his message by instructing his listeners, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41).

It was evident that, "The Lord was working with them, confirming His Word" (See Mark 16:20).

Eyes Fixed on Destination

A destination can be reached by a continuing to walk in the right direction. The early church determined to please their Lord, win souls for His kingdom, and to reach heaven.

Those converted continued in:

-  Apostle's doctrine
-  Fellowship (membership, participation)
-  Prayer
-  Unity

-  Praises and worship
-  Giving
-  Evangelism (Acts 2:42-47).

All of these components are essential and evident in growing, local churches. A church (or an individual) cannot emphasize two or three of these and remain healthy and progressive.

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

The Baby Walks

The baby was taking its first steps. A miracle at the Beautiful Gate caused jealousy among the Jewish leaders. They threw the two preachers into prison but the seed planted in good soil was bound to grow.

"But many of the people who heard their message believed it, so that the number of believers totaled about five thousand men, not counting women and children" (Acts 4:4, *NLT*).

C. Peter Wagner surmises that there were at least five thousand women that also believed. If we estimated that each man and woman had one child that would mean that there were about 15,000 believers at that point.

Growing Pains

The preachers were slapped around, threatened not to preach, teach, or use the name of Jesus. They responded in prayer. God heard and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Leadership problems developed. The church was growing so big that the widows could not be ministered to properly.

The apostles had to make a decision. Should we wait on tables? Should we prioritize to enhance greater growth?

Their decision: We will continue to sow the seed of God's Word. A seed sown in good soil is bound to grow.

"But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4).

The results: "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7).

Did you notice? The church growth in Acts started with addition but now it has moved to multiplication.

Wagner estimates that the original 120 have now grown to up to 25,000 people and fertile fields of Samaria and beyond have not been reached.

The Running Church

Persecution stormed in and the disciples were scattered everywhere sowing the seed of the Word. (See Acts 8:4.)

Philip the evangelist stepped on the scene and preached the gospel in traditionally despised Samaria.

“But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12).

Grandchildren Arrive

Next, the church extended to the Gentiles. It began at Antioch the first place believers were called “Christians” and it has been spreading ever since (Acts 11:26).

“And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord” (Acts 11:21).

Paul and his friends were involved in three missionary journeys throughout the later portion of the Book of Acts and birthed the global missions movement.

“And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe” (Acts 21:20).

The story of church growth in Acts ends with this testimony.

“Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him” (Acts 28:31).

An Analysis of Church Growth in Acts

The seed (Word of God, gospel, doctrine of the kingdom) planted in fertile soil (hearts of men) caused the young church to grow. It grew as grain grows – seedling, stalk, and the full ear.

“But the word of God grew and multiplied” (Acts 12:24).

How did the Word of God grow? It did not grow in size – a bigger and better Bible. It took

root in ready soil and increased in its influence and control over the lives of believers. The Word grew and multiplied through being sown, and an ever-increasing number of people accepted the truth. That is multiplication.

God’s Word produces fruit.

“The rain and snow come down from the heavens and stay on the ground to water the earth. They cause the grain to grow, producing seed for the farmer and bread for the hungry. It is the same with my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it” (Isaiah 55:10-11, *NLT*).

Stages of Church Growth

“For the soil made the seeds grow. First a leaf-blade pushed through, and later the wheat-heads formed and finally the grain ripened” (Mark 4:28, *TLB*).

The growth of the church (and of the Christian life) can be summarized in four stages.

1. **Prepared Soil and Seed:** (Church planting precedes church growth. The seed must be planted before it can grow.) Good soil is bound to produce when it receives the seed. In its time the combination of the seed and soil will produce. Growth is gradual (first the blade, then the stalk, and the full ear). We cannot make the seed grow but God can. Sow the seed in good ground. It is bound to grow! God will do His work.

2. **Blade:** The beginning is small. The green, feeble tender seedling pokes its way through the soil. It needs special care – watering, and protection from the winds and rain.

3. **Stalk:** It begins to grow tall and strong.

4. **Full Ear:** It ripens and the appropriate fruit is produced. Good fruit proves that there is in its origin good seed and good soil.

What happened when “Isaac sowed in that land” (Genesis 26:12)?

“That year Isaac’s crops were tremendous! He harvested a hundred times more grain than he planted, for the LORD blessed him” (Genesis 26:12).

Like Isaac we can reach our maximum potential and reap our greatest harvest when we sow in a fertile land. A seed planted in good soil is bound to grow!

Study Questions

1. What did the young man (in the Joyful Way Inc. Concert) repeatedly say?

2. What were the concluding remarks that Peter used in his Acts 2 message?

3. What was the response from those listening to Peter's message?

4. What did the believers continue doing in Acts 2:42-47?

5. How many men were in the church according to Acts 4:4?

6. This number did not include whom?

7. What estimate did C. Peter Wagner give concerning the church population at this point?

8. What decision did the Apostles make when faced with the problem over feeding the widows?

9. What impact did this have on the size of the church?

10. C. Peter Wagner estimated the church increased to what size (Acts 6:7)?

11. What effect did persecution have on the early church?

12. "But the word of God grew and multiplied" (Acts 12:24). How did the word of God grow?

13. What are four stages of church growth (as compared to Mark 4:28)?

14. What is the "seed" and "soil" that caused the young church to grow?

15. According to Isaiah 55:11, what does God's Word always produce?

Lesson 2 - Signs Of A Healthy Church

(Acts 2:42)

The Church is NOT just an organization like any other one you might find in the world. It is a LIVING ORGANISM. The church is a living body established in Acts 2. The term Pentecostal is not just another denomination, it is a way of life. Jesus came to give us a more abundant life; an overflowing life. Jesus said, "...Upon this rock I will build my church..." (Matthew 16:18) The word "church" comes from the Greek word, "ecclesia" which means "called out ones." The church is people.



In our studies we will establish that only God can cause the church to grow. Every living thing is designed to grow. Growth is a normal result of life. If living things do not grow, they are not healthy.

In this lesson we will look at signs of a healthy, growing church. These signs will be given in more detail later. We will also make a comparison between these ten signs of a healthy church and our physical bodies. When a child is born the parents usually look for signs to verify that their baby is healthy. This is also done in the spiritual realm.

1. **Emphasis must be on the salvation experience.**

- ⇒ Acts 2:37-38
- ⇒ Acts 20:20-21

New Testament preaching will produce New Testament results.

Just as we have children the Lord also wants us to produce spiritual babies. The only way this can happen is when the church puts the emphasis on the salvation of souls. In order for there to be growth there must be the planting of the seed. When we look at John 3:5 and Acts 2:38 we see that we must be born of water (baptism in Jesus name) and born of the Spirit (baptism of the Holy Spirit).

2. **Commitment to the Word of God as the final authority in doctrine and life.**

- ⇒ Acts 2:42
- ⇒ Acts 6:4
- ⇒ Acts 15:13-16

When the Word of God is preached and obeyed, the natural response is growth (Acts 6:7). Acts 15:13,16 confirms that a healthy church will be supported by the Word of God.

3. **Regular Study and Reading of God's Word.**

- ⇒ Acts 2:42
- ⇒ 2 Timothy 2:15
- ⇒ 2 Timothy 3:16-17

If a child wants to grow he/she must eat. We too must eat the Bread of Life which is the Word of God (which is Jesus Christ Himself) (John 6:48; John 1:1; John 14:6). God does not want the church to remain on milk but to regularly study (eat the meat) and grow (Hebrews 5:12-14).

4. **Effective Spiritual Leadership.**

- ⇒ Acts 4:13

5. **Practical Holiness.**

- ⇒ 1Thessalonians 3:12-13
- ⇒ I Thessalonians 4:7-8
- ⇒ I Timothy 2:8-10

6. **Mobilized membership for evangelism.**

- ⇒ Acts 1:8
- ⇒ Acts 8:4
- ⇒ Acts 11:19-21

Growth requires movement! How does one grow physically? By eating and exercising. Once we have digested the Word of God into our hearts and minds, then we need to exercise the Kingdom Power!

7. **Fellowship, love, unity, and sharing among members.**

- ⇒ Acts 2:42-45
- ⇒ Acts 4:34-35

8. **Prayer**

- ⇒ Acts 2:42
- ⇒ Acts 4:24
- ⇒ Acts 4:31
- ⇒ Acts 12:5-11

In Acts 12 we see that Peter was in prison and the church prayed. A praying church is a powerful church.

9. **Infilling of the Holy Spirit, and power for service.**

- ⇒ Acts 4:31-33

10. Endurance in Persecution.

- ⇒ Acts 5:27-31, 41, 42
- ⇒ Acts 14:21-23
- ⇒ James 1:12
- ⇒ 2 Timothy 2:3
- ⇒ Matthew 24:13

A sign at a Barber Shop stated, "Everything that grows, changes." While this sign was talking about men's hair turning white, and also falling out, the same principle applies to the church.

A growing church goes through many changes. As a leader we must identify these changes and also grow with them.

Study Questions

1. Locate the Scripture that says, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation."

2. What is meant by "ecclesia"?

3. What is the natural response when the Word of God is preached and obeyed?

4. In order to produce spiritual babies our emphasis in the church must be on what?

5. The term "Pentecostal" does not only refer to a denomination but what? _____

6. A praying church is a _____ church (Fill in the blank).

7. List the "Signs of a Healthy Church."

Lesson 3 - A Quick Overview Of Church Growth In The Book Of Acts

(Acts 2:47)

A CHURCH IS BORN

Acts 2 records the beginning of the church. The Holy Ghost was poured on about 120 people. Peter stood and preached and the result of his preaching yielded 3000.

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.” (Acts 2:41)

They made a commitment to continue in the Apostle’s doctrine. They preached the same message that Peter preached. They continued in the doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayers, shared what they had, continued in the temple and from house to house, praised God, and had favor with the people. Because of these elements many wonders and signs were done by the apostles (verse 43). As a result, “the Lord added to the church DAILY such as should be saved.” (Acts 2:47)

Healing, Jail Sentence, Brings Growth

The lame man is healed, and as a reward the men of God get thrown into jail. With the pastor in jail, surely church growth will stop. “Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.” (Acts 4:4)

You will quickly note that they heard the Word. One reason for the lack of growth in churches today is that people are not hearing the Word. Our churches must be Word churches; churches where the Word of God is preached in power and without fear. In Ghana, West Africa, the Ghana Evangelism Committee reported that in their Church Survey they found that only 11% of the Nation’s population attends church on Sunday. Surprisingly, more than 60% of the Nation claim to be members of a Christian Church.

Why is there such a big gap between Christian profession and practice?

The survey revealed that some of the reasons for their failure to attend church include:

- Worship is not scriptural in principle.

- Ministry content is not Biblical, balanced or life related.
- Gospel of repentance, and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord is not preached.
- Evangelism - no genuine concern for the lost or continuous effort to reach others for Christ.
- Pastoral leader - dictatorial, lacking spiritual vision and life, moral, integrity, and pastoral gifts.
- Over emphasis on money.
- Terms of discipleship not spelled out.
- Lack of instruction for converts - no personal shepherding or special classes.
- Ministry scope - no provision for children and youth. (National Church Survey: Ghana Evangelism Committee).

In Acts 4:4 we also note that only men were mentioned. Perhaps the women would account for another 5000, and each couple may have had one child so that is another 5000. You can estimate that the church grew to 15,000.

People, Problems, More People

The Apostles were delivered out of prison with a commitment to obey God rather than men. Acts 5 reveals that fear came upon the church, and the Apostles did many signs and wonders (Acts 5:11-12).

“And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.” (Acts 5:14)

Chapter six of Acts opens with tremendous growth in the church and a lack of personnel to handle the growth. The problem was settled. Deacons did what they were supposed to do. Pastors did what they were supposed to do. God did what He was supposed to do.

“And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” (Acts 6:7)

The disciples started off by being added but as the Word of God spread they began multiplying. It is God’s will to add and multiply the church. It is Satan’s plan to bring subtraction and division.

The original 120 may very well now number 25,000.

Missionaries: the Gospel Carriers are Sent Out

With a vision for the future, missionaries were sent out and the churches began to multiply over the known world.

“And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe...” (Acts 21:20)

The Apostles lived and died for CHURCH GROWTH. They were men that turned their world upside down. They shocked the world because they had been termed as “ignorant and unlearned men.”

They followed the teachings of Jesus who died on the cross of Calvary for CHURCH GROWTH.

We have the same Spirit and a challenge of reaching a much larger world. Like David, when he faced the possibility of fighting the giant Goliath, we must also proclaim, “Is there not a cause!” (1 Samuel 17:29)

Study Questions

1. What does Acts 2 record? _____

2. How many were converted as a result of Peter preaching? _____
3. What happened when they gladly received the Word? _____

4. In which areas did the converts continue? _____

5. What would be a reason for lack of church growth? _____
6. What are some reasons for low church attendance in the nation of Ghana? _____

7. What did Jesus and the Apostles live and die for? _____
8. Disciples started off being added but then began to what? _____
9. Why did the early church shock the world with their church growth? _____

Lesson 4 - Back To The Basics

(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, first of all, that we as people 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 very clear that we are merely "labourers together" with the Lord who builds the church.

Rick Warren in his book, *The Purpose Driven Church* states that "church leaders should stop praying, 'Lord, bless what I'm doing' and start praying, 'Lord, help me to 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 my church from growing?" Instead of, "What will make our 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 it 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 we understand that God wants everyone to repent instead of perish. This was the reason why He came to earth, was tempted, died on the cross, resurrected, and has ascended. This is well understood in John 3:16-18.

Jesus made his purpose of being on the earth very 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 in this lesson. First, we cannot bring about church growth. Secondly, God causes the church to grow. Third, He wants the church to grow.

We cannot put our confidence in methods that have been made by men. Paul said our confidence should be in God (2 Corinthians 3:4-5). He warned against using excellency of speech and wisdom. He claimed that this would be enticing people. Instead he proclaimed that 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 change. Methods can change according to culture, location, circumstances, and time.

**"Methods are many,
principles are few;
Methods always change,
principles never do."
Warren Wiersbe**

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

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

We begin to measure ourselves against 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 begin to 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 the growth of the church than the Book of Acts. Here we find the acts of the church, and the God that made it grow. We can clearly see in Acts that the Lord was the one that 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, 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? _____

**Lesson 5 - Keep Sowing
Until Church Growth Happens**

(Acts 2:42, 47)

A story is told by T. C. Hamlet concerning two frogs. You have the same choice as they had. You can either give up or continue in steadfast perseverance until God moves in your situation.

Two frogs fell into a can of cream.
Or so I've heard it told:
The sides of the can were shiny and steep,
And the cream was deep and cold.
"O, what's the use?" croaked Number One,
"Tis fate; no help's around.
Good-bye, my friend! Good-bye, sad world!"
And weeping still he drowned.
But Number 2, of sterner stuff
Dog-paddled in surprise.
The while he wiped his creamy face,
And dried his creamy eyes.
"I'll swim a while, at least," he said-
Or so I've heard he said;
"It really wouldn't help the world
If one more frog were dead."
An hour or two he kicked and swam
Not once he stopped to mutter.
But kicked and kicked and swam and kicked.
Then hopped out, via butter.
(Note: Butter is like margarine)

I am sure that each of us yearns to see our churches grow. Sometimes we feel hopeless and inadequate because we know that Church Growth cannot be produced by man. We understand that anything that has eternal value will be accomplished by God. It is only God that can breathe on a valley of dry bones and cause them to come back to life. It is only God that can cause revival, church growth, and hearts to be receptive to Him.

However, we must also realize that God wants His Church to grow. It has been said, "Children are God's way of saying that the World should go on!" The church, the called out ones, still being on the earth is God's way of saying, "The Church will go on!"

In Matthew 24 we see signs that precede the Second Coming of Christ. In verse 12 it reads, "...the love of many shall wax cold."

We can't quit now. We can't retreat now. We must march forward because this is a forward

moving Church. We will not stop loving Him; serving Him; worshipping Him; trusting Him; witnessing for Him; praying to Him; living for Him NOW.

We've come too far to quit now!

1. Would the walls of Jericho have come down if Israel had stopped walking after six days?
2. Would Naaman have been healed of leprosy if he had stopped dipping in the Jordan river after six times?
3. Would the New Testament Church have grown continually if the Apostles and believers had stopped sowing the Word (seed)?

Some predict that in the last days there will be a great falling away. In my opinion we saw a great falling away through the Council of Nicea, the falling away from the early Church; and have passed through the Reformation; and we are presently in the latter reign of revival and outpouring of the Spirit as Joel prophesied in Joel 2:28-29.

Matthew 24:13-14 "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

Note: Endure: "...The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong..." (Ecclesiastes 9:11); but the race is won by the one who runs with patience. (Hebrews 12: 1-2)

Have you ever wondered what you are doing on the earth that you cannot do in heaven? Praying, singing, worshipping, fellowshiping, listening to the voice of God, etc. can all be done in Heaven. However, SIN and WITNESSING will not be done in Heaven. Which one are you continuing to do on this earth?

We are also sure that God wants His Church to grow because He is the God of the Full House. Some say that God is concerned with the quality of our members rather than the quantity. Surely God is interested in both; a glorious church without spot or wrinkle and a great host of men and women who serve Him. After all, before He left for Heaven, he proclaimed, "In my Father's house are MANY mansions..." (John 14:2) He also came because of His love for the world (John 3:16).

In Luke 14 Jesus tells us a convincing story of His desire for our churches to be full and for us to experience Church Growth. A man had prepared a great feast and invited MANY. The servant was sent with a message, "Come, for all things are NOW ready." (verse 17) Those invited gave foolish excuses and refused to come. When the servant informed the Master, he sent him out QUICKLY and told him to bring the poor, the blind, the halt, and the withered. The servant brought those but there was still room for more. The master sent the servant out once again. Why was the master so insistent on sending his servant out again? "Compel them to come in, THAT MY HOUSE MAY BE FILLED." (verse 23)

Jesus has prepared a great feast for us; all things are now ready; and He is compelling all to come in so that His house (the church) will be filled. Jesus declared, "upon this rock I WILL build my Church." (Matthew 16:18)

In 1 Corinthians 3:6 Paul reveals the partnership role we have with God when it comes to Church Growth. "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase."

The Psalmist said in Psalm 126:5-6 "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. (This is the law of the Harvest, sow, then reap) He that GOETH FORTH (you must GO if you expect results) and WEEPETH, (denotes a burden) BEARING PRECIOUS SEED (the Word of God), shall DOUBTLESS (for sure; without a doubt; it's a promise) come again with rejoicing, BRINGING HIS SHEAVES (you will have Church Growth) with him."

So we must continue doing our part and our great Partner will do His part. At times the road is rough and there are many setbacks but we must press on toward the mark (Philippians 3:14). As the song goes, "Onward Christian Soldiers" The writer of Galatians 6:7,9 advised, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

It has been said, "Quitters never win; winners never quit." It's always too soon to QUIT! "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small." (Proverbs 24:10) Also read Isaiah 40: 29, 31.

The songwriter wrote:

"He didn't bring us this far just to leave us.

He didn't teach us to swim, to let us drown.
He didn't build his home in us just to move away. He didn't pick us up, to let us down."

DON'T QUIT

When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,
When the road you are trudging on seems all uphill,
When the funds are low and the debts are high,
And you want to smile but you have to sigh,
When care is pressing you down a bit,
Rest if you must - but don't you quit.
Life is queer with it's twists and turns,
As every one of us sometimes learns,
And many a failure turns about
When he might have won had he stuck it out;
Don't give up though the pace seems slow
You might succeed with another blow.
Success is failure turned inside out,
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt.
And you can never tell how close you are,
It may be near when it seems so far.
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit,
It's when things seem worse
Then you must NOT QUIT.

We must do what the early church did: They continued!

Ecclesiastes 11:1, 4-6 is a most encouraging Scripture when it comes to sowing until Church Growth happens!

"Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds you plant." (Robert Louis Stevenson)

Study Questions

1. Who can cause the church to grow?

2. Who wants your church to grow more than anyone else? _____

3. What lesson can we learn from the story of the two frogs? _____

4. Where do we find a prophecy of a revival in the last days? _____

5. Is God interested in quality or quantity? Explain! _____

6. What do we learn from the story found in Luke 14? _____

7. What does 1 Corinthians 3:6 reveal?

8. In one word describe what the early church did. They _____

9. For what reason has the Lord allowed us to remain on the earth? _____

10. What is a most encouraging Scripture when it comes to Church Growth? _____

**Lesson 6 - Deacons In Today's Church;
Assistants In Church Growth**

(Acts 6:3)

Deacons (local church leaders) in the church can be very instrumental and helpful in relieving the pastor of the many responsibilities of running a church. They can also be useful in assisting with the establishment and oversight of preaching points and churches.

God has a plan for the Deacons in Today's Church and you must know what is required of you. As with any job you need a Job Description. The first Deacons had to demonstrate that they lived continuously under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and as a Christian.

According to *Willmington's Guide to the Bible* the Job Description for Deacons is as follows:

- They must be MEN.
- They must be SAVED.
- They must be REPUTABLE.
- They must be SPIRITUAL.
- They must possess WISDOM.

Deacons must have the spirit and anointing along with the pastors. Anyone who has responsibility in the House of God must move in the Spirit.

When you look in Acts 6 you will notice that Deacons existed because of Church Growth. The Church had grown so rapidly that there was a shortage of people available to perform the necessary leadership tasks. Instead of pastors praying and preaching they were performing other functions. The church had grown to the point that there were so many needs; both spiritual and material. Because of the growth of the Church the Deacons were called upon to share the WORK LOAD. They assisted the pastor. These men were chosen by the people and were to be full of the Holy Ghost, honest, and have a good report.

The Deacons were to love the truth and love God. They were people in the church that could be trusted. They knew their place and did not try to overstep their place or run the spiritual affairs of the church. They existed to HELP, be a blessing, be trustworthy, and to do good things for the Church. Deacons must love souls more than position and seek God for souls to come into the Kingdom. If Deacons

will seek God then something will happen to them. They won't be ordinary saints anymore. Deacons need to be used in the Spirit just like Stephen and Philip. You can become a Book of Acts man! Stephen was a Deacon; full of faith and the Holy Ghost. He had faith IN God and WITH God. He assisted in INCREASING the Church. When you do things God's way then the blessings of God will be upon the Church.

Stephen, in Acts 6:8 was full of faith and power and did great wonders and miracles. In Acts 6:10 they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke to them.

Study Questions

1. Why are Deacons necessary in the Church today? _____

2. What is the Job Description for a Deacon?

3. Who are two examples of Spiritual Deacons in Acts? _____

Lesson 7 - Turning Little Churches Into Big Churches

(Acts 6:7)

A recent postcard from the World Network of Prayer (UPCI) reads, "1996 was the most productive year in the history of our fellowship." Sister Nona Freeman, a retired veteran missionary to Africa recently wrote an article entitled, Jesus Christ-Still the Same. In this faith provoking article she states that "the Word is a time-proven irrefutable fact. Whatever God has done through the ages, He can do it again, and more, much more than our finite minds can comprehend. He can stack up waters of the sea and make a dry highway through the flooded river, confuse enemies in darkness while giving His children light, pour a mighty river out of a rock, and rain bread from heaven, deliver a mass of helpless slaves from grievous bondage, and drown their enemies with one stroke. Name the need, and He can and will do it....All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. His limitless power will do whatever we believe Him for. No exceptions. ...In our forty-one years in Africa.. we saw every miracle recorded in the Book of Acts happen in our services."

Just this last year of it was reported that we now have 1,400,000 constituents in the African Region. In one year in this region alone 73,073 were baptized in Jesus name; 103,480 received the baptism of the Holy Spirit in 6,776 churches.

In the nation of Ethiopia alone there are over one million believers in the UPCI; 56,176 were baptized in one year and 82,366 received the Holy Spirit. In this one nation there are 4,451 pastors and 4,688 churches in our denomination.

We are living in the most tremendous day in the history of the church. Like Daniel we must "set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting..." (Daniel 9:3) Like Zechariah we must "Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain..." (Zechariah 10:1) Like Hosea we must know that "it is time to seek the LORD." (Hosea 10:12) We must accept the same challenge that God gave to Jeremiah, "Call unto me and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." (Jeremiah 33:3)

C. Peter Wagner in his timely book Prayer Shield, stated that "the most massive growth of churches is found in Pentecostal/Charismatic traditions." Armed with this understanding, coupled with the statistics and verses given above, I wonder why we persist to believe that God will not give us great Church Growth. Must our churches remain small? Could it be because of our doctrine and standards of holiness that our churches are not growing? Is it really Scriptural for the church to grow?

Churches remain small because we fail to exercise faith for growth. Once we have exercised the faith, we must then exercise our works and efforts. "Faith without works is dead." (James 2:26) A leadership principle expresses it another way. "Effort In, Results Out!"

Just because we know that it is only God who can cause the church to grow does not give us an excuse to sit back and wait for church growth to happen. We must sow the seed, plant it, and then water it. It is after this EFFORT that God will give us the RESULTS. If you do not want your church to grow, it will not grow. Each time you set a goal for your church to grow, you are making a statement of faith.

One man said that there were three secrets to success. The first, WORK. The second, WORK. The third, WORK. Church growth is a lot of hard work.

Our doctrine or standards of holiness could not be considered as reasons for lack of church growth. Of course, if you are looking for an excuse, any excuse will do. People all over the world are hungry for the truth and they are searching for something that is original and life changing. The beginning of the church is found in the Book of Acts. Even organizations following the Trinitarian tradition acknowledge that the church was born in Acts 2. Our doctrine finds itself clearly in Acts 2. This doctrine was strange to the Jews that were assembled in Jerusalem for the Pentecost. Surely the church would not grow, and could not grow. Wrong. It did grow and that day 3000 were added to the church. They continued in the Apostles' doctrine. That means they continued believing and spreading what Peter had given them as doctrine.

In *Look Out! The Pentecostals Are Coming*, by C. Peter Wagner, there is an interesting review of

the United Pentecostal Church of Columbia. He writes, "Some Pentecostals won't even want me to mention this third point. But it is true that by far the fastest growing church in Columbia is the United Pentecostal Church. The United Pentecostal Church is somewhat unorthodox because it baptizes, not in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, but in the name of Jesus. Its nickname is 'Jesus only'. The United Pentecostal Church refuses to dot the i's and cross the t's of the Council of Nicea (the famous church council of 325 A. D. where the present doctrine of the trinity - three persons in one essence - was articulated and approved.) United Pentecostals, of course, don't agree. They preach salvation by the blood of Christ, and can testify of multitudes of transformed lives as signs of people being born again. They believe in the Holy Spirit, in baptism in the Spirit, and speaking in tongues. They consider themselves true Pentecostals, as their name implies. They are not Jehovah Witnesses who deny the deity of Christ. And if anyone doubts their spiritual power, they could simply point to a graph which compares their church growth to that of the next largest Pentecostal Church."

A book has been written by Dean Kelley called, Why Conservative Churches are Growing. Again, Wagner in Look Out! The Pentecostals are Coming reveals that UPCI opposes Christian involvement in organized sports, politics, labour unions, and are very strict. Women do not cut their hair, apparel must be up to the most rigid standards of modesty. Members do not attend dances, theaters of any kind, and consider television, and secular music to be worldly. The United Pentecostal Church Manual says, "We warn all of our believers to abstain from any of these practices in the interest of spiritual growth and the soon coming of the Lord for His church."

Wagner records that "It would be easy to draw the conclusion that such standards would quickly render the United Pentecostal Church irrelevant to contemporary Colombian society....It might well be, therefore, that the strictness of the United Pentecostals in Columbia is actually one of the causes of the fact that they are the largest and fastest growing church in the nation."

Study Questions

1. Comment about the growth of the church in the African nation of Ethiopia.

2. We are living in the most tremendous day in church history. What must we do to take advantage of this? _____

3. What did C. Peter Wagner say about the Pentecostal movement? _____

4. What is the leadership principle regarding "effort" used in this lesson?

5. What are three secrets to success?

6. Where is our basic fundamental doctrine found in the Bible? _____

7. Can our doctrine be a reason for a lack of church growth? Explain. _____

Lesson 8 - First United Pentecostal Church

(Acts 2:47)

The best way to learn about how to have an authentic United Pentecostal Church (or any Pentecostal Church) is to look back into history. The First United Pentecostal Church is found in the New Testament when we see the first church being established in Acts 2. Through determining New Testament principles used in planting the first church we will be better able to achieve New Testament results in this present day. We cannot cause the church to grow but we can help create the right environment where we can sow the seed and then watch that seed grow. That is what planting a church is all about. We sow the seed and then watch God make it grow. Paul confirmed this when he wrote, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase...For we are labourers together with God." (1 Corinthians 3:6, 9)

Planter's Points to Ponder

- It is God's will for the church to grow.
- Church Growth is a natural result of a healthy church.
- It can be expected just as you would expect your child to grow.
- If the church is not growing then it must be dying.
- If we want church growth then we must pay the price.
- Ministry must be Christ-centered and people-oriented.

I always like to tell visitors that they are "Welcome to the United Pentecostal Church; a church where everybody is somebody but Jesus Christ is Lord. Every time you make a step through the doors of the UPCI you have made step in the right direction."

Churches are healthiest when they give God the glory. God's Word deserves the place of highest importance in church services. We must also love people and try to meet their needs. After all, one of the purposes for having the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is to receive power to be a witness to others (Acts 1:8). As we concentrate on Church Planting and Church Growth we must continue to preach the Apostles' Doctrine. You cannot have realistic church growth without preaching the message that the Early Church preached (Acts 2:38). The preaching from the pulpit must

always be Word-centered, anointed, and also relevant and practical to the people.

There are five elements of Church Growth outlined in this lesson. In order for the church to grow, each of these principles must be operating in the church and they must be in balance. There is not one that is considered to be more important than another because each one is equally important and necessary.

1. Fellowship

The First UPC members were in unity; shared in fellowship and in breaking of bread. This is why it is very important for each member to attend church regularly. The church where fellowship is strong is a caring church because the believers demonstrate a genuine concern for each other. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much more, as ye see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10:25)

Not only did the Early Church fellowship with each other but they also had fellowship with their God through prayer. The first church was brought into existence as a result of a prayer meeting and continued to grow as a result of prayer.

Miracles began taking place in Acts 3 when they were on their way to prayer. The only prerequisite to a miracle is someone in need.

2. Discipleship

We are called to make disciples; to reproduce ourselves.

"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." (2 Timothy 2:2)

In the Great Commission Jesus Christ placed "discipleship" at the very top of the list of things needed to be done. Sometimes we write out "To Do" lists of things that we want to accomplish on any given day. Many times the church forgets about discipling and enabling their members on their list. This causes the real priority to be shifted lower on the list each day. The result is that the church lacks the needed power in transforming lives.

Elton Trueblood said, "The real test of the vitality of a religion can be seen in its impact on the culture." Are we making a difference in our culture and in our country? How can we

make a greater impact in a shorter period of time? This can be done through discipleship (training and teaching). The Early Church "ceased not to preach and teach." (Acts 5:42) and therefore "filled Jerusalem with their doctrine" (Acts 5:28)

Hosea said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." (Hosea 4:6)

If we do not teach people what is expected of them from the Bible we are rendering them "Bible Illiterates."

3. Worship

Worship and praise are so vital to church growth. In sports we realize that there is something greater about a game that is played in front of thousands of people compared to a game played in front of a few hundred people. As we gather together at church, there is an atmosphere of celebration. When we begin to celebrate our God and what He has done for us we are expressing our love for God.

"And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." (Deuteronomy 6:5)

"O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together." (Psalm 34:3)

"We worship God for who He is...(concerns His character). We praise God for what He does...(concerns His actions)" - Jack Hayford.

4. Ministry

This is expressing our love for others and meeting their needs. If you are not meeting people's needs then you are not ministering. The church ministers to different types of people (Ladies, Men, Children, Youth, Prisons, Hospitals) with different types of needs. These needs fall into the four categories that make up a man: spiritual, physical, social, and emotional.

Some churches even have cell groups where 5-12 people get together and minister to each other in a small group setting. In the Book of Acts they ministered from "house to house."

5. Evangelism

If we do not try to witness and evangelize, people will not come into the church. We cannot just expect people to walk in off the streets but we must go to where the people are. When we make an effort to evangelize we

are showing the world that we are a reaching body.

We are reaching for those outside of our church who are in need with a desire to provide hope and help.

If we are able to have all five elements operating in our churches, and give them equal attention, then we will receive the result we are looking for.

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

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." (Jeremiah 29:11)

Study Questions

1. Where is the best place to study the way that the UPCI should be? Why?

2. What are the five elements of Church Growth?

3. What is the real test of the vitality of a religion?

4. What should preaching from the pulpit be like?

5. What is the difference between our praise and worship according to Jack Hayford?

6. What was the result of the Early Church practicing "discipleship"?

7. What happens when we do not teach people what is expected from them?

8. What is the end result of incorporating the five elements of Church Growth into the church?

9. Of these five elements which one is the most important? Why?

10. How does ministry in our churches need to be?

11. The church is a "reaching body." As we reach those outside of the church what should our desire be?

12. What are you going to do to assist your local church in the five elements given?

Lesson 9 - Neighborhood Evangelism Centers

(Acts 5:42; 20:20)

Church Born At Home

Have you ever considered where the Holy Ghost was poured out on the Day of Pentecost? It was an "upper room." *"And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room..." (Acts 1:13)* This was a room traditionally set aside by rich people to entertain their visitors. The Holy Ghost was not poured out in the temple or chapel but in someone's home. With three thousand added to the church on the first day, where do you think they continued to worship? They continued in fellowship both in the temple, on Solomon's porch, and in their houses. After all Jesus had promised:

How Big is a Church?

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20)

When the Gentiles started coming into the church they were not even able to go to the Jewish temple. That was okay because they knew that the building is not the church. People are the church. We can't hide behind the four walls of our churches but we must get out to where the people are. We must carry out the Great Commission. Telling people to "come to our church and grow with us" does not do this. Rather we must "Go."

Reinhard Bonnke wrote an article entitled, *Observance of the Apostolic Ministry*. In it he states, "the apostolic ministry can be summed up in one word: 'Go!' Our task is no smaller than that of the first apostles nor is it any different. Indeed, we can be sure of one thing: If we go as they went we shall get what they got. The task remains unchanged, and neither has God changed in the slightest degree. God will do for us what He did for the apostles if we do for God what the apostles did, because God never changes."

We have the apostolic message of salvation contained in Acts 2:38, but many times we don't use the apostolic methods of spreading the gospel. What would happen if we started to do what the Apostles did? How did they go about evangelizing the known world? They did it from house to house.

Houses in the New Testament were a place where people could gather to hear the Word, pray, and have fellowship. The church existed for three hundred years without a building, yet they filled Jerusalem with their doctrine and turned the world upside down.

"And DAILY in the TEMPLE and in EVERY HOUSE, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." (Acts 5:42)

If this was the Apostolic plan, why is it that we only meet in church buildings on certain days of the week? Why is it that we now feel that we must have a church building before we can have a church? We that live our lives according to the Bible, need to let the Bible methods become our model, pattern, and way of life.

Anthony Tamel reports that when people were asked, "What or who was responsible for your coming to Christ or church?" that the people responded with the following percentages:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------|
| 1. A special need | 1% |
| 2. Walked in to the church | 2-3% |
| 3. Pastor | 1-2% |
| 4. Visitation | 1-2% |
| 5. Sunday School | 4-5% |
| 6. Evangelistic Crusade | .05% |
| 7. Church Programs | 2-3% |
| 8. A Friend or Relative | 75-90% |

(Note: Much of Anthony Tamel's materials on the Cell Ministry were studied in preparation for this lesson. He has an excellent cell ministry in his local church and travels around the world promoting this vital ministry.)

From the above list we can see that 75 to 90 per cent of all people coming to Christ or coming to church have come because of a friend or a relative.

People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care!

With house to house evangelism and cell groups we can take the gospel to where the people are and provide more points of entry (soul saving stations) into the Kingdom of God. Houses can become evangelism centers. Home churches provide for a dynamic neighborhood evangelism method. Here we can penetrate Satan's kingdom and bring the light of the gospel into the darkness. Cell groups would cause us to always be looking at meeting the needs of people and reaching out. Through this method you can share Christ

with a lost world. In many countries people are not motivated to pay high transport costs to attend churches. They tend to go to the church that is nearest to them; the community church. With the cell church people will not have to travel but they can come to a "neighborhood evangelism center." People are more apt to open up and share their lives with small groups of people they count as their friends. After all, the church is the new extended family of the newly converted believer. The cell church is like an extension cord. When plugged into the power source (mother church) it can be extended to a far distance.

Deacons have been described as men who are responsible for the hands-on ministry of the church. Some pastors require their deacons to plant a new church in order to maintain being a deacon. Deacons and local church leaders can be used in establishing neighborhood evangelism centers.

The Key To Growth - Multiplication

Addition is something that we learned when we were small children. The next step in mathematical learning is multiplication. In church life, few believers or churches go beyond addition to multiplication.

"But the word of God grew and multiplied." (Acts 12:24)

"And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly..." (Acts 6:7)

God has promised us a great outpouring in the last days and the small church buildings that we now have will not be able to hold the outpouring that God wants to send to us. It is not time for us to think in terms of adding to the church but rather in terms of multiplication.

James Rutz said that, "the heart of the traditional church is the Sunday service." We go to church on Sunday morning as a spectator and we leave and forget about church until the next Sunday morning. The traditional church does not provide appropriate care for its entire people; doesn't build people in their own ministry; and does not do a lot to provide fellowship. It has been often said, "home is where your heart is." This is a good reason why the gospel should be taken into the homes, where the hearts of the people are.

A home is a more personal or private place to meet than a church building. Like Cornelius in Acts 10 we can invite our friends and relatives and they can hear the words of salvation and church growth can take place.

"Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning." (Acts 11:14-15)

"And on the morrow after they had entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends." (Acts 10:24)

Look at some other Scriptures that point to cell groups, house to house evangelism, and small groups as being a Biblical method of evangelism.

Neighborhood Evangelism Centers in Acts and the Epistles

- ★ "Like wise greet the church that is in their HOUSE." (Romans 16:5)
- ★ "The churches of Asia salute you. Aquilla and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their HOUSE." (1 Corinthians 16:19)
- ★ "Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his HOUSE." (Colossians 4:15)
- ★ "And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in thy HOUSE." (Philemon 1:2)
- ★ "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy HOUSE." (Acts 16:31)
- ★ "And when he had considered the thing, he came to the HOUSE of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying." (Acts 12:12)
- ★ "...There came many to him into his LODGING; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus...from morning till evening." (Acts 28:23)
- ★ "And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired HOUSE, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him." (Acts 28:30-31)

Have you ever noticed that the Acts of the Apostles closes with Paul preaching the gospel in his own Neighborhood Evangelism Center?

Cell groups are also called home fellowship groups or care fellowship groups. In a broader sense they could be considered as preaching points, church plants, or satellite works. They meet once a week, usually at a time when church is not scheduled. You can make up Bible Studies of your own, or use Portable Bible School lessons, or small group lessons are available. Besides teaching the Word of God you would have fellowship, and a time of praises, worship, and prayer.

The Principle of the Neighborhood Evangelism Center

“...As for me and my house,
we will serve the Lord.”
(Joshua 24:15)

Study Questions

1. What did Jesus promise in Matthew 18:20?

2. Who is the church? _____
3. What do some pastors require their deacons to do? _____

4. How long did the church exist before they started having church buildings? _____

5. What were houses used for in the New Testament church? _____
6. What was the Apostolic (Biblical) plan for evangelizing the world? _____

7. Where is the Apostolic (Biblical) plan of salvation located? _____

8. How does the largest percentage of people come into the church? _____

9. How does the lowest percentage of people come into the church? _____
10. People don't care how much you know until what happens? _____

11. What is the key to growth? _____

12. Give two Scriptures that speak about churches being in houses. _____

13. Why are cell groups or neighborhood evangelism centers considered to be a good, effective ministry? _____

14. How many people does it take before Jesus promises that He will be in the midst of them?

15. How many people do you think you must have before you can start a church?

16. Reinhard Bonnke claims that the apostolic ministry can be summed up in one word. What is it? _____

17. What needs to take place in order for God to do for us what He did for the Apostles?

Lesson 10 - Evangelism The Powerful Way

(Acts 8:6-7)

When the crowds of Samaria heard what Deacon Philip was preaching and saw the miracles that he did, they paid close attention to him and believed the preaching that he gave. Men, women and even a sorcerer named Simon were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 8:12-16). Philip was able to conduct evangelism the powerful way; through the operation of the power gifts.

Miracles cause unbelievers to believe when they see the amazing works of God. When Jesus performed his first miracle at the wedding of Cana of Galilee. He not only turned the "water into wine" but the hearts of men toward God. "...And manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him." (John 2:11)

When Jesus raised the Widow's son from the dead the people "...glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, that God hath visited his people. And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judaea, and throughout all the region round about." (Luke 7:16, 17)

In Acts 13:11-12, Paul performs a miracle on Elymas, the sorcerer. He is struck blind. When that happened "...the deputy...believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord."

In the healing of the lame man in Acts 3, we see that all of Jerusalem was in an uproar. The Jewish leaders took measures to stop the Christian Church.

"And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it." (Acts 4:14)

"...They conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? For that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it." (Acts 4:15-16)

These leaders were concerned about the preaching of the name of Jesus, but more than that, they were concerned about the "miracle." It was likely the miracle and not the message that upset these leaders. They knew that they could deny the message, but they could not deny the miracle. The miracle proved that a powerful God was at work.

Nicodemus said to Jesus one night, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." (John 3:2)

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:" (Acts 2:22)

The imprisoned John the Baptist sent his disciples to Jesus with a question: "...Art thou he that should come? Or look we for another?" (Luke 7:19) Jesus did not answer them but continued to heal the sick and cast out devils.

Finally he said, "...Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached." (Luke 7:22)

Jesus did not send a message of rebuke back to John the Baptist. He did not give a theological or logical explanation of his presence on the earth. Instead, He gave them a power demonstration through healing and deliverance.

Paul said, "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." (1 Corinthians 2:4)

It is not uncommon today to see believers rushing about following signs, miracles and wonders. However, the Bible specifically tells us that "these signs shall follow them that believe..." (Mark 16:17) A quick review of the list of things that believers will do in Mark 16:16-18 allows us to know that the working of miracles was not for the Apostles alone. These signs will confirm that the gospel message we preach is real, powerful, and that the Lord Jesus is in our midst. You will notice that every one of these signs was operating in the church in the Book of Acts.

"And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." (Mark 16:20)

The world is still waiting for us to take our place as believers and perform the acts that God has ordained for us to do. "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." (Romans 8:19)

When we think of miracles we often think of the “supernatural” and the “natural” realm. “Natural” means “normal” and “supernatural” means “super-natural.” It goes beyond the normal. A “Miracle” is when God does something that goes beyond the natural realm. It is a supernatural act. In the days of Jesus and then in the early church, miracles were a way of life.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that salvation came to many through signs, wonders, and the operation of the gifts of the Spirit.

“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.” (Hebrews 2: 3-4)

God backs up those who preach the Gospel with His power and authority. He confirms the message preached through signs, miracles, and wonders. He proves that He is the mighty God!

Rahab confessed to the spies, “For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt;...And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.” (Joshua 2:10-11)

In Acts 4, after Peter and John were harassed by the Jewish leaders for the miracle done to the lame man, and the preaching of the name of Jesus, they went to pray. Their prayer went something like this: “God give us boldness to preach your Word. Stretch out your hand to do more signs, wonders, healings, and miracles in the name of Jesus.”

As a result of their prayer meeting, the place was shaken, and “...with great power gave the apostles witness...” (Acts 4:33) All preaching should be accompanied with “great power!”

Have you ever wondered how an instantaneous revival can take place? If we could get a miracle happening in the church, people from all around would rush to see it, and receive their own miracle.

Since Jesus is the “same yesterday, and today, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8), we should not be surprised to see miracles today. In fact, we should expect miracles to happen! Even Saul of Tarsus was converted as a result of a supernatural experience on the Road to Damascus.

The “Working of Miracles” is the power gift that “works miracles.” The working of the miracle is used to show God’s power. Miracles involving healing are usually a result of the “Gifts of Healing.” “Working of Miracles” allow us to exercise miracle power. “Miracle” comes from the Greek word “dunamis.” This means “dynamite.”

“...But the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.” (Daniel 11:32)

Study Questions

1. What do miracles cause the unbeliever to see? _____

2. What were the leaders in Acts 3 concerned about? _____

3. How did Nicodemus know that Jesus was sent from God? _____

4. How did Jesus confirm to John the Baptist that He was the Messiah? _____

5. What did Paul say about his preaching in 1 Corinthians 2:4? _____

6. We are not to follow "signs" but "signs" should follow _____
7. What do "signs" confirm? _____

8. What is the world waiting for us to do?

9. What is the difference between "natural" and "supernatural"? _____

10. What is a "miracle"? _____

11. According to Hebrews, how does salvation come to many? _____

12. How does God back up His Gospel? _____

13. What did the disciples pray in Acts 4?

14. What was the result of that prayer? _____

 15. How can instantaneous revival take place?

 16. What is the "Working of Miracles"? _____

 17. What does the Greek word for "miracle" mean? _____
 18. All preaching should be accompanied by what? _____
 19. Why were the Jewish leaders so concerned about the miracle performed in Acts 3, and not the message that the Apostles preached?

 20. How do we conduct evangelism the powerful way? _____
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Lesson 11 - The Lord Is At Work

(Acts 3:12, 16)

One day the mayor (leader) of a small town noticed two of his workers doing something strange. They were working steadily along the side of the road. One of the men was digging a hole in the ground, and the other filling it up again. After watching them dig and fill several holes this way, the mayor, somewhat confused, stopped the two workers and asked for an explanation.

"Well, sir," replied the first man, "we work for the town planting trees, and usually there are three of us who work on this job. One digs the hole; one plants the tree, and one covers it up. But the man who plants the trees called in sick today, and we did not want to miss a day's work, so here we are."

How easy it is to fall into the habit of just being at church. We can become so programmed that like the tree planters, we totally lose sight of the meaning behind what we are doing. Just "doing church" is not enough.

Many churches are "heavy on knowledge and light on supernatural power." (C. Peter Wagner). There should be a balance between the two.

We Are Working Together with God

📖 "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building" (1 Corinthians 3:6, 9).

📖 "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen" (Mark 16:19-20).

We Cannot Accomplish the Work without Him

"...For without me ye can do nothing." (John 15:5)

The Lord Is Working in Us

📖 "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

📖 "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

📖 "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:20).

Jesus Wants to Work in Our Day

📖 "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you" (Acts 13:41).

Acts is a book of action. The early church lived in an atmosphere of anticipation. Each page of Acts reminds us that the Lord was at work. Today, as He promised, He continues the work that He started.

In the Gospels Jesus worked in His physical body. After His ascension and the Day of Pentecost, He began working through His spiritual body—the church. Throughout the Acts of Apostles, Jesus Christ was the real "worker."

"Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47).

The Lord continues to work in His end-time church. In fact, He wants to move in each service. Rev. R. M. Buie taught a tremendous lesson while visiting Ghana. It was entitled, "Pushing Beyond the Conventional Boundaries." He stated that we should approach each service anticipating a demonstration of the Spirit and power. The highlights of Rev. Buie's excellent teaching follow:

"While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished" (Acts 10:44-45).

Spiritual ministry pushes beyond a form, program, or ritual. It is the realization that Jesus comes to church to do a work.

Study Questions

Our work is to pray for a move of the Spirit before service time. We need to prepare our hearts for the Lord to work.

Ask God to take control of the service and have faith that He Will.

Thank Him for His visitation before it happens.

Plan for a move of the Spirit. It can happen at any time. It is not good to keep a rigid program for the service. Have a plan, but make it flexible. God should be welcome to move at any time.

Anticipate a move of the Spirit—at any time.

Remember, your actions communicate your expectation. Passive worship or leadership will produce a passive response.

We lead by following.

“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Be sensitive to the move of the Spirit—at any time.

Follow after His Spirit, not the program or Order of Service. God wants everything done “decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40). A move of the Spirit is not an interference with the service. It is decent and in order. We want God to work! If we do not have time for God, we do not have time for anything. We can make time for God to move and still do other necessary things required in the service. It is important to lead the congregation into the move of the Spirit.

Respond to the move of the Spirit—at any time! As leaders, we should show a favorable reaction to God at work. We need to respond to the presence of the Lord. If not, He will leave without doing a work.

“But he passing through the midst of them went his way” (Luke 4:30).

Reap the benefits of the move of the Spirit—at any time. The saints are encouraged, edified and uplifted by the Spirit. The lost receive the gift of the Holy Ghost spontaneously.

The sick are healed by the ministering power of God’s Spirit. The preacher is anointed by the Spirit to preach the Word.

When God does a work celebrate—rejoice, praise and thank God for the move of the Spirit.

1. How do many church programs compare with the tree planters?

2. What does C. Peter Wagner say about many churches?

3. What is the difference in the way the Lord worked in the Gospels and in Acts?

4. What should we anticipate happening in each service?

5. How do we prepare for a move of the Spirit in our services?

6. How does God want things done in each service (1 Corinthians 14:40)?

7. When should we expect a move of the Spirit?

Lesson 12 - Five Ingredients Of Revival Churches

(Acts 2:16-18; 2:47)

Revival Churches Are Churches with a VISION

"And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:17).

Helen Keller was both blind and deaf. She overcame these handicaps and raised money for the blind through the sale of her books and her lectures. She was once asked, "What is worse than being blind?" She quickly responded, "Having sight, but not being able to see."

As Peter, on the Day of Pentecost repeated the Old Testament prophecy concerning the visitation of God's Spirit upon all flesh, he reiterated that young men shall see visions, and old men shall dream dreams. The wise man wrote, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). One writer rearranged the words in the positive; "Where there is a vision, the people flourish."

Ed Roebert agrees, "Vision is the key to achievement. Without it, confusion reigns. With it, the future is filled with excitement. Many churches have no vision for their future. Many pastors have no vision for their lives. Having no purpose in life results in frustration, lack of motivation and a growing futility."

Casey Treat adds, "It is a purpose for life that is strong enough to motivate you everyday; strong enough to motivate you into action." (*Church Management: Leading People in Church Growth*)

Vision is derived from a word that means, "see." This is an excellent word to describe seeing or looking forward. Vision suggests a future direction. Jonathan Swift in *Gulliver's Travels* wrote, "Vision is the art of seeing things invisible."

As leaders, we need a mindset that looks forward. It is important for us to continually improve. According to the law of sowing and reaping, we reap today what was sown yesterday.

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

Our challenge is to develop leaders who are able to facilitate God-given revival. Revival and church growth can best be achieved following God's direction. We tend to look at the closest church having revival and copy what they are doing.

"Do not follow where the path may lead. . . . Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." (Anonymous)

Satan Tries to Blind Us

It is the will of God to open our eyes (Luke 4:18). It is the devil's will to blind us.

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

Jesus Came to Open Our Eyes

Jesus announced His purpose, vision, and direction in coming to the earth.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19).

Three times Jesus includes preaching in His purpose statement. He came to provide for the recovery of sight for the blind. This includes both physical and spiritual blindness.

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

What Do You See?

Zechariah was asked in Zechariah 4:2, "What seest thou?" What do you see? Do you see a great end-time revival?

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see

visions, and your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:17).

You may feel that revival cannot happen in your town or country. The Scripture disagrees. "I will pour out of my Spirit upon ALL flesh." This includes where you are.

You may think, "But this place is full of sin and iniquity. God cannot move here." Again, Scripture disagrees. "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20).

You may ask, "But isn't there going to be a great falling away?" First of all, make up your mind that you will never fall away. You have come too far to quit now. Jesus is coming soon!

"And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:11-14).

Revival Churches Focus on JESUS CHRIST

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8). For some reason, we find it easy to believe God for revival anywhere but here.

Things That Never Change

-  Anything Jesus has ever done, He can do today.
-  Anything Jesus is doing anywhere else; He can do it where you are.
-  Anything Jesus has done for anyone, He can do for you.

Apparently Uzziah blocked Isaiah's view of the Lord. What happened when Uzziah was taken out of the way? "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple" (Isaiah 6:1).

People need to see GOD! They need to put their confidence in the God who does not fail. Man can fail, but God never fails.

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken,

and shall he not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19).

Revival Churches Are PRAYING CHURCHES

Prayer brings the power of God. It allows people to see God's POWER.

When the church puts emphasis on prayer, revival happens. Prayer is dealt with in other lessons but let us look at a few of the scriptural promises concerning prayer.

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:11-13).

"Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not" (Jeremiah 33:3).

"And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Matthew 21:13).

"Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Psalms 2:8).

No Prayer – No Power Little Prayer – Little Power Much Prayer – Much Power

When you arrive for church and a mighty prayer meeting is going on, you know that the service will be filled with the power of God. Much emphasis should be placed on prayer in each service.

Revival Churches Are WORSHIPPING CHURCHES

Worship brings the presence of God. It allows people to feel God's PRESENCE.

When we praise and worship God, He comes to where we are. He is looking for those who worship Him from a pure heart, in spirit and in truth.

"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that

worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24).

"But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel" (Psalm 22:3).

"Praise ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD. Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD'S name is to be praised" (Psalm 113:1-3).

Revival Churches PREACH TRUTH and LOVE HOLINESS

Holiness allows others to see – GOD IN US.

A church that seeks revival must preach the truth of God’s Word. The reference point for revival and an outpouring of the Spirit is found in Acts 2. We must preach the Acts 2:38-39 message if we expect to receive the results evidenced in the Book of Acts.

"But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

God looks on the heart and sees deep inside a person’s life. The only way that people can know that we are truly living for God is by our outward appearance. They judge us based on the fruit we bear.

"O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth" (Psalms 96:9). Holiness is beautiful.

The writer of Hebrews advises, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). Through the life of holiness that we live, others can see the Lord in us.

Study Questions

- 1. What is the result of lack of vision?

- 2. What is meant by "vision"?

- 3. What is the law of sowing and reaping?

4. Who can best give direction for revival and church growth?

5. How many times was preaching mentioned in Jesus’ purpose statement (Luke 4:18-19)?

6. What was promised concerning the end times in Acts 2:17?

7. What answer would you give to someone who says, "This place is so full of sin that God cannot move here"?

8. List three things mentioned in this lesson that never change about Jesus.

9. In Isaiah 6:1 what happened when Uzziah died?

10. Prayer brings the _____ of God.

11. What happens when churches put emphasis on prayer?

12. According to Psalms 2:8, how can we evangelize (receive) the uttermost parts of the earth?

13. Worship brings the _____ of God.

14. Holiness allows others to see _____ in us.

15. What/where is the biblical reference point for revival?

16. How do others judge whether we are living for God?

Lesson 13 - Celebrating Every Breakthrough

(Acts 14:27)

Bill and Amy Stearns wrote an outstanding book, *Catch the Vision 2000*. In this book they stated, "Something big and challenging is happening in our world. Something so astonishing it should make headlines in every church and Christian home. All around the earth remarkable breakthroughs in reaching every people group with the gospel have occurred."

God is doing great things. You may ask, "Why haven't I been hearing about it?"

Bill and Amy Stearns explained, "Little breakthroughs . . . happen so often that Satan and his cronies make heroic attempts to keep believers from knowing about them, because the whole picture would be so encouraging we just might jump in and finish the job."

Christians would realize the need to speed up what God is doing—to pull the rug out from under the enemy's feet. Satan realizes no news is good news—to him."

They explained that the first eleven chapters of the Bible establish the main characters—God, angels, and man. The setting for the drama is the earth and the heavens. There is a conflict between Satan fighting for the kingdom and God redeeming mankind. The entire Bible is a drama of war between good and evil. The Book of Revelation reveals the final winner. Until that day we need to celebrate every victory and breakthrough.

"Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered" (Psalms 40:5).

Studies show ninety-five per cent of problems taking place within organizations are related to communications (or rather the lack thereof). The number one complaint employees have is lack of communication. Poor communication exists despite the modern information technology we presently enjoy.

Communication problems also exist in the church. We need to develop a climate of

communicating and celebrating every breakthrough experienced.

It is easy to find fault and lament over what is wrong with the church. Anyone can see problems. The church is not perfect, but it is better to look for what is right. Catch people doing the right things and praise them for it. Give them honor and do it publicly. This is a positive motivational tool. Always maintain positive reinforcement for efforts made toward accomplishing the vision.

Once you have determined your vision and your goals, people will start performing according to expectation. Each time something happens in line with the vision and in accordance with the goals—celebrate. Work toward being as positive as possible. We are not part of the "Fellowship of the Miserable" but the "Fellowship of the Redeemed."

Be specific with the reasons for celebration. "God moved in an awesome way in our service last Sunday night," is not nearly as inspiring as, "Three people received the baptism of the Holy Ghost last Sunday night, and one lady was healed of cancer."

Celebrate What You Want to See More Of

Each time someone is baptized in Jesus' name or filled with the Holy Ghost we need to celebrate. After all, heaven is celebrating, why shouldn't we? We should never treat souls being added to the kingdom as commonplace.

"Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10 NKJV).

On the national level celebrate every time a new church is planted, a preaching point is established, or the churches grow. Yes you can celebrate when the church enjoys prosperity and financial breakthroughs. (Be careful! Many times we celebrate the financial breakthroughs and forget the spiritual victories.)

If you were to go to a sports game, you would find people celebrating over every goal. Kingdom building is not another game; it is a battle. Jesus Christ is the Captain of our salvation and is the winner. Every time a goal is scored in the kingdom celebrate the victory. Satan will be defeated and left crying. The shout of victory will deafen him.

"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Lesson 14 - Higher Quality, Greater Quantity

(Acts 16:5)

The secret to successful church growth is found in Acts 9:31(NIV), "Then the church... enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.

In each Scripture above the churches were "strengthened" and "grew." It seems that they grew after they were strengthened. They had been taught, revived, and became focused on evangelism. As a result they "grew."

It is God that gives growth to the church.

"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).

In the Book of Acts we find two types of growth in the church.

Quantity

First of all, the early church measured their growth numerically. On the Day of Pentecost 3000 souls were added to the 120. Later 5,000 believed. There was a growth in the number of believers (Acts 2:41, 47; 5:14; 6:7) and in the number of churches (Acts 16:5).

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

"And the believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 5:14).

"And the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly" (Acts 6:7).

The minister needs to be an evangelist before he can become a teacher or a pastor. First, we must win the people. After that, we can pastor and teach them.

Quality

Secondly, the early church measured growth according to quality. The Apostle Paul often reported (or received reports from his assistants) concerning the spiritual status of the church. The leaders took special notice of how the believers did spiritually. They wanted to make sure that the believers moved from

elementary (basic) to maturity (advanced) in the things concerning Christian understanding, doctrine, and righteous living.

A. J. Gordon said, "If perchance the church should attract men without at the same time transforming them; if she shall attach them to her membership without assimilating them to her life, she has only weakened herself by her increase and diminished herself by her addition." (Michael Griffiths, *Get Your Act Together Cinderella: A Call to Today's Church*)

The purpose of the five-fold ministry is to perfect the saints for the working of the ministry (Ephesians 4:12-13). It is imperative that we are involved in church planting. However, we are also in the church-perfecting business. This means that we look for growth and development in our church in many different ways. We are involved in "continuous improvement." Our desire is to present a perfected church to the Lord.

"That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27).

As a church, we need to commit ourselves to being the church God planned we should be. We should pray and fast to become what God wants us to be. The secret to accomplishing this is found in the following verses:

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

Growth in numbers should always be accompanied by spiritual growth.

Many times we are not really growing, but getting spiritually fat. Instead of bringing people to maturity in Christ, we have many additions to the church family—just more spiritual babies. We continue to feed them milk, instead of going on to the meatier things of God. We teach our people the same things week after week (prayer, praises and worship, etc.).

"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection;

not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment” (Hebrews 6:1-2).

“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:12-6:1).

People demonstrate spiritual childishness when they seek material things (homes, cars, money) first and spiritual things take second place. Material blessings are not wrong. However, we should first seek after the spiritual blessings.

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

How Can We Grow?

Growth needs to be encouraged in the following areas:

- The body of Christ (Ephesians 4:16).
- Holiness (Ephesians 5:27).
- Doctrinal understanding and discipleship (Colossians 1:28, 1 Corinthians 14:20, Hebrews 6:1-3).
- Giving (2 Corinthians 8:1-5).
- Commitment to evangelism (Matthew 28:19).
- Spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7).
- Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).
- Ability to be a witness (Acts 1:8).

Study Questions

1. What is the secret to successful church growth?

2. How are churches strengthened?

3. As a result of the churches being strengthened, what happened?

4. How did the early church measure growth?

5. What is the purpose of the five-fold ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12)?

6. What is the secret to becoming what God wants us to be?

7. What are five areas in which the church needs to grow?

8. What type of blessings should a Christian seek for first?

9. What are three different foundation doctrines of the church (Hebrews 6:1-2)?

10. What do immature Christians continue to feed on since they cannot handle the meat of the Word?

11. According to Ephesians 5:27, what type of church will be presented to the Lord?

Lesson 15 - Great Expectations

(Acts 4:33; Psalms 118:23-25)

Today is the first day of the rest of your life. Our future is full of promise and potential. The Lord wants to do great things in us and through us. Let us rise to the occasion of becoming a great church impacted with higher quality and greater quantity.

Let's see what "great" means: "large in size or number, being beyond the average, mighty, grand, long continued; markedly superior in character, quality or skill."

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (3 John 2).

Much has been written about financial or economic prosperity. This lesson deals with ways that the Lord would like to prosper us spiritually – prosper our soul. The Lord wants to make His church spiritually prosperous by supplying great things.

Great Power

"And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all" (Acts 4:33).

Great Grace

Read Acts 4:33; Genesis 6:8; Hebrews 13:25; 1 Peter 5:5; Revelation 22:21; Galatians 2:21; 2 Corinthians 9:14.

"Grace" is God's free gifts or actions taken to meet human needs. By grace we have salvation (Ephesians 2:7-8) The concept of grace expresses all that God chooses to do for us. We have free access to God's grace (Hebrews 4:14-16). Much has been said about "grace," but the verse(s) above talks about "great grace."

Great Fear

"And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things" (Acts 5:5).

"Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied" (Acts 9:31).

Also read Proverbs 9:10; 10:27; 14:26; 14:27; 15:16; 15:33; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17.

Great Wonders

"And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people" (Acts 6:8).

Also read Habakkuk 1:5; Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 14:3; Mark 16:17-18.

Great Faith

"When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (Matthew 8:10).

Also read Mark 2:5; Romans 1:17; 10:17; Colossians 2:7; Hebrews 11:1; 11:6.

Great Door

"For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries" (1 Corinthians 16:9).

"I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name" (Revelation 3:8).

Great Harvest

"Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:37-38).

Great Peace

"Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psalms 119:165).

Also read Proverbs 16:7; John 14:27; 16:33; Philippians 4:7; Colossians 3:15.

Great Love

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

Also read 1 John 4:7-12; Matthew 22:37-40; John 3:16.

Great Works

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he

do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12).

Great Joy

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 4).

"For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city" (Acts 8:7-8).

Study Questions

1. What are ten of the great things that God has promised us?

2. What is "grace"?
