

THE GROWTH OF THE KINGDOM

Texts: Acts 2:41; Luke 13:18-19; Acts 8:12

INTRO: These passages are abundantly sufficient to prove that it is God's will for His kingdom to grow and spread its influence abroad. But the only outward manifestation of His kingdom in any community is the local church. God wants this church to grow but He has put the responsibility of doing His work & obeying His will in your hands. If this congregation is going to grow, YOU must also will it to be so.

There are at least 3 prerequisites to church growth in this congregation.

1. You must want to grow.
2. You must be willing to take action that will result in growth
3. You must include growth in your goals. Too often we reach no goals because we have no goals.

I. THINGS THAT SOMETIMES HINDER CHURCH GROWTH.

A. Some might be afraid to grow.

1. The Jewish leaders were afraid to accept Jesus.
Afraid of losing their position of power. Afraid of what the Romans would think or do.
2. All my life I've heard people state how they preferred to worship with a small congregation. They perhaps fear losing their identity in a large crowd. This was no problem in Jerusalem, Acts 6:1-7.
3. Some brethren fear that if the church grows properly elders will be appointed & they will lose their "vote" in the business meeting.

B. The 2nd major hurdle that may--& usually does exist is a negative attitude. "We've already tried. It won't work. Nobody's interested anymore..."

1. Remember that John B spent his adult life paving the way for the kingdom of heaven & never lived to see its existence. But Pentecost could not have happened as it did without his preparation.
2. Jesus spent 3 1/2 years, day & night, seeking to

prepare the Jewish people for the kingdom, yet as He came to the end of His earthly career, even His best friends had forsaken Him. One denied Him. One even betrayed Him for the price of a wounded slave.

3. Yet these temporary setbacks paved the way for the ultimate victory of Jesus & His cause.

II. WE MUST BE MINDFUL THAT THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF GROWTH.

- A. Numerical growth is greatly to be desired. The passages we read as texts describe numerical growth. Don't be afraid to count numbers. The apostles did. The H.S. did.
- B. Spiritual growth is not only desirable, but absolutely essential. If we aren't growing spiritually, we are not pleasing God.

For tho by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God... (Heb 5:12).

But grow in the grace & knowledge of our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ... (2 Pet 3:18).

III. THINGS THAT WILL ASSURE CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH. Each of the matters to be discussed in the remainder of this lesson will be a factor that will aid in the growth of this congregation, both spiritually & numerically.

- 1. Each member must put God first--starting with you. For the moment don't worry whether others put God first or not. Just be sure you do. Then, later you can help others to do so. Matt. 6:33.

He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: & he who loves son or daughter more

than Me is not worthy of Me. (MT 10:37).

2. Do not allow part time jobs, social activities, sporting events, recreation, company, friends or relatives to keep you from fulfilling your obligations as part of the congregation. READ LUKE 14:16-24.
3. Attend all the services of the church if you possibly can: Bible classes, preaching services, gospel meetings. Be willing to take part in all these to the extent of your ability. In most cases, you at least have the ability to be there. Acts 2:42, 46-47.
4. Live in such a manner that those who know you will respect you. MATT 5:16.
5. Do not be ashamed that you are a Christian. Be glad to be a Christian & be willing to accept cheerfully the consequences, because with them come the rewards.
Rom 1:16; MK 8:38.
6. Cultivate a love for your brothers & sisters in Christ. Do not say anything about them to outsiders or in the presence of your children that will hurt their influence for good.

Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother & judges his brother, speaks evil of the law & judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge. (James 4:11).

NOTE: Many verses are of similar import. They do not restrict mature Christians from discussing the problems of other Christians when that discussion is for the purpose of seeking to help them by prayer, counsel, etc. The Scriptures do forbid us to gossip & slander those who are seeking to serve God, just as we are. Discussing problems of a brother or sister in Christ with non-Christians will almost always cause a hindrance.

7. "Make friends of God's children." Be drawn closer to Christ

by having more association with other Christians.
Acts 2:46-47.

8. Be willing to spend & be spent. 2 Cor 12:15.
READ 2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-5; 9:7

9. Shy away from questionable activities & behavior. Most people of the world do not expect one that is a faithful Christian to curse, swear, tell filthy jokes, dance, drink, gamble, wear short shorts & halters & do numerous other things that are either sinful or highly questionable. No Christian can engage in these things without harming his influence & setting a stumbling block in the path of others. And no church can grow properly when its members are worldly & indifferent in such matters.

1 Cor 8:13 (if food makes my bro. stumble...)

Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man thru whom the stumbling block comes!
(MT 18:7).

10. Realize that we have no right to withhold the gospel from those who need to hear it. Teach others in keeping with your ability. Invite them to come study with you.

I am a debtor both to Greeks & barbarians; both to wise & unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also. (Rom 1:14-15). Are you ready to take the gospel to...?

CONCLUSION: If we who are members of Christ's church will resolve ourselves to do these things, the church will grow, spiritually & numerically. But don't look for it to begin with someone else. It must begin with you. God wants the church to grow. Do you?

La Porte, TX, August 26, 1979

Hutto, TX, October 7, 1979 (meeting)

Humphrey, AR, August 3, 1980 (meeting)

Liberty Hill, TX, August 17, 1980 (meeting)

Springhill, LA, October 22, 1980 (meeting)
Weatherford, TX, September 19, 1980 (meeting)
Exton, PA, July 8, 1984
Lancaster Co., PA, October 21, 1985
Exton, PA, January 15, 1989
Shiloh, Mexia, TX, June 5, 1989 (meeting)
Wrightsville, PA, August 18, 1991
Shippensburg, PA, June 7, 1998 (meeting)