

A Quick Overview of Church Growth in the Book of Acts

“...And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (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. 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 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 are 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).

They heard the Word. One reason for the lack of growth in churches today is people are not hearing the Word. Our churches must be Word 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 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 only men were mentioned. Perhaps the women would account for another 5000, and at least one child per couple is another 5000. You can estimate 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).

Acts 6 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 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 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 who turned their world upside down. They shocked the world because they had been termed as “ignorant and unlearned men” (Acts 4:13).

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 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’s 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? _____
