



Global College of Ministry

EMPOWER

The Christian & Church Growth (Part One)

Signs of a Healthy Church

“And they continued stedfastly...”(Acts 2:42).

The Church is not like any organization 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. He 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.



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 look for signs to verify 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 wants us to produce spiritual babies. This happens when the church puts 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 meat) and grow (Hebrews 5:12-14).

4. Effective spiritual leadership.

- ⇒ Acts 4:13

5. Practical Holiness.

- ⇒ 1Thessalonians 3:12-13
- ⇒ 1 Thessalonians 4:7-8
- ⇒ 1 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, 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 changes. As a leader we must identify these changes and 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? _____

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? _____

Back to the Basics

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We have established three truths so far:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Keep Sowing until Church Growth Happens

“And they continued stedfastly....And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved”
(Acts 2:42, 47).

A story is told by T. C. Hamlet concerning two frogs.

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)

You have the same choice as the frogs. You can either give up or continue in steadfast perseverance until God moves in your situation.

I am sure each of us yearns to see our churches grow. Sometimes we feel hopeless and inadequate because we know church growth cannot be produced by man. We understand that anything with eternal value will be accomplished by God. It is only God who can breathe on a

valley of dry bones and cause them to come back to life. It is only God who can cause revival, church growth, and hearts to be receptive to Him.

God wants His Church to grow. It has been said, “Children are God’s way of saying 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. 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!

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. A great falling away was seen through the Council of Nicea, the falling away from the Early Church. We have passed through the Reformation and are presently in the latter reign of revival and outpouring of the Spirit as Joel prophesied in Joel 2:28-29.

“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: 13-14).

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 earth that you cannot do in heaven? Praying, singing, worshipping, fellowshiping, listening to the voice of God, etc. can be done in heaven. However, sin and witnessing will not be done in heaven. Which one are you continuing to do?

God wants His Church to grow because He is the God of the Full House. Some say 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 a convincing story of His desire for churches to be full and 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 to bring the poor, blind, halt, and withered. The servant brought those but there was still room for more. The master sent the servant out again. Why was the master insistent on sending his servant again? “Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled” (verse 23).

Jesus has prepared a great feast; all things are ready; and He is compelling all to come in so 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, “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” (Psalm 126:5-6, emphasis mine).

We must continue doing our part and our great Partner will do His part. At times the road is rough and there are setbacks but we must press on toward the mark (Philippians 3:14). As the song says, “Onward Christian Soldiers.”

“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” (Galatians 6:7, 9).

“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 as the Early Church: They continued!

Ecclesiastes 11:1, 4-6 is an encouraging Scripture of 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 earth? _____

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

Additional Notes

First United Pentecostal Church

“...And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (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 where the first church is 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 watch it grow. That is what planting a church is 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 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, “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 a step in the right direction.”

Churches are healthiest when they give God 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 of the Early Church (Acts 2:38). 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 and each are necessary.

1. Fellowship

The First UPC members were in unity; shared in fellowship and in breaking of bread. This is why it is important for each member to attend church regularly. The church where fellowship is strong is a caring church. 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 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 top of the list of things needed to be done. Sometimes we write out “To Do” lists of things 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 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 vital to church growth. In sports we realize 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 we are not meeting people's needs then we 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 have cell groups where 5-12 people get together and minister to each other in a small group setting. In 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 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 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 results 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 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?
