

PRINCIPLES ON CHURCH GROWTH

- Do we want to be a Mega Church (2,500+)? WHY?
- Do we have what it takes? The Infrastructure? The staff? The acumen? The teachers and counselors? THE VISION?
- **Or do we just want to be as large as we can based on our current skills and local demographics?**
- What grows a church God's way – and do we have these now?
 1. Good doctrine?
 2. Good music and worship?
 3. Good teaching & preaching?
 4. Good programs and ministries?
 5. Friendly people? Prayerful people?
 6. Good facilities, cleaned & maintained facilities?
 7. Others? _____
- What are some major factors for Church stagnation or decline?
 1. Sin in the Camp? Num 12:15
 2. Not Faithful in Small Things?..... Luke 16:10
 3. Poor leaders? Poor followers? Poor ministries? Poor facilities?
 4. Demographics? (church saturation within the community)
 5. Other factors? _____
- **We should realize the following:**
 1. We can do everything right, yet experience negative growth
 2. We can do everything wrong, yet experience positive growth
 3. Decline may be due to 1 or 2 big things or a lot of "little foxes that ruin the vineyard" (i.e., people, things, and processes)
 4. BUT there are principles to follow to better position us to grow God's way, for **GOD'S KINGDOM IS ALL ABOUT GROWTH**

HOW DO WE BEST POSITION OURSELVES FOR GROWTH?

- **Ask hard questions:** Are we a Family or a Business? What do we need to change? Not, who do we need to change out?
- Identify what is working and strengthen it
- Identify what is broke and fix it
- Relieve the Elder(s) so they can Pray, Preach, and Teach/Counsel
- Seek out laborers for the harvest
- Prepare for growth through discipleship
 - ♦ Are we able to handle tough cases (i.e., addictions, immorality)?
 - ♦ Growth often comes after pruning John 15:2-6

OTHER BIBLICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- **Churches in Revelations**
 - ♦ Some churches in Revelations were noted for severe problems such as being dead (**Sardis**); lacking love (**Ephesus**), holding to false doctrines (**Pergamum**); tolerating immorality (**Thyatira**), and having wealth but no zeal (**Laodicea**);
 - ♦ Yet, Christ acknowledged them as His Church, and He applauded the true believers who were in them for hanging tough and remaining faithful – **So, we do not have to be perfect!**
 - ♦ BUT, if we do not fix things, God can remove our candlestick
- **Basis of Growth.** God promised to bless & multiply Israel (as the sand & stars) – **if they would obey** (Deut 28:1-14; Jer 33:22); but would scatter & diminish them if not obedient (Deut 28:15-68)
- **Promised Church Growth.** The Kingdom of Heaven (believers) is depicted as mushrooming into something BIG as seen in parables of Good Seed, Leaven, and as a Mustard Seed.....Matt 13:24-33
- **Discipleship.** Church growth could be exponential – especially for those who are faithful in small things, are diligent in their outreach, who feed and protect God's flock, who teach others how to teach, who avoid sin, and who teach the whole counsel of God
 - ♦ Hence the need to provide thorough discipleship training just to keep up with growth potential
 - ♦ ...and disciple future Pastor(s) [i.e., hire from within] or you will need at least 7 years to see growth from an outside Pastor

- **Evangelism vs Repatriation.** Yes, we need to seek the lost, but we also need to seek the wayward who have left the church, unless they are divisive [Rom 16:17] or prodigal [Luke 15:11-20]
- **AND PRAY BIG.** Let it be according to our faith Matt 9:29

SUPPORTING PASSAGES

- 1Chron 12:32 We need to be like the men of Issachar who knew how God was working, and they knew what to do to prosper
- Prov 14:28. A large population is a King's [or Pastor's] honor, but a shortage of people is his ruin. **Growth is Good!**
- Malachi 2:7 The Priest/Pastor should know God's Word, and from his mouth people seek instruction/guidance, for he is God's messenger

Passages on Bad Shepherds:

- Jer 10:21 What does God call shepherds who have not grown their flock? **STUPID.** The shepherds have become stupid and have not sought the LORD; Therefore, they have not prospered or grown, and all their flock is scattered
- Jer 23:2 What does God call shepherds who drive sheep away? **EVIL.** God will judge their evil deeds for scattering His flock.
- Eze 34:1-11 What does God call shepherds who don't care for the sheep? **JOBLESS.** You have not strengthened the sickly, you have not healed the diseased, you have not bound up the broken, you have not brought back the scattered, nor have you sought for the lost; but you have dominated them with force and severity (v4)... [therefore], I will make you cease from feeding My sheep. (v10)
- Zech 11:17. What does God call shepherds who desert His flock? **WORTHLESS.** Woe to the worthless shepherds who leave.

Passages on Bad Sheep:

- Num 14:10, 35. What does God call a congregation who seek to remove their God-anointed leaders? **EVIL**
- Deut 17:12. The man who will not listen to the priest or to the judge (i.e., the Shepherd) shall suffer consequences.
- Jer 22:22. God will remove shepherds from a wicked congregation.
- Ezek 34:21-22. God will judge sheep who bully others.
- Hoshea 4:16. Even God cannot lead stubborn cows.

Passages on Church Growth as seen in the Book of Acts:

- Acts 2:41 There were added to them about three thousand souls.
- Acts 2:47 ... the Lord added to the church daily
- Acts 4:4 But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.
- Acts 5:14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women
- Acts 9:31 Then the churches had rest/peace throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria and were edified; walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.
- Acts 11:21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord.



PREACHER, IF THINGS DON'T PICK UP PRETTY SOON,
WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO PRAY ABOUT IT

OTHER INTERESTING FACTS ON CHURCH GROWTH

- **What are some key attributes of a healthy growing church?**
 - Numerical and Financial Growth | Increase in Baptisms
 - Growth in Programs | Increase in workers/contributors
 - Spiritual Growth (How would you judge this?)
 - Other attributes: _____
- **There are two ways to measure the health of any organization:**
 1. **Quality.** Quality measures tend to be subjective. They rely on taste, perception, intuition, and anecdotal evidence.
 2. **Quantity.** Quantifiable measures tend to be more objective. They rely on statistics, which need to be interpreted, but they often convey a true and accurate story over time.
- **Key to Church Growth is First Time Guests:**
 - ♦ To maintain current size, we need three (3) first-time guests each week for every hundred regular attenders.
 - ♦ To grow, we need to average five (5) first-time guests per week.
 - ♦ Therefore, a church with weekly attendance of 500, would need 15 guests each week to maintain, and at least 25 to grow (src: <https://www.pastormentor.com/healthy-church-18-numbers-will-tell/>)
- **Another Critical Number – Percent of Adults in Small Groups:**
 - ♦ Healthy churches have at least 40-50% of their adult attendance in some form of Small Group, including Sunday School
 - ♦ **Great churches have upwards of 80% of adults in Small Groups**
 - ♦ The highest percentage seen is Rick Warren's Saddleback Church, which has 130% of their adult attendance in small groups. They have a lot of outsiders coming in for special studies, such as Celebrate Recovery (CR)
- **Another Critical Number – Percentage of Givers:**
 - ♦ Statistics show that less than 10% of Evangelicals tithe; and that's why average church giving reflects about 3% per family
 - ♦ **Statistics also reveal the validity of Pareto's rule of 80/20. 80% of a church's income comes from 20% of the people, and 20% of the people do 80% of the work**
 - ♦ One doesn't get closer to God by making a commitment to tithe or to give proportionately. Rather, a commitment to Tithe is an indication one HAS gotten closer to God.....*Ps 50:23; Acts 10*
 - ♦ Therefore, we do not need to stress giving as much as we need to emphasize spiritual growth through DISCIPLESHIP. Giving is a by-product of one's growing faith.....*Heb 11:6*

Apostle Paul's Approach to Church Growth

Acts 6. Know Your Audience & Priorities + Pray + Fix Problems

- To promote church growth and position ourselves and the church body to be blessed, we should always do things God's way.
- v1. Expect problems, "...when the number of the disciples was multiplied there arose a murmuring..."
 - ♦ Having problems in a growing church is a good sign. We get to see Biblical principles put into action as God's people rise to the occasion to fix problems and to give God glory.....*1Cor 11:19*
- v2-4. It is not right for Elders to neglect the ministry of the word of God...they must give attention to prayer and teaching of the word
 - ♦ **Elder Priorities: Praying & Teaching.** Why is praying and teaching God's word so critical to church health and growth? Not music, not programs, not facilities, not giving, not even evangelism matters as much.
 - ♦ **Consider this.** Praying aligns us to God's will, and accurately conveying God's word both saves and matures the congregation to do the work of the ministry.....*2Tim 3:15-16*
- **The Path of Least Resistance Kills.** We must address "big" issues that need immediate attention. If we let "big" issues linger and fester it kills church unity and church growth.....*Prov 1:22-33*

Acts 20. Discipleship Promotes Church Growth

- v18. Mature leaders groom younger leaders
- vv19, 24. Paul served in all humility and tears. He deeply cared for God's church and gave them top priority over his own comfort.
- v20. He did not shy away from teaching the whole counsel of God. He taught them in public and in private, in large and small groups, and he taught both the easy and the hard topics
- v21. There was no partiality. Salvation & sanctification were made available to every race, class, & gender.

Ephesians 4. Evangelize and Disciple

- **HOW can we turn negative church growth around? To fulfill the Great Commission, churches (shepherds & sheep) must both Evangelize and Disciple.** Consider the following:
 - ♦ If all we hear each Sunday is a salvation message, then we will always have baby Christians sitting in the pews *Heb 6:1-3*
 - ♦ If we have great Sunday School & Bible classes, but the sheep are not evangelizing co-workers, neighbors, family, & strangers, then we become an anemic church (Pastors can't do it all)
- **Longevity is Critical.** Typical pastoral tenure is less than 5 years. Tenure is over 20 years for the 20 largest churches in the world.
- **Hire Within?** If we do not groom leaders from within, then we will always be hiring strangers from the outside to lead us.
 - ♦ Plus, it shows we do not know how to disciple people.
 - ♦ ...and taking shepherds away from other churches creates a cycle of new shepherds herding unfamiliar sheep, which often causes internal challenges – making churches to have more of an inward focus till things settle down.
 - ♦ **Statistics show it typically takes 7-12 years to see sustained growth from a pastor hired from the outside**

1Timothy 4. Teaching Has Priority in a Church, Not Preaching

- Paul's emphasis was on TEACHING, not preaching at believers
- Teaching involves 2-way dialogue, not a one-way monologue
- **This is why Sunday School/Bible Study is so vital to church growth.**
- BUT teaching what? Easy doctrines? Basic doctrines? Non-controversial doctrines? The whole counsel of God?

Desired Results. When shepherds and sheep begin doing what God expects (planting & watering/evangelizing & discipling), we can watch with amazement how God grows His Church whether we live in a time of peace & prosperity, or under persecution, or COVID. *1Cor 3:7*

Some Disturbing Church Statistics: (<https://www.pastoralcareinc.com/statistics/>)

- 4,000 new churches begin each year and 7,000 churches close
- Over 1,500 pastors left the ministry every month last year
- Over 1,300 pastors were terminated by the local church each month, many without cause.
- Over 3,500 people a day left the church last year.
- Only 1 pastor out of 10 will retire as a pastor.



TYPES OF PEOPLE PROBLEMS IN THE CHURCH

According to [Leviticus 4](#), there are four (4) types of people problems within the church, and they are listed in the order of severity as seen with the types of sacrifices required to attain God's forgiveness and restoration:

1. High Priest (aka, Sr. Pastor) [If the pastor is the problem, any problems will have the most severe impact]
2. Congregation as a whole [If the congregation is unjustly grumbling, their impact is severe but not as bad as having a pastoral problem]
3. Other Leadership [e.g., the rest of the ministerial staff and deacons]
4. Individual members

THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUESTIONS TO ASK CHURCH LEADERSHIP

1. Do church leaders acknowledge there is a troubling downward trend, and is it worth investigating?
2. Are there any indications of one or more severe problems in the church such as unusual staff departures, Deacons leaving the church, or notable congregational grumbings, or increase in congregational grumbings?
3. What do you think is the root cause of our decline? And can we do anything about it?
 - a. Issues with People, Programs, Ministries, and/or Facilities?
 - b. Demographic issues (i.e., church saturation in our community)?
 - c. God-induced decline due to spiritual failure (e.g., bad sheep, bad shepherds, unfaithful in small things, sin in the camp)? Note: When sin is resolved, then God can reverse the decline ([Is 48:18-19](#); [Ezek 36:33-37](#))
4. Do we only have 1 or 2 big problems causing the decline or a lot of small stuff?
5. Do we have a problem with an outdated constitution and by-laws?
6. Should we consider a cultural change (e.g., move from congregational rule to elder rule)?
7. Do we have doctrinal issues? (e.g., Calvinism? Legalism? Liberalism? Are we doctrine-light?)
8. Is it due to preaching or music styles (e.g., expository vs topical; traditional vs contemporary music; preaching or music is too boring or too flamboyant; formal attire vs casual attire)?
9. When did the decline start?
10. Was the decline in attendance, finances, and/or accomplishments?
11. Have our shepherd(s) been scattering the sheep intentionally or unintentionally (i.e., addition thru subtraction)?
12. Are the shepherds spiritually mature? (i.e., Woe to a [church] with young or inexperienced leaders, [Ecc 10:16](#))
 - a. Are our shepherds/deacons leading by example (i.e., followers are only as good as their leaders)?
 - b. How many people have they invited to church in recent years?
 - c. How many people have they won to the Lord in recent years?
 - d. Are people able to acquire good biblical counsel from the shepherds, or are they told to go home and pray about their problem, or are they sent to another church or agency for counseling ([Mal 2:7](#))?
13. Are the shepherds properly tending the sheep and seeking the wayward or are things ominous as noted in [Ezekiel 34:4](#) (Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them)?
14. Are the shepherds being servants to the sheep or lords over them?
 - a. [Ezekiel 34:4](#); [1Peter 5:1-3](#). Elders are not to be lords over the flock, but to lead by example
 - b. [1Kings 12:7](#). If you will be a servant to these people and serve them and treat them fairly, they will always be your servants.
15. Is the decline due to bad sheep?
 - a. [Num 14:10](#). God calls a congregation who tries to oust their God-anointed leaders EVIL
 - b. [Hoshea 4:16](#). Even God cannot feed or lead stubborn or lazy sheep
16. Are the leaders doing anything about the decline or are they just praying & waiting on God to turn things around?
 - a. [Exodus 14:15](#). God asked and told Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Get the people moving!"
 - b. [Josh 7:10-13](#). God asked & told Joshua, "Why are you praying and doing nothing. Israel has sinned...and they have failed in their mission. Rise up and fix the problem."
 - c. [1Kings 19:9-11](#). God asked and told Elijah, "What are you doing here? Get moving!"
17. How much longer should we wait to address our decline?
18. What event will force us to eventually do something?
19. Again, is our church a Family or a Business?



ONE MORE THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUESTION TO ASK CHURCH LEADERSHIP

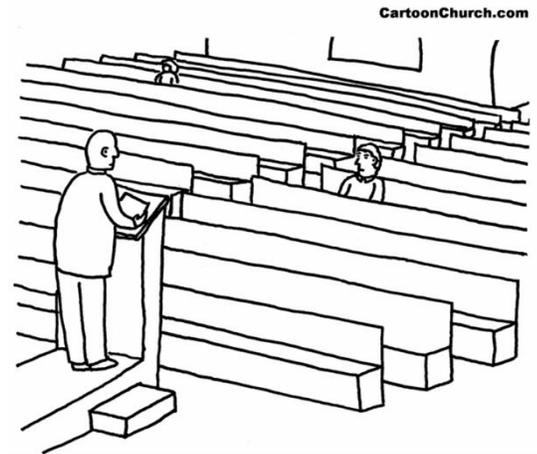
20. Which church-type or types do we resemble the most; and which church type or types do we want to resemble?

Troubling Churches:

- 1) Ephesus – All work, but no love
- 2) Sardis – Dead church, except for a few
- 3) Laodicea – They were rich, but were lukewarm
- 4) Thyatira – Great works, but tolerated immorality
- 5) Corinthians – They had all the gifts, but were babies
- 6) Galatians – They started off great, but went legalistic
- 7) Pergamum – Great works, but tolerated false doctrine

Faithful Churches:

- 1) Smyrna – Persecuted, but not crushed
- 2) Philadelphia – Faithful church to the end
- 3) Colossians – A church that was flourishing
- 4) Romans – Faith was renown, missionary-minded
- 5) Philippians – A church going in the right direction
- 6) Thessalonians – A steadfast church during persecution



INSIGHT FROM NOTABLE CHURCH-GROWTH RESOURCES (Initially gleaned from 19 books & compiled by Col. Murrell Porter, USAF, ret.)

1. **There's Hope for Your Church: First Steps to Restoring Health and Growth**, by Gary McIntosh, 2012
 - Without a doubt, the first thing that must happen before a church can begin a process of revitalization is an admission there is a problem"
 - Deeply ingrained patterns of dysfunctional behavior must be diagnosed, admitted, and resolved.
 - Take complaints seriously – Look for frustration, embarrassment, discouragement, anger – and fix it
 - Churches seldom change without a strong environmental shock (e.g., Pastor leaves or budget crashes).
 - Confront problem people sooner rather than later when it becomes necessary – and do it biblically
 - You evangelize to revitalize; not revitalize to evangelize.
2. **Move: What 1000 Churches Reveal about Spiritual Growth**, by Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson, 2016
 - **Leadership matters.** Leaders in the more highly successful churches share one key attribute: an unrelenting, uncompromising focus and drive to help grow people into disciples of Christ. Their strategies and programs were not radically different. It's their hearts - consumed by Christ – that make the difference.
 - Nothing has a greater impact on spiritual growth than reflection on Scripture. Churches must inspire, encourage, and equip their people to read the Bible, specifically, to reflect on Scripture for life applications.
 - They embed the Bible in everything they do. They breathe Scripture. Every encounter and experience in the church begins with the question, "What does the Bible say about this?"
3. **The Purpose Driven Church: Every Church is Big in God's Eyes**, by Rick Warren, 1995
 - Don't worry about growth. Focus on fulfilling the purposes of your church. God will grow his church to the size he wants it and at the rate that's best for your situation. BUT leaders must want to grow.
 - Church effectiveness is not how many attend services but how many are actively serving
4. **God Dreams: 12 Vision Templates for Finding and Focusing Your Church's Future**, by Will Mancini, 2016
 - Look at demographic information to determine the number of people defined by your locality
 - **An area is saturated if there is one church for every 1,000 people**
5. **Scrappy Church: God's Not Done Yet**, by Thom Rainer, 2019
 - **Successful churches turn to prayer for the turnaround.** They begin the turnaround with a time of intensive prayer for the church – a 24-hour vigil as a start. Prayer is not an afterthought. It is pervasive and powerful.
 - The Turnaround Cycle is worthless without an attitudinal adjustment, which begins first with the senior pastor, then the staff, then the most effective church members, then the whole congregation
6. **High Expectation Churches**, by Thom Rainer, 1999
 - **Sunday School was rated the most effective assimilation program.** Successful adult classes set a goal to start a new class each year.

