

## 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 teaching & preaching?
  3. Good music and worship?
  4. Good programs and ministries?
  5. Friendly people? Prayerful people?
  6. Good facilities and clean bathrooms?
  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.** What do we need to change? Not, who do we need to change out? Are we a Family or a Business?
- 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
- Seek out laborers for the harvest
- Prepare for growth through discipleship
  - ♦ Are we able to handle tough cases (i.e., addictions, immorality)?
  - ♦ We may need to raise up lay counselors

## OTHER 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
- **Kind David** – He ran toward his problem → Goliath
  - ♦ He was prepared to fight (He armed himself with 5 stones)
  - ♦ He was not presumptive, but was prepared for setbacks
- **Joab** – While fighting the enemy he told his brother, "Be strong, and let us show ourselves courageous for the sake of our people; and may the LORD do what is good in His sight."..... 2 Sam 10:12
- **Discipleship.** Church growth could be exponential, as predicted by the Kingdom being compared to leaven or a mustard seed, which mushrooms into something bigger (**Matthew 13:31-33**)
  - ♦ Hence the need to provide thorough discipleship training just to keep up with growth potential
  - ♦ ...and disciple our next Pastor(s) (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 left us (unless they are divisive [Rom 16:17] or prodigal [Luke 15:11-20])
- **AND PRAY BIG.** Let it be according to our faith ..... Mat 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
- Lessons from Jeremiah, Ezekiel, & Zechariah on How NOT to Shepherd:
- **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.** You have scattered my flock and driven them away, for you are evil.
  - **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 that will not listen to the priest or to the judge, even that man shall die.
- **Jer 22:22** [God will remove] your shepherds... Then you will surely be ashamed and humiliated because of all your wickedness.
- **Hoshea 4:16** Since Israel is stubborn like a stubborn heifer, can the LORD shepherd them like a lamb? [rhetorical answer is NO]

## Passages on Church Growth in 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
  - Number of Programs |  Number of 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 numbers, which need to be interpreted, but they often tell a true and accurate story
- **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 700, would need 20+ guests each week to maintain, and 35+ 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**
  - ♦ 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 &amp; 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**
- vv2-4. 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 empowers us, and accurately conveying God's word both saves and matures the congregation to do the work of the ministry ..... **2Tim 3:15-16**
- We also must be aware of "big" issues that need immediate and direct attention. If we let "big" issues linger and fester it does not promote church unity or church growth.

## 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 a dying church (Pastors can't do it all)
  - ♦ If we do not groom leaders from within our churches, then we will always be hiring strangers from the outside to lead us
  - ♦ Plus, we would be taking shepherds away from other churches. This creates a cycle of new shepherds herding unfamiliar sheep, which often causes internal challenges – making the church to have more of an inward focus till things settle down. **Statistics show it typically takes more than 7 years to see growth from an outside pastor.**

## 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?

When shepherds and sheep begin doing what God expects (planting & watering – i.e, 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 under 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



### THOUGHT PROVOKING QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. Do the 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 rumblings or increase in congregational rumblings?
3. What do you think is the root cause of our decline?
  - a. Issues with People/Programs/Ministries/Facilities?
  - b. Demographic issues (i.e., church saturation in our community)?
  - c. God-induced discipline due to spiritual failure (e.g., unfaithful in small things, bad sheep, bad shepherds, sin in the camp)?
4. Do we only have 1 or 2 big problems causing our 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? Are we doctrine-light)?
8. Is it due to preaching styles (e.g., expository vs topical; not enough or too much application; not enough or too much salvation emphasis; preaching is boring or too flamboyant)?
9. When did the decline start? Was the decline in attendance, finances, and/or accomplishments?
10. Have our shepherd(s) been scattering the sheep intentionally or unintentionally (i.e., addition thru subtraction)?
  - a. FYI, God calls shepherds who drive sheep away EVIL ([Jeremiah 23:2](#))
  - b. God calls shepherds who do not investigate issues STUPID ([Jeremiah 10:21](#))
  - c. God calls shepherds who abandon God's sheep WORTHLESS ([Zech 11:17](#))
11. 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](#))?
12. Are the shepherds properly tending the sheep and seeking the wayward 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)?
13. 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.
14. 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
15. 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!"
16. Are we a Family or a Business?

### TYPES OF PEOPLE PROBLEMS IN THE CHURCH

According to [Leviticus 4](#), there are 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 child, 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 (aka, the rest of the ministerial staff and deacons)
4. Individual members

