
How To Grow The Church

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We are facing a crisis in America regarding church growth.

- Each year we are seeing a few more of our churches closing their doors and shutting down.
- We are seeing fewer and fewer congregations starting up.
- When a new congregation starts, it's usually because of a fuss and a congregation is experiencing a hostile split.

Q: What's the problem?

1) **"We don't have enough preachers."**

There's always been a shortage of preachers:

Matthew 9:37-38

³⁷ Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but **the laborers are few.**

³⁸ Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

2) "The preachers we have are lazy and not doing their jobs."

Let's not blame the preachers alone. Everyone shares in the responsibility of evangelizing – not just the preachers.

I would also ask you to remember Jeremiah. No one labored like him and, to my knowledge, he converted no one.

3) "We aren't concentrating on the TV program enough."

Let's remind ourselves that the apostles never had television programs.

(I'm not against television programs.)

I'm simply saying that in spite of no TV, the apostles evangelized to "*every creature under heaven*" (Col 1:23).

What I want to do for a moment is talk about the problem of church growth and offer at least one solution that will help our congregations grow.

First Numbers

First, let's talk about numbers.

Whether we admit it or not, numbers affect us – they really do!

Romans 11:2-4

² ... do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying,

³ "LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life"?

⁴ But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself **seven thousand men** who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

At this time Elijah was very discouraged. He thought he was the only one living for God. He was ready to quit and die.

When he heard there were 7,000 in Israel who had not forsaken God (i.e. when he heard he was not alone), that gave him renewed strength and courage to return and finish the work God had for him.

We get discouraged because we don't seem to grow very much. No one seems interested in the gospel anymore. But Jesus said it would be this way:

Matthew 7:13-14

¹³ "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are **many** who go in by it.

¹⁴ Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are **few** who find it.

We must remember that our responsibility is to preach the gospel in its purity.

- **We are not responsible for growth.**
- We **cannot lower the standards** of the gospel in order to attract more people.
- We **cannot change the worship** of the church in order to attract more people.
- Our responsibility is to preach the word
- The sinner's responsibility is to obey.

If sinners hear the gospel message and do not obey:

- The problem is not the preacher.
- The problem is not how we're conducting our services.

But to put number into perspective, let me inform you of something you might not know.

As of 2008:

- 1/4 of all Protestant congregations have fewer than 35 in attendance at their largest assembly.
- 1/2 of all Protestant congregations have fewer than 75 in attendance at their largest assembly.

These statistics point to the painful fact that Americans are losing their interest in religion.

We are living in a society who has tried the Bible ("Been there/done that") and they don't want it anymore. That's why we're not growing much these days.

The Solution (Step 1)

I wish to offer a solution:

- A solution which I know will work.
- A solution which every congregation can afford.

Not everyone can afford a television program. The solution I'm talking about is affordable.

Flavil Yeakley spoke with a researcher at the Mormon headquarters in Salt Lake City, UT. Here's what Yeakley wrote:

I told [my Mormon friend] that I had seen their 18-year-old “elders” going door to door. But I told him that Churches of Christ have not found door-to-door canvassing to be very successful. We ... make very few converts by that method. I asked him what they did that made door-to-door canvassing productive. He said, *“It is not very productive for us either. We may make one convert for every 3,000 doors those young people knock on.”* He went on to say they continue using door-to-door canvassing because it is good training for their young “elders,” and they occasionally make a convert through that method of contact. So I asked him, “Where is your growth coming from?” He replied, **“We are having many more babies than you people are having ...”**

(Why They Left, Kindle Loc. 2416-2426)

Now, my first suggestion for growing our congregations and brotherhood is for our *young married couples to begin having more babies.*

But listen to me: If that's all we do, we won't grow. This is only the first step.

Step 2

Step 2 is to *train those children every moment of every day.*

We're going to have to train our children:

- With our words.
- With our actions.

Our children are going to have to learn that:

1) The Bible is God's word.

I mean they're going to have to learn that when we read these words we are hearing the voice of God Himself speaking to us.

2 Timothy 3:16

¹⁶ All Scripture is given by [the breath] of God, ...

They have to learn the Bible is the rule book.

- It doesn't change.
- It means what it says.
- It is the only instrument God uses to communicate with us today.

2) **God and His kingdom come first.**

I mean these little ones are going to have to learn ***they are not the center of our lives*** – God and His kingdom are.

Right now, American children are being taught they are the center of the universe. They are being taught that what they want – they get.

Our children are going to have to learn differently.

Matthew 6:33

³³ ... seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, ...

Our children must learn there's something more important than they are.

- ***When church services come around***, it doesn't matter if it's a school night. There's something more important than them getting some rest.

- ***We're not buying the nicest house, the nicest car, or the best clothes*** – because the money that would have paid for some of those things we're giving to God.
- ***When these children step out of line and become immoral we're not going to come to their defense.***

Yes, we love our children. But we love Someone else more than our children.

Matthew 10:37

³⁷ He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

The Past

Think about this: If we had done NOTHING but convert our own children, the church would have grown.

One of the saddest passages in all of the Bible is:

Judges 2:7-10

⁷ So the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD which He had done for Israel.

¹⁰ When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them

who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel.

Q: What was the problem here?

A: The problem is: They did not train their children night and day EVERY DAY.

Their children did not hear the word from the time they got up to the time they went to bed.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7

⁶ "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.

⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

Q: How do Muslims train their children to hate Americans so effectively?

- How can Muslim parents be proud of their children who strap bombs onto themselves and blow themselves up on a crowded bus?
- How do Muslim parents convince their children to blow themselves up in the first place?

Here's how they do it:

- Every waking minute of every single day they teach those children hatred for America and for Israel.
- And those parents are proud to see their children blow themselves up because they love their Muslim religion more than they love their children.

Conclusion

Listen to me: If Muslims can train their children to love their religion enough to die for their cause, we can do the same.

Praise the Lord He's not asking us to kill innocent people. He's asking for us to save them with the inspired word of life.

Let me close with these words of scripture:

Ephesians 6:4

⁴ And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

It's time for fathers to assume their role as the "head of the home" and take responsibility of seeing that their children are trained up in the ways of the Lord.

If we can't evangelize and convert anyone in America – at least let us convert our own children so the church can grow and have a future in America.