

## PARISH GROWTH

### The Four Basic Questions Concerning Congregational Development

- What kind of **CHRISTIAN** does God want your church to produce?
- What kind of **CHURCH** would produce this kind of Christian?
- What kind of **LEADERS** would be needed to create this kind of church?
- What kind of **CLERGY** could develop the leadership to create this church?

### Issues of Numerical Growth

The model from the Early Church: Acts 2:37-47

- Peter preached the **WORD** of God – call to repentance.
- People **ACKNOWLEDGED** their need – what must we do.
- People joined the Church through **BAPTISM**.
- People came under the **TEACHING, FELLOWSHIP, BREAKING OF BREAD, AND PRAYER**
- Many **SIGNS** and **WONDERS** were experienced.
- People gave **GENEROUSLY**.
- People were constant in **PRAYER AND WORSHIP**.
- God **ADDED** to the church.

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## Visible Marks of Growing Churches

1. **NUMERICAL GROWTH**
2. **TRANSFORMED LIVES**
3. **PROCLAIMED THE WORD OF GOD**

## Characteristics of Growing Churches

1. Growing churches are rooted and grounded in **PRAYER**.
2. They have a clear **VISION** and well defined **MISSION**.
3. They are committed to **EVANGELISM** as a priority.
4. They are **NOT ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE**.
5. They have an **ATMOSPHERE** that is contagious.
6. They invest heavily in **YOUTH**.
7. They pursue **EXCELLENCE** at every level.
8. There are no **SACRED COWS**.
9. They have a strong **SENIOR PASTOR**.
10. As a congregation they are willing to take **RISKS**.

## SEVEN CRITERIA FOR CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

1. **WORSHIP.** According to the Canons of the church, a communicant in good standing is one who is present for worship every Sunday, except for good cause. The worship of God was commanded in the Old Testament through remembering the Sabbath. In the New Testament it is the natural expression of giving thanks to Jesus for what He has done for us. Members worship.
2. **BIBLE STUDY.** In *Acts 2:42* we read that the believers continued in the Apostles' teaching. That means they were students. They were learners. They were engaged in the study of Scripture. Members will be in Bible study.
3. **PRAYER.** Central to the life of all believers is developing a vibrant and intimate prayer life. Developing a daily quiet time and joining others in corporate prayer is not optional, it is mandatory.
4. **WITNESS.** In *Acts 1:8* Jesus tells those gathered to wait in Jerusalem until they receive power from on high, then they will be His witnesses. All believers should be able to bear witness to their faith with conviction and intelligence.
5. **MINISTRY.** In *1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4* we are told that all believers have been gifted by God, the Holy Spirit, for ministry. There are many different gifts available for each believer, as the Spirit wills, for the common good. All believers have a gift and a ministry.
6. **STEWARDSHIP.** Throughout Scripture, giving and honoring God with our wealth is central to the life of the believer. It is clear that all believers are stewards of God's possessions and are called to a standard of giving. This is to support the working of the ministry of Jesus Christ on the earth, through the local church.
7. **FELLOWSHIP.** In *Acts 2:42* we read that the believers continued in fellowship. This means small group accountability where sin is confessed and others that care deeply review one's faith journey. Believers seek accountability in their faith journey.

These are the normal commitments for all members of the church through Baptism and Confirmation. All those in leadership positions should have met these minimum criteria and should be examples to the flock.

## DARE TO SHARE

### Overview

Every Christian should have the ability to express their faith in a simple and uncomplicated way when given the opportunity. In fact, the ability to share one's story gives a tremendous credibility to the Christian faith. Your story is not an abstract concept but a faithful telling of how Jesus became real to you and what He has done for you.

When you share your story it's not threatening, it's not preaching, it's not teaching, and it's not talking down to others. You are simply telling others of your experience. It's not up to you to persuade or convince; that's the work of the Holy Spirit. You are "sowing the seed" and allowing your light to shine before others.

Sharing your story and being a faithful witness does require some training, however, you don't need to be "Billy Graham" or a highly educated and trained theologian. In fact, it's probably better that you are not. Average people sharing their story with other average people can (and does) have a huge impact.

### Some Basic Tips About Sharing Your Story

1. Don't embellish – keep it simple and truthful – tell it like it is without exaggeration
2. If you have never had an "powerful/dynamic" conversion experience say so.
3. Avoid Christian Jargon – washed by the blood; atonement, justification, sanctification etc.
4. Avoid lots of biblical quotes
5. Don't argue or try to defend God – just tell them your story
6. Answer objects as best you can, however, it's ok to say you don't know
7. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit – sometimes less is better
8. You are not talking about "religion" or your denomination, only your personal experience with the Lord

### Acts 1:4-8

And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," *He said*, "you have heard from Me; <sup>5</sup> for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." <sup>6</sup> Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" <sup>7</sup> And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. <sup>8</sup> But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be <sup>9</sup>witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

### **I Peter 3:15 (Good News Translation)**

<sup>15</sup> But have reverence for Christ in your hearts and honor him as Lord. **Be ready at all times to answer** anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you,

**English Standard Version**

<sup>15</sup> but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

## 2 Peter 1:16-18

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. <sup>17</sup> For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son,<sup>[a]</sup> with whom I am well pleased,” <sup>18</sup> we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

## I John 1:1-4

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— <sup>2</sup>the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— <sup>3</sup>that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>And we are writing these things so that our<sup>[a]</sup> joy may be complete.

## Acts 26 – Entire Chapter – Paul’s Defense Agrippa

- Verse 5 I was previously a Pharisee
- Verses 9 – 12 I persecuted the church
- Verses 14 - 18 The Road to Damascus encounter with Jesus
- Verses 19 -23 Paul's new life and ministry

Notice there are three distinct parts to Paul's personal story – His WITNESS or TESTIMONY

1. Part One – my life before Christ
2. Part Two – my conversion to Christ and understanding the faith
3. Part Three – my desire to live for Jesus in obedience to my revelation

In the Space below – write out briefly your testimony using the outline above

Life Before Christ

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Conversion to Christ

My life Today