

THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

August 27

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What Will Cause A Church To Grow?

I venture to say that we all desire to see the Lord's church grow and prosper both spiritually and numerically. Thinking about that, I suggest to you...

The Church Will Grow When Christ Is Preached.

In order for the Lord's church to grow, Christ is going to have to be preached. You see, this was the kind of preaching that converted about 3000 souls on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:22-41). This was the kind of preaching that Philip did, which resulted in the conversion of men and women in Samaria (Acts 8:5-12). This is the same kind of preaching that converted the eunuch from Ethiopia (Acts 8:35-39), and this is the kind of preaching done by the apostle Paul (Acts 17:18) which resulted in the conversion of some in Athens (Acts 17:34). Once more, the preaching of Christ will cause a church to grow.

The Church Will Grow When There Is Unity Among Brethren.

We learn in Acts 2:46, that the early church was of one accord. Simply put, the early church was united in both doctrine and purpose (Acts 2:42, 44), and the result of this was a church that grew daily (Acts 2:47). Think about that! You see, when the Lord's people are of one accord, when they are united in doctrine and purpose, when they have all things in common, the Lord's church will grow.

The Church Will Grow When Discipline Is Practiced.

In Acts 5:1-11, we have recorded for us the first account of discipline being practiced in the church, which not only brought about great fear upon all of the church, but also upon all those who heard about it. However, this action also ultimately resulted in multitudes of men and women being increasingly added to the Lord (Acts 5:14). You see, brethren, we have an

obligation to keep the Lord's church pure (1 Corinthians 5:1-7; Ephesians 5:27), and this is done by practicing discipline upon those members of the Lord's church who walk disorderly (2 Thessalonians 3:6). Remember that, and know that when discipline is practiced, it will help the church grow both spiritually and numerically.

The Church Will Grow When The Word of God Is Spread.

The word of God, is the kingdom seed (Luke 8:11). Therefore, in order for the Lord's church to grow in number, the seed is going to have to be planted, and we learn in Acts 6:7, that when the word of God spread, the number of disciples multiplied greatly. You see, if the Lord's church is going to grow in number, it is going to require the word of God being spread. Knowing that, may we all be diligent in planting and watering the seed, for by doing so, God will give the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6).

The Church Will Grow When It Has Peace and Is Edified.

We find in Acts 9:31, that two key ingredients for church growth is peace and edification. You see, when a church is free from persecution, strife, and contention it will be at peace, and it will be a proper environment which will promote both spiritual and numerical growth. Likewise, a church will grow when it is edified (i.e. built up). Now, some may ask, how can I help build up the church? Well, I suggest to you that you can attend it up and love it up (Read: Hebrews 10:24-25). Again, when at church is at peace and is built up it will promote a proper environment for growth.

The Church Will Grow When It Walks In The Fear of The Lord and In The Comfort of The Holy Spirit.

In Acts 9:31, we also learn that it is important for a church to walk in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit. Now, it's important to note that when you think church, you need to think people. For, it is people who make up the church (Ref. Acts 5:11; 11:22). However, if the Lord's church is going to grow, it is going to have to have members who properly conduct themselves in the reverence of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

Brethren, keep in mind that the things listed above produced church growth in the first century, and if we will likewise practice them today, they will also produce church growth in the twenty-first century. Therefore, let us make proper application of these things, and let us all strive to do our part in helping the Lord's church grow both spiritually, and numerically!

✍ Brad Phillips

THE WORK OF THE CHURCH AND INDIVIDUALS

The church's work has always been evident in the scriptures.

Preach the word. "For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything" (1 Thess. 1:8).

Edify (spiritually "build up") the saints. "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12).

Assist needy saints. "Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all" (2 Cor. 9:13).

These commands restrict the church's work to these three areas. However, many folks have argued that more things need to be done by the church. Some say part of the church's work needs to be financially assisting non-Christians and using funds for recreational activities. Assisting non-Christians and enjoying recreational activities are mentioned in the scriptures, but whose responsibility are they? Are they the church's responsibility? What does the scripture say?

Galatians 6:10 states, "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith." Paul used the term "us" to the Galatians here, but who is the "us?" Throughout the chapter, one sees Paul talking about the individual as he uses words like "one," "you," "a

man," and other words like that. This is supposed to be something individuals are doing. Not the church.

In Acts 2:46, it says concerning the disciples, "Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart." How did they engage in this recreational activity of eating together, as the church or as individuals? It says the breaking of bread took place from house to house. This implies it was done by individuals. This wasn't something the church was doing. This was something Christians were doing.

The work of the church and the individual are different. The church's focus is supposed to be saving the lost and helping those within the church. The individual is supposed to do that and more. This is important to remember. Rather than burdening the church (1 Tim. 5:16), why not respect God's plan for the work we are to do as Christians and what we're commanded to do as the church?

Ethan Jennings

Belleville church of Christ

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Schedule of Services

Sunday Bible Study	9:30 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship	4:00 p.m.
Wednesday Bible Study	7:00 p.m.

Evangelist

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