THE CHURCH THAT GROWS

ACTS 2:1-47

INTRO: WHY IS IT THAT THERE CAN BE TWO SEPARATE CHURCHES WHERE THE WORD OF GOD IS PREACHED, AND ONE CONTINUES TO GROW DRASTICALLY, AND THE OTHER ONE DOES NOT GROW HARDLY AT ALL?

EXAMPLES:
1) One church in a given town that went from 0 to over 800 in one year.
2) One church in the same town that only had 300 after 50 years.

BOTH CHURCHES were of the same denomination, in the same town, ministering to the same local culture, with pastors from the same Bible College, with people having the same financial scale, and yet one church was booming (over 10,000 members in 5 years) and the other one never got above 300.

Now, a strong hyper-Calvinistic person may say, “Those churches were predestined by God to be what they are.” But from the standpoint of what the Bible teaches about church growth and development, that argument does not hold out very long. THE VERY CONCEPT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH IS THAT IT IS TO BE CONTINUALLY GROWING SPIRITUALLY AND NUMERICALLY!

1) Note Matthew 16:18
2) Note Acts 2:41, then 2:47, then 4:4, then 5:14, then 6:7, then 9:31, then 11:21, then 11:24, then 14:1, then 16:5, then 14:4.

AN INTERESTING OBSERVATION: For the last 35 years there have been those who have said, “We need to get back to the early church where we meet in people’s homes.” Their point is that the church should stay small, but that is not supported by scripture at all! GOD’S DESIGN IS FOR CHURCHES TO GROW CONTINUALLY!

A VERY SAD OBSERVATION: We are living in a day when most churches in America are either “holding their own,” or not growing at all. WHAT IS WRONG? THE ANSWER IS: THE BIBLICAL PATTERN FOR CHURCH GROWTH IS NOT BEING FOLLOWED, EVEN BY DOCTRINALLY SOUND, FUNDAMENTAL CHURCHES!

LET’S STUDY THE EARLY CHURCH AND SEE WHY IT GREW. THE LOCAL CHURCH THAT COMMITS ITSELF TO FOLLOWING THE SAME PATTERN WILL SURELY GROW SPIRITUALLY AND NUMERICALLY!

THE FOUNDATION FOR CHURCH GROWTH

ACTS 2:1-40

NOTE: THE FOUNDATION FOR CHURCH GROWTH WAS THAT PETER FOLLOWED THE CHRIST-DESIGNED METHOD OF COMMUNICATING BIBLICAL TRUTH….HE PREACHED A SERMON! Note: 1 Cor. 1:21!

NOTE: The sermon Peter preached LAID THE FOUNDATION for church growth with the various points of emphasis he made before his audience.

A. The Emphasis upon the Use of Scripture
   1. Verse 16 from Joel 2:28
   2. Verses 25 – 27 from Psalm 16:8-10
   3. Verse 30 from 2 Samuel 7:12-17
   4. Verses 34,35 from Psalm 110:1

B. The Emphasis upon the Way of Salvation – Vs. 21

C. The Emphasis upon the Message of the Gospel – Vss. 23,24
   -The Gospel is the DEATH, BURRIAL, AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST. Cp. 1 Corinthians 15:3,4.

D. The Emphasis upon the Invitation to Salvation – Vss. 37-40

ILLUSTRATION:

II. THE FORMULA FOR CHURCH GROWTH

ACTS 2:1,38,41,42

NOTE: FOR ANY LOCAL CHURCH TO GROW, THESE PRINCIPLES MUST BE PRESENT. A GROWING CHURCH MAY HAVE MORE PRINCIPLES THAN THESE, BUT NEVER FEWER!

A. The Principle of Biblical Unity – Vs. 1
   -Genuine church growth will never occur where there is division.

B. The Principle of Repentance from Sin – Vs. 38
   -Repentance involves turning to Christ from Sin. Unfortunately this is not preached as much as it should be these days in the church.

C. The Principle of Believers Baptism – Vs. 38
   -Baptism is the outward way to identify with Christ. Many Christians do not believe this these days. It is a part of the Great Commission! Mt. 28:19,20

D. The Principles of Spiritual Development – Vs. 42
   1. The Apostles Doctrine – Divine Truth communicated by the Apostles who received their message directly from God. Since 96 AD when The Book of the Revelation was completed doctrine is Divine Truth found in the Bible and taught by the Holy Spirit.
   2. The Fellowship of Believers – The early church was together daily and it grew. If a local church is to grow, it must be a center for fellowship.
   3. The Breaking of Bread – The celebrating of the Lord’s Supper. The local church MUST focus on what Christ has done!
   4. The Practice of Prayer – A church void of genuine prayer will be a stagnant church!

ILLUSTRATION:

III. THE FUNCTION FOR CHURCH GROWTH

ACTS 2:43-47

NOTE: A LOCAL CHURCH PRACTICING THE ABOVE FORMULA WILL FUNCTION IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS WITHOUT ANY DEVIATION!

A. There will be Respect for God – Vs. 43a
   -When the church is functioning as it should, it will not operate as a circus or in a flippant way. There will be GREAT RESPECT FOR GOD which will result in GENUINE WORSHIP OF GOD!
B. There will be Ministry in the Community – Vs. 43a
-When the church is functioning as it should, great things will be done by
the leaders of the church inside and outside of the church walls.
C. There will be Sharing with Others – Vss. 44-45
-When the church is functioning as it should, there will be a togetherness of
the people that will result in helping others who are in need. The early
Christians actually SOLD their possessions “as every man had need.”
D. There will be Continual Service Unto the Lord – Vss. 46,47a
  1. Including being in ONE ACCORD daily – Vs. 46a
  2. Including being in the TEMPLE daily – Vs. 46b
  3. Including being in FELLOWSHIP with each other daily – Vs. 46c
  4. Including being involved with WORSHIP daily – Vs. 47a

“AND THE LORD ADDED TO THE CHURCH DAILY SUCH AS SHOULD
BE SAVED!”

ILLUSTRATION:

LESSON: LOCAL CHURCHES ARE DESIGNED BY GOD AND
EXPECTED BY GOD TO GROW CONTINUALLY! A LOCAL CHURCH
THAT IS NOT GROWING IS NOT FOLLOWING THE BIBLICAL MODEL!
WHAT DOES OUR CHURCH NEED TO DO TO ENHANCE GROWTH!

SPIRITUAL AND NUMERICAL GROWTH IN THE LOCAL CHURCH
WILL ALWAYS GLORIFY GOD AND DRAW ATTENTION TO HIM,
WHICH IS THE CHIEF REASON WHY THE CHURCH EXISTS! A
CHURCH THAT IS NOT GROWING IS NOT GLORIFYING GOD TO THE
EXTENT THAT GOD EXPECTS!