How To Grow A Great Church - Must It Be Large

Jim Bill McInteer

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.harding.edu/mcinteer-sermons-topic

Recommended Citation
HOW TO GROW A GREAT CHURCH - MUST IT BE LARGE?

I. If I knew the exact answer to my subject, I'd be making this same speech in every congregation in the land. We all are interested in it! We all think we know part of the answers! (How much for bull)?

A. I walked the streets of ancient Ephesus.
   1. Saw the roads rutted.
   2. Houses, temples, monuments.
   4. Market & sandy streets for "Follow Me".

B. To whom would I deliver the letter?

Eph. 1:15-23 (Read) To the st. which art at Eph.
Rev. 2:4 "Nevertheless I have somewhat"
5 "Remember therefore from whence"

C. Churches rise & fall - candlesticks are removed - there for some is a "glory that once was Rome". For others the star is rising.
   1. Peter Berger quote - #2.
   2. Belew quote - #3.
   3. Pyramid Principle - #3A.

II. Growth is in the Hands of God.
1 Cor. 3:6 "I have planted, Apollos watered"

A. The church is His.
   1. Wears his name.
   2. Bought with his "money" - blood of Jesus.
   3. Received into glory by his calling.
B. Notwithstanding as an earthen vessel there are tasks that are mine.

C. Kearley editorial - Riggs

III. Essential to Growth is:

1. The magnification of the name of Jesus.
   Zech. 6:12 "Behold the man whose name is The-
   He shall build the temple"
   1. He is the Branch.
   2. He builds the temple.
   3. In it He is to be reverenced & adored.
   4. Gamaliel was right!
   Acts. 5:39 "If it be of God, ye cannot overthrow"
   Eph. 3:10-11 "To the event that now unto prin."

2. If it be of God, ye cannot overthrow.
   Matt. 16:18 "And I say unto thee"

5. Everlasting - gates of hell are nil.

3. In it He is to be reverenced & adored.
   Eph. 2:21 "In whom all the bldg. fittly framed"
   1 Pet. 2:2 "As newborn babes desire"
   2 Pet. 3:18 "Grew in grace and knowledge"
   Eph. 4:15 "But speaking the truth in love"
   2 Thess. 1:3 "Faith grows exceedingly
   Love abounds
   Glory in the church"
1. The blessed truth of God must be its food & building materials.
2. Love
   a) New Orleans monument 7/4/1900.
   b) Read Isa. 58:6-7 #4
   c) Heal where they hurt!
   d) Mother of 7 - divide? Multiple #5
3. Stay Healthy
   1 Cor. 15:33"Bad company corrupts good character"
   C. Body Must Be Clean
   1 Jn. 1:7-9"But if we walk in the light"
   Jn. 15:3"Now ye are clean thru the word"
   Rev. 19:8"Fine linen, clean, white - rt. of saints
   1. Dirt & health do not go together.
   2. Dirt & filth are not attractive.
      a) Clean temple
      b) Moral lives
   3. Secular, material - More at Vandy Wednesday night than church.
   4. 1 in 3 marriages fail -- absentee daddys - spiritually too.
   5. 7%, 2 M upper white latchkey kids; 70% mothers work.
(4) D. There is the mutual effort of every part:
   1. Tell story of Nu. 32.
      a) Reuben & Gad.
      b) Multitude of cattle.
      v-1"Behold the place was a place for cattle"
      v-4"Is a land for cattle & thy servants have c!"
      v-5"Let this land be (ours) bring us not over J.
      v-6"Shall your brethren go to war & shall ye sit here?
I

V 2. Failure of cooperation called: Sitting still, discourage, sinful man, turning way from God, destroy people, leave in wilderness, sin.
3. Can't go with one spark plug & win the race where others use 8!
   a) 210,000 increase today.
   b) 60,000 to Chr. daily - look at disparity - (Walt's clip) #8
      (4 Billion clipping) #9
      (Looks like everybody's home) #9A
   c) One dies every 21 sec. - 171 die in Sunday services!
   d) Child born every 12 sec. thus 1000 new classes of Bible daily!
   e) Cooperated - built Jer. wall in 52 days.

W-17"We ourselves - will go ready armed"
W-23"But if ye will not do so, behold sinner...
   be sure your sins will"
   (Boy to Dad can't get along w/ c your wife) - #7

c) It "discourages" (v-7).
d) History (thus did your fathers)
e) Cites 40 years of history.
f) "Ye are risen up in your father's stead, an increase of sinful men to augment yet the fierce anger of of the Lord" (v-14)
g) Turn away from him.
h) Leave again in wilderness.
i) Destroy all this people.
k) Pledged to help.

V-17"We ourselves will go ready armed"
V-23"But if ye will not do so, behold sinner...
   be sure your sins will"
   (Boy to Dad can't get along with your wife) - #7
E. People who will seize the day.
1. They have a vision & pursue it.
   Acts. 2:17 "Young men shall see visions"
   Prov. 29:18 "Where there is no vision"
2. Webber quote - #10.
3. Benowsky quote - #11
   4. "Look not back in anger, nor forward in fear
      but around you in awareness" R. Hershey
A MAN DROVE into the farmer's yard and asked him, "How much is that old bull worth to you?"

The farmer thought for a moment and said, "That depends . . . are you the tax assessor, do you want to buy him or has he been run over by a truck?"
Religion in America is a starry-eyed optimism and a naive credulity in the ideology of the status quo; also religion is something that goes well together with an unthinking, if benign conservatism in all areas of life.

-Peter L. Berger
The Noise of Solemn Assemblies
In some instances, churches, seeking to remain uncorrupted by secular society, have withdrawn from the culture. These churches viewed their obligation as that of removing themselves from the profane world of business, politics, liberal education, public entertainment, and war, in order to establish a separate community of the elect. Consequently, the church is looked upon primarily as the defender of orthodox beliefs and traditional morality. She becomes essentially a fortress into which Christians retreat and in which they seek to find their security against the onslaught of a corrupt society.

In other instances, churches remembering only that they must be in the world, have become folk churches; as such they identify with a particular culture and seek to preserve that. Too few churches have seen themselves as a mission of God in the world.
A gentleman who had traveled very little was visiting a large city. One night his host took him to a hill overlooking the city so he could view the panorama of lights stretched out below. After the fellow had looked his fill, he turned to his friend and commented, "Looks like everybody is home!" — Sunshine Mag, 3-70.
The true church is an outpost of the Kingdom of God, which has been placed in a particular spot in the world to bear witness to the lordship of Jesus Christ; a mission living by the foolishness of God in a world that sometimes hates it, or is indifferent and seeks to take it captive. The church that does not recognize the basis purpose for its existence may die. The church in America must see it is in a missionary situation.

-George W. Webber
“The Christian can seek for truth in any field without fear,” Dr. Francis Schaeffer has noted. “There are no skeletons in God’s closet — nothing that is true will contradict or diminish faith in Him and His Word.”
Rupert Brooke has coined the attitude of confidence and opportunity to which we must dedicate ourselves: "Now God be thanked who has matched us with this hour." Ours is the opportunity of elevating a world shrouded in an overcast of heartache to higher altitude and the brilliant sunshine of God's grace.

From "Every Day Can Be a Sunny Day" - By William S. Banowsky.
Editorial
“The Church... Was Multiplied”

F. Furman Kearley

Acts 8:25 reports, “So the church throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified; and, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, was multiplied” (ASV).

The early church grew despite opposition, persecution and hardship, beginning with few in number, originating in a despised land, having no printing presses or mass media. The church grew from a small handful to more than 50 million in approximately 12 years. The early church’s core elements were the conversion, dedication, purity, study, prayer, conference, missions, energy, unity, service and evangelism of the early church (Acts 5:19-29; 6:1-7; 8:1-7; 9:26-43; 10:1-48; 11:1-18).

F. Furman Kearley reports, “being edified; and, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit...” many characteristics that contributed to the growth of the church can be identified in the book of Acts. Basically, the reasons are summed up in the fact that the disciples believed so strongly that they could not boast in comparison. In comparison, they believed so confidently; they were willing to die rather than renounce Christ.

In America today, the Christian religion is on the decline. The churches of Christ are not growing but are on the decline also. Atheism, infidelity and immorality are on the increase.

Some try to bury their head in the sand, deny the problems and press on in blind optimism. Others curse the darkness, bemoan the problem and berate the enemies, but do nothing to solve the problem. Some add to the problem by saying “about words to no profit” (2 Timothy 2:14 ASV), “doting about questions,” and engaging in “strife, seditions, evil surmisings, wrangelings” (1 Timothy 6:3-5 ASV). Many distort Christianity and drive men from it by adding to God’s Word and binding traditions of men, while others take away from God’s Word (Matthew 16:19; 15:1-20; Revelation 22:18,19).

What we must do, if we are to turn from decline to growth again, is to light a candle. We must recognize and admit the problem, analyze the problem, and restore the spirit, the attitude and the actions of the Christians as described in the book of Acts.

Every congregation and every Christian should study thoroughly the book of Acts asking these questions: What were the characteristics of the early Christians and church that contributed to its growth and spread? Do I or this congregation possess these characteristics? How can we restore these characteristics today? How can we interact with our society as the early Christians interacted with theirs to turn men from darkness to light— from wickedness to righteousness?

The book of Acts has the answers. The New Testament reveals the solution. The problem is not in the wisdom of men but in the power and spirit of the Word of God. We can learn from men, but we must make everything pass the test of the Word of God.

A recent report by the Gama Research Group reveals four reasons why the church is floundering: lack of interest in growing.

1. Church members did not evangelize but have adopted the attitude, “Leave the post coming on in the profession...” (Acts 9:5-10,11).

2. Religious teachers are not communicating the message— not speaking their language but a specialized religious vocabulary.

3. Preachers operate upon the false assumption that people believe the Bible. In reality, more than 50 percent of the people questioned the accuracy and authority of the Bible to some degree. This means that about 33 percent of church members do not accept the unquestioned authority of the Bible.

4. Churches allocate inadequate resources of personal effort and financial aid to reaching the unconverted. This often goes too much on themselves and not enough on reaching the lost.

This study briefly mentions three possible steps toward solving the problem. First, the church and Christians must place priority on connecting to the lost. Evangelism must be a high priority by Christians. Of course, evangelism that comes from halfhearted, lukewarm, unconvincing, morally corrupt Christians will have no effect. We must get our Christian living and Christian service in order to be effective in evangelism.

Second, we must analyze our audience more carefully. People are not all the same. Some are religious, some are not. We must be sure that we are reaching the lost. We must be sure we are reaching the unconverted.

Third, we must communicate the message more effectively and clearly. This includes the words we use, the style of preaching, the illustrations, the methods of presentation, the quality of media and visual aids and every aspect of communication. As Paul charged, “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one” (Colossians 4:6 ASV). Also, he taught us to speak “the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15).

Obviously, the burden is not only on the Christian. The lost ones share the responsibility. They must respond to the gospel. But “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Romans 10:14 ASV).

It is the responsibility of the church and Christians to see that the lost hear and that they hear in such a fashion as to have an opportunity to respond.

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15 ASV).
In the book, The Pyramid Principle of Church Growth, David Womack made the observation that churches tend to level off their growth at specific plateaus. He noted these are 75, 85, 125, 180, 240, 280, 360, 600, 800, and just under 1,200. He said he was challenged in this observation by George Edgerly, a statistician with a denominational Sunday School Department. So he asked Mr. Edgerly to study their statistical records and find at what predictable sizes their churches stopped growing. He concluded it was 50, 90, 130, 180, 220, 260, and 400. (You don't have to be much of a mathematician to see that the two are pretty close.)

But why is this true? Womack concluded: "In my opinion, once a church is large enough to care for its own members, pay its own expenses and establish a favorable image in the community, the congregation often loses momentum and is lulled into the peaceful slumber of religious passivity."

1. REALIZE OUR WORK IS NOT DONE EVEN THOUGH WE'VE MADE PROGRESS. God gave Joshua the job of taking all of the land of Canaan. For a while the people did good, but after they got enough for them to live comfortably on they stopped. God said to Joshua, "You are very old, and there are still very large areas of land to be taken over" (Joshua 13:1). We've many more to win, and a city who needs to know about the Lord. We cannot stop just because we've enjoyed some success.

2. CONSTANTLY INVOLVE MORE PEOPLE IN THE WORK. This is exactly what God had Joshua do. He was told to take the land and "divide it as an inheritance" among the people (Joshua 13:8). The church can continue to grow only as leadership and responsibility are divided. Our biggest fault has been in thinking only a few ought to be involved in decision making and specific works.

3. LET THE LEADERS SHOW ENTHUSIASM. God told Joshua, "Be strong and courageous because you will lead these people to inherit the land..." (Joshua 1:6). Our leaders must be

Dick Marcear
Experts tell us that by 1980, 75 percent of America's population will reside in the cities. Apartment housing is the fastest-growing type of shelter for urban Americans--constructed at the rate of 500,000 units per year. The church must create a method of reaching these contemporary, and often unrelated, urban cliff dwellers.

We can experiment. We can try direct mail to individuals who live in the high-rise apartments. We can begin young adult clubs, home Bible study classes, Bible education programs. A family or individual can move into an apartment building and be a "light" shining in darkness, or "salt" flavoring its environment.

Let us be perceptive about the tremendous resource that is buried in the city's people. Together these attitudes can set off an explosion of love that will be the transformation we need.

But, we must go! And we must go humbly, ready to learn as
well as to teach; ready—if necessary—to lay down our lives.

"The City A Matter of Conscience and Other Messages" — By George Sweeting — Page 27
AN INTERESTING NOTE:

According to the latest statistics available, Texas leads all states in the U.S. with the most congregations of the Church of Christ, with 2,222 and 278,820 active members in these congregations. Tennessee is second with 1,444 congregations and 174,355 active members. Alabama is third with 875 congregations and 68,268 active members. Arkansas is fourth, 763 congregations and 70,139 active members. California is fifth, 676 congregations, and 68,842 active members. Sixth is Oklahoma with 638 congregations and 71,728 active members and Kentucky stands seventh with 600 congregations and 46,158 active members.

EVEN MORE INTERESTING:

A survey was conducted asking how the members felt their preacher should use their time. The results were recorded in the percentage of total time which should be spent in each area of work:

- Sermon preparation: 65%
- General church work: 25%
- Public relations: 45%
- Administration: 0%
- Counselling: 60%
- Visiting non-members: 80%
- Visiting members: 85%

The total of these figures means that the folks surveyed felt their preacher should use 360% of their time in church work. They would only need 460 additional hours in their week to fulfill the expectations of those surveyed.

You cannot please everyone, so whom should you strive to please? A difficult task isn't it, when you try to please people.

-Joe Riggs
"Is not this what I require of you as a fast: to loose the fetters of injustice, to untie the knots of the yoke, to snap every yoke & set free those who have been crushed? Is it not sharing your food with the hungry, taking the homeless poor into your house, clothing the naked when you meet them and never evading a duty to your kinfolk?"
A mother of seven was asked how she divided her love among so many children.

“You don’t divide,” she corrected. “You multiply.”
LET'S COMPROMISE

WILLIAM PILE

The hunter raised his rifle and took careful aim at a large bear. When about to pull the trigger, the bear spoke in a soft soothing voice, "Isn't it better to talk than to shoot? What do you want? Let's negotiate the matter.

Lowering his rifle, the hunter replied, "I want a fur coat." "Good," said the bear, "that is a negotiable request. I only want a full stomach, so let's work out a compromise."

They sat down to negotiate and after a time the bear walked away alone. The negotiations had been successful. The bear had a full stomach, and the hunter had his fur coat.

The fable says it straight: there's no compromising with the devil. "Neither give place to the devil," Ephesians 4:27 warns.
The mother was away on a visit. The father noticed his small son sitting on the front steps very unhappy. "What's wrong, son?" he asked. "Just between you and me," the boy answered, "I simply cannot get along without your wife."
For your future reference and encouragement, let me put on paper some information we shared orally Sunday morning:

At the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago the IBM Corporation has an exhibit explaining the phenomenon of geometric progression.

QUESTION: You have a regular checkerboard with sixty-four squares. On the first square you place one grain of wheat. On the second square you put two grains, and you continue to double the number of grains on each square (four on the next square, eight on the next, sixteen..., thirty-two..., and so forth). WHEN YOU GET TO THE SIXTY-FOURTH SQUARE HOW MUCH WHEAT WILL YOU HAVE?

ANSWER: Enough to bury the entire nation of India in FIFTY FEET OF WHEAT!

Rarely do we contemplate the powerful impact of just influencing one life at a time. Satan wants us to assume that only those who have the opportunity of speaking to many at once will ever be able to make real changes in this world. Therefore, since we're not on nation television and crowds don't gather by the hundreds and thousands to listen to our ideas, our opportunities are limited.

God says that's a lie! His whole plan for reaching the world IS NOT based on mass evangelism, but on one person reflecting the life and love of Jesus through their lives to another person. He is more interested in the QUALITY of our lives than in the QUANTITY of our influence. If the quality is right, the quantity will follow.

It is wonderful to see a growing number of people in this congregation who are touching lives daily -- one on one -- with that life-changing quality available only through Jesus. Only God has an imagination big enough to dream of what your influence can accomplish in the years to come!

Looking forward to what God is planning for our "family get-together" this Sunday at Antioch. Don't miss it!

Walt
area which, within five years, holds the promise of providing a large proportion of the food the country needs.

The term overpopulation then, really does not describe the true situation everywhere throughout the developing world. One has to ask, "How many is too many?"

The Coming Four Billion

None of this is to be construed as an invitation to sanguinity. The world is certainly not out of trouble. Babies are weighing in on this fragile planet at the astonishing rate of three hundred fifty thousand every day. That's a new Tulsa, Oklahoma, or Calgary, Alberta, every twenty-four hours. Any second now, one of these hungry newcomers could turn up the world's people-counter to a massive four billion.

From the original two we've come a long way. The Population Bulletin (April 1971) reports that "from the time of Adam and Eve until now man's population has doubled 31 times." In early 1975, population growth was occurring at the rate of 2.1 percent a year, according to a U.N. report. That sounds very innocuous and nonthreatening. However, at that rate we add another million people to the total in less than five days. A billion people in no more than a dozen years, and will double the population by the year 2007.

U.N. Secretary General Kurt Waldheim told the Bucharest conference, "The next 30 to 35 years may well be the most challenging in the history of mankind... for it is virtually certain that the world's population will double [to eight billion]."

Look where we've come from. It took from the beginning of man until 1830 for one billion people to inhabit the earth. It took only one century to double that to two billion, and only thirty years to climb to three billion. The next leap to five billion will take place in only a twenty-four year time span. That is what the Club of Rome report, Limits to Growth, calls "super-exponential" growth. It means that not only are we increasing, says the Club, a group of noted scientists, but the rate of increase is also increasing.

Think about it this way. Most of us usually conceive of growth as being linear, such as when a child becomes an inch