WHAT WILL MAKE THE CHURCH GROW?

by Donald Townsley

INTRODUCTION:
1. This question is often asked by members of the church.
2. Those who are sound in the faith will ponder the question:
   (1) Not from the standpoint of numbers alone.
   (2) But, what will make it grow spiritually strong.
3. A spiritually strong church will grow in number.
4. Sometimes a congregation must get in spiritual shape to grow -- Rev. 2:5
5. Let us look at, and study, some of the characteristics that a congregation MUST have if it is to grow.

I. THE CHURCH MUST FAITHFULLY TEACH THE TRUTH
   1. The church is the fulfillment of God’s eternal purpose -- Eph. 3: 10 - 11
   2. It is a spiritual institution -- John 18: 36; Rom. 14:17; 10:15
   3. It is the "pillar and ground of the truth" -- I Tim. 3:15
   4. It preaches a spiritual message -- John 6:63; Rom. 1: 16; John 6:68
   5. This message is powerful; it can make men FREE from sin -- John 8:32; James 1:25; Gal. 5:1; I Cor. 15: 1 - 2; Mk. 16:15 - 16; Heb. 4:12; Rom. 1:16
   6. This message must be preached in "its fullness" -- Acts 20:27; 20:20
   7. Men must be charged to teach "no other doctrine"-- I Tim. 1:3; II John 9 - 11
   8. The unfruitful works of darkness must be REPROVED -- Eph. 5:11; II Tim. 4:2
   9. Every man must be warned of dangers to his soul -- Col. 1: 28
   10. When a congregation fails to teach the truth upon any subject, the disastrous results will soon be seen.
   11. A growing church is one that is faithful in its teaching.

II. THE CHURCH MUST BE STEADFAST IN PRAYER.
   1. A growing church is a PRAYING church -- Acts 2:42; I Tim. 2: 1 - 8
   3. We need to pray:
      (1) For daily bread -- Matt. 6:11
      (2) For God’s will to be done in earth as it is in heaven -- Matt. 6:10
      (3) We need to pray for forgiveness -- Matt. 6:12
      (4) We need to pray for God to deliver us from temptation -- Matt. 6:13; I Cor. 10:13
      (5) Pray for preachers -- I Thess. 5:25; Eph. 6: 17:20; Col. 4: 2 - 3; I Thess. 3:1
      (6) Pray for the lost -- Rom. 10:1
(7) Pray for the sick -- James 5: 15 - 16
(8) Pray for those in authority -- I Tim. 2: 1 - 3

III. A GROWING CHURCH HAS SPIRITUAL EMPHASIS

1. Love for God, Christ and the Truth is emphasized above love for man -- Matt. 10:37; 22: 37 - 38; John 8:32
2. The kingdom of God, or church, is given priority over all things of the world -- Matt. 6:33; Heb. 10:25; Luke 9: 59 - 62
3. Elders are not absorbed in details and errands that can be assigned to others -- Acts 6:4
   (1) They are busy leading the people into lives of purity; they do it by example and teaching -- Tit. 2: 11 - 12; I Pet. 5:3; Heb. 13: 7
   (2) They are busy leading the church into unity -- I Cor. 1:10
   (3) They are busy leading the church into spiritual productivity.
5. The preacher is not absorbed in clerical work and social activities, and details in general -- he is busy studying, reading, meditating and preaching the word -- I Tim. 4:13; II Tim. 2:15; II Tim. 4:2; Acts 20: 20
6. Members are not so swayed by the world that they don't have time to attend the services, study their Bibles and teach sinners what to do to be saved -- Matt. 13:22; Mark 4:19

IV. A GROWING CHURCH IS LIBERAL IN GIVING

1. The early church was liberal in giving -- Acts 2:42; 2: 44 -45; 4:32, 34 - 35
2. Such liberality was manifested because, "First they gave their own selves to the Lord" -- II Cor. 8:5
3. God and Christ set the example of liberal giving -- John 3:16; Eph. 5:2
4. The Lord has taught us to be liberal in giving -- II Cor. 9: 6 - 7
5. When the people of God give their money, time, and service, the gospel will be preached and the church will grow.

V. PURITY IN LIVING WILL MAKE THE CHURCH GROW

1. Failing to "practice what we preach" turns men from the gospel -- Rom. 2: 21 - 23
2. When we practice the very things we preach against, men do not listen to us -- I Tim. 4:12
3. We are to be DOERS of the Word -- James 1: 22- 25
4. We are to be SALT and LIGHT -- Matt. 5 : 13 - 16
5. We are to deny the practice of ungodliness and worldly lusts in our lives -- Tit. 2: 11 - 12
6. When the world looks at the church and they see bitterness, envy, strife, drinking, drug use, lasciviousness, immodesty, fornication, lying, cheating, disobedience to parents, anger, rebellion, and hatred -- THE WORLD IS TURNED OFF!
   (1) We "shut up the kingdom of heaven against men" -- Matt. 23:13
7. One of the great hindrances today is the WAY CHRISTIANS LIVE!
CONCLUSION:

1. These are only a few of the things that will make the church grow.
2. The church that will please the Lord is the one that is SOUND IN THE FAITH.
3. A growing church is one where the members live out the principles taught by Christ in His word.

Underwood Hts. July 1, 2007