

Church Growth

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In passages such as Ephesians 4, we see that the Lord desires for His church to grow. In 2018, we have looked at many ways people and congregations grow, hindrances, and the like. Church growth is not automatic. Some places can become stagnant and some can go into a downwards spiral. Groups that are growing can cease to in a moment. When groups are growing, they must use that momentum to keep on the upward path. It is important to release that there are some important factors to church growth. They have to be both understood and applied.

Each part must do its share. When this happens, church growth is enhanced in number, comradery, and strength. Ephesians 4:16 — each part must work. If not, the whole body is not supported probably and does not function correctly! Romans 12:3-8 reminds each of us that we have a duty to fulfill. Every person has a role to fill and job to do, because every single member is important in the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:12-22) The growth is enhanced when each person draws strength from the Head of the body. (Eph. 4, Col 2:19) This is done directly through God (Philippians 2:12-13; Eph. 3:16,20) and indirectly through our fellow Christians (2 Corinthians 1:3-5). When we are nourished from the head of the body and from within the members of the body, a congregation is bound to grow. People want to be a part of an inviting group that's goal is to assist each other in growing. By growing together, we are strengthening ourselves in the Lord, and closer together.

Church growth is then endangered when each person does not do their part. Many times people want to pass along their responsibilities to others. Sister "Jill" or Brother "Jack" will do it, so why should I? Again recall Ephesians 4 that shows that each part must do their work in order to support the body. If one joint does not function properly, the body will not either. The church becomes handicapped by members who wish not to function. The church cannot be expected to perform at full potential in this situation. Many times other members try and pick up the "slack". This leads to people being over burdened, disheartened, and "burnt out". A prime example of such is in those who will teach.

Another major factor in church growth is that the strong must bear with the weak. Church growth flourishes when the strong members understand the weakness in others. As the church teaches and preaches to the lost, there will always be babes in Christ and those who are week. Growth sometimes is "messy". Many new members have not had the blessing of good role

models. Some families do not understand their duties not only as parents, but as Christian parents and Christian spouses. It takes time for anyone to learn how to live godly. The strong must remember their responsibility to the weaker. Romans 15:1-2 & Galatians 6 — The strong must bear the infirmities of the weak, not to please themselves, but to restore those who become wrapped up in faults. 1 Thessalonians 5:14 — the strong must be patient with the weak. Growth comes from weakness. Many churches fail to grow because they expect too much from the weak. They expect that once they obey the gospel they know everything and must not let us down! That is simply not realistic on any level.

Church growth again becomes damaged when strong members become disheartened. They grow weary of doing well (Galatians 6:9). They begin to feel their labor is in vain (1 Cor. 15:58). They even think about leaving and going elsewhere. Somewhere else that might be more appreciated. Somewhere else others might volunteer to do jobs and they will not be as burdened. While these are all common human emotions, sometimes they leave to an unscriptural place because of these issues.

When strong members lose their strength, consider that longsuffering is both a fruit of the spirit and a gift from God. (Galatians 5:22-23; Colossians 1:10-11). Becoming disheartened can be an indication that the strong are in trouble. Remember that God's strength is unlimited (Ephesians 3:20). Sometimes we depend too much on our own strength and forget to look at what should be the source. (Ephesians 6:10-13) We might forget the joy of serving for the Lord's sake alone, even if others do not appreciate it. We must not lose perspective, there will always be weak. Dealing with them is necessary training for future leaders in the church & teachers. There being babes in Christ & the weak should not be disheartening, but rather a source of joy. . . because the church is growing. If the strong members become weak, a church cannot grow.

Let me offer my personal appreciation for our teachers, worship leaders, card senders, and many others. Being inviting to visitors is a great deal, and helps in our efforts here at Rock. Whatever work you do, sometimes it is overlooked. I appreciate it as does our Lord. —**CW**