

Growing Churches is Not About Food, Fun or Family Life Centers

Franklin Church of Christ
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PM Worship

Introduction:

How often have we heard, “At the _____ church we are not so concerned with numerical growth as we are with spiritual growth”? The fact is, we need to be concerned about numerical growth because numerical growth in a God fearing, God following, Bible teaching church means more souls snatched from hell and going to heaven. There are two reasons this catch phrase of non-growth is given. **Neither is valid.** The first reason is the phrase offers a comfortable cop-out for a lack of souls being added to the Lord’s church. It makes people feel better if they can convince themselves that growing spiritually, not numerically, is really what God wants. God wants both spiritual and numerical growth. Where true spiritual growth is taking place, numerical growth will also take place. The other reason people give this excuse for non-growth is a misconception about what is essential to church growth. Many have the mistaken notion that a church must do unscriptural things in order to get numerical growth. Therefore, they make this statement nobly meaning they are not willing to compromise truth in order to get numbers. This is a worthy stance. We must never compromise truth in order to get numbers. But this stance is mistaken. We do not have to compromise truth in order to save souls. Tonight, I want to explain what “church growth experts” claim the essentials are for growing churches. My purpose tonight is not to teach us to follow after the advice of men. Rather, it is to demonstrate that those men who have examined churches that grow have found these similar practices in each. It stands to reason if we do these things, we will grow. But above all, I want you to notice that we do not have to compromise truth to have any of these essentials for growth today. As we look at these 9 essentials, I want you to note that church growth is not about food, fun or family life centers.

Discussion:

- I. We must teach from the Bible.
 - A. The experts claim that on a practical level this is the number one thing a church must do if it will grow.
 - B. Granted, because most people are ignorant of the what the Bible says, they are not always discerning about whether or not what is said is really what the Bible means. But they want to be a part of a church that is teaching from the Bible.
 - C. If denominational churches can grow with merely the appearance of teaching what the Bible says. How much more can we grow when really teaching what the Bible says. **II Timothy 3:16-17** says scripture is all we need to perform every good work. It follows that scripture is what we need for growth.
- II. We must maintain high standards of commitment.
 - A. Jesus commands His disciples to put Him first (**Luke 9:23**). Without this commitment in their members churches will not grow.
 - B. Many people believe teaching this high standard of commitment hinders growth because it scares people off. The experts have observed that churches who have high standards grow, the others are slacking off.
 - C. Logic demands this. A church that does not emphasize commitment may surge at the beginning, but members quickly realize they do not have to do anything and eventually they are not even attending. Some churches continue to keep these non-committed members on their roles to pad their numbers, but their church is declining not growing, no matter how they pad those numbers.
 - D. On the other hand, churches that have high standards of commitment work at training their members to be committed. They may scare some off, but those who stay grow and work, producing more growth.
- III. We must maintain high standards of morality.
 - A. Peter taught that moral behavior converts people to Christ (**I Peter 2:11-12**).

- B. As with high standards of commitment, many Christians are afraid if they stress the Bible's moral teaching they will scare people away. The "experts" have observed that churches with high moral standards grow more than those with weak standards.
- C. Again, logic bears up this essential. Churches with weak moral teaching may surge initially with morally weak members. However, as time goes by they will lose those members to sinful living. Churches which stress high standards of morality train their members to abstain from these sins.

IV. We must convince every member they are needed.

- A. Paul said every member was needed in **Ephesians 4:14-16**. The church only grows by the work which "every joint" supplies. Consider what this means about the strength of this congregation. Your strength as a group is equal to the sum of your individual strengths. For this church to reach its growth potential you have to see the church's need for you as an individual to work and grow.
- B. When members feel needed they work harder. If they feel unimportant, they leave. You must understand that you are necessary for this church to reach its potential. You are needed.

V. We must increase love and warmth among the brethren.

- A. Jesus said the world would know we were His disciples if we have love for one another (**John 13:34-35**).
- B. This is one of our greatest evangelistic tools. People want to be loved. If the community around you can see that true love for one another exists in this congregation, they will want to be a part of it. If they see hatred and back-biting, they will not want to come here. After all, they can get hatred in the world.

VI. We must have enthusiastic Bible classes.

- A. The biggest religious change group in America today is young families with children. Enthusiastic Bible classes appeal to these families who desire high standards of morality and commitment to God for their children, even if they have not had morality or commitment. If we are not concerned about our Bible classes, we are missing our greatest opportunity for evangelistic contact.
- B. Allow me to make some short statements regarding objections I have heard to focusing on Bible classes as a means of growth.
 1. First, focusing on Bible classes is not the "church of Christ" answer to Family Life Centers and youth groups in denominations. If done biblically, it is nothing more than teaching the Gospel effectively.
 2. Secondly, focusing on Bible classes is not handing over the parent's responsibility of teaching their children to the church. If done properly, the Bible class is merely a supplement to the parent's own teaching at home. The problem here is not that churches have taken over the parents' roles. Rather, it is that too many parents just aren't doing their job. The church having Bible classes is no more usurping the parents' job to teach their children than it is usurping the individual Christian's job to study on his own or teach his friends.
 3. Thirdly, allow me to make three positive statements on behalf of strengthening your Bible classes for children and adults. First, it is one of the most effective ways to produce spiritual growth in the congregation. Secondly, it is one of the most effective ways to reach out to lost parents who are concerned about their children. Thirdly, it is one of the most effective ways to prepare innocent children for overcoming the moral corruption they will inevitably reach if they live long enough.
- C. **I Timothy 4:13** says we should give attention to public teaching. It will help us grow.

VII. We must have good calm, steady leadership.

- A. God gave qualifications for the eldership (**I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9**) because the leadership of a congregation must be grounded in the truth, committed to work, and able to work with one another in a loving manner.

- B. If they are not, the church will be in constant turmoil. With bad leadership, the church will not only cease to grow, but will suffer loss and eventually die.
- C. The leaders are the ones who must look into the future and see where the church needs to go. Then they take the church there, leading the way. This plan only works when the leadership is stable and steady.

VIII. We must portray our worship as special.

- A. People do not want to be part of the ordinary. They can get that anywhere. They want to be part of something special. Isn't that what our worship is? Is not our worship special? We are gathering together in the presence of the Almighty God. We must grasp the specialness of that event.
- B. If we do not grasp the specialness of what we are doing here and communicate it to others, we will never grow to our fullest potential.
- C. Regrettably, many churches feel they must cut back on worship to attract people. Cut out songs, prayers and sermon time. This portrays a lack of value in our worship. Remember, if we demonstrate to our friends that we do not think our worship is important and special, why should they think it is?

IX. We must have an evangelistic method that produces results.

- A. Jesus gave the great commission, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations ..." (**Matthew 28:19**).
- B. Do you have a method or a plan for making disciples? Or do you just kind of hope someone will drop in and it will accidentally happen? Making contact is not enough. You must formulate a plan to make them a disciple. Over time, your plan may change to be more effective, but you must have a plan.

Conclusion:

None of these essentials are unscriptural. We cannot make the claim that we are not growing numerically because we will not compromise the truth. The simple truth is, we must do the same things to get numerical growth that we do to get spiritual growth. We must be committed to God, obey His word and teach others. Commit yourself to do things necessary to grow; not because you want a big church, but because you want to save souls.