



God is love and love lives here!

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Sunday, June 9, 2024

This one is a long one but one of the most important articles I believe you can read if you desire to see the church grow. The reality is it is up to the Lord. Yes, all we have preached about and taught over the last three weeks have been true. Yes, it's important to grow. But more importantly, it's important to focus on God-Given Growth. Take the time, read the article, and let's talk about it when we get back. Love you guys!

-Pastor Tommy

Scripture and Sermon:

2 Kings 6:15-17

"The Rules of
Spiritual Warfare"

God-Given Growth, by Mark Dever

Everybody wants their church to grow. When a church doesn't grow for a while, some begin looking for those to blame. Some might say "our sign is too old." Others might say that the church is doing evangelism all wrong. Still others might blame themselves, and decide that they're just not friendly enough. The preacher, the leaders, the surrounding community, all can come in for their share of blame. But are any of those people the cause of real church growth? Isn't God the one really to blame? What should we Christians think of contemporary church-growth thinking?

First of all, it must be said that the Bible is a pro-growth book. From the garden of Genesis to the city of Revelation, God is a God who shows something of His life and energy through growth. Most growth is a good thing in this life. So I want to grow as a husband and father. I want to grow in my competence in my job. And as a Christian I want to grow in my Christian life. So what about our church—do we want our local church to grow? How does that happen? That's what we want to consider in this article.

If we go back to the beginning of the Bible, there we find in the first chapter that God commands the creatures of the land and sea to multiply: "God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth'" ([Gen. 1:22](#)). Similar commands are given to Adam and Eve, and then to Noah and his sons after the flood. From there on in the Bible we see that God our Creator has continued to give life, from calling Abram to follow Him, to calling the Jews back home from their Babylonian exile.

It's important for us to remember this as we consider our local church. Some people today seem to think that a church grows because it has a popular program, or because the pastor is a good communicator, or because the leaders are wise. All of these may be present in a growing church. But behind all these factors is God Himself. It is God that grows the church through His Gospel by His grace.

The rain accomplishes God's purpose to make things grow ([Isa. 55:10–11](#)), but it is still God who gives the growth. In the same way, it is God who gives new life by His Spirit (see [John 3](#)). He is both the Creator and the re-Creator.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth" ([1 Cor. 3:6–7](#)). Any true church growth is from God, whatever means He may choose to use. Just as Jesus' first disciples followed Jesus because He called them ([John 15:16](#)), so today we follow Him only because He first calls us. God grows the church He planted.

He does so by giving us spiritual life by giving the gift of repentance (see [Acts 11:18](#)). It is God's kindness to us that He ever puts in our rebellious souls a distaste for our revolt against Him. In His mercy, He makes us to feel the bitterness of our choices. In His love, he causes us to turn. This new life that God gives comes through belief in the Gospel—which belief we were appointed for ([Acts 13:48](#)). Our "appointment" to such belief again makes the point that spiritual life and growth are from God. He opened the door of Lydia's heart to respond to Paul's message ([Acts 16:14](#)). It is by God's "grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" ([Eph. 2:8–9](#)).

And God brings about such repentance and faith by His Spirit's using the preaching of His Gospel. So when the message about Christ is preached in Antioch, Luke describes the results as "the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord" ([Acts 11:21](#)). Notice it is the Lord who is credited with this church growth. Faith comes through hearing the message ([Rom. 10:17](#)).

And the churches are strengthened by hearing the truth ([Acts 16:5](#)). So, whether we're talking about growth through conversion, or growth in being built up and maturing, it is God's work through the appointed means of preaching God's truth, and most especially the Gospel, what Jesus called "the word of the kingdom" ([Matt. 13:19](#)). Such church growth could even be called "the word of the Lord" spreading (as it was in [Acts 19:20](#)) so identified is such growth with the Gospel message.

So if the above is all true—if church growth is from God, then what difference should that make in our churches and in our lives? Here are seven suggestions based upon the Bible's teaching about church growth. Pray for these in your own life and in the life of your pastor. And share them with others in your church, including the pastors, elders, and deacons.

In order to see God's church grow, we should use the means God has given to us. As we've seen, preaching the Gospel is the normal way God grows His church. Added to this, there is also prayer. Again and again in the book of Acts we find the early

Christians at prayer. And as we beseech God for conversion and for maturity, we find God granting our prayers. The more we pray the more we acknowledge that God is the reason for any growth that comes. We acknowledge, in humility, that any growth that comes does not ultimately come from us.

The late great evangelical theologian Carl Henry once said that "numerical bigness has become an infectious epidemic." When too many of us measure growth mainly in terms of numbers, we show that we forget how deceptive crowds can be. So, the crowds that cheered Jesus one day, called for His crucifixion the next. Even if our church is growing numerically, usually these days in America such numerical growth is more reflective of population redistribution than it is of new conversions.

We can't control when someone is converted. Though some evangelists may try through well-intentioned manipulation, the human heart is beyond being manipulated to give up its revolt against God. Only a new set of loves—replacing love for self with love for God—can end our revolt, and only God's Spirit can give that love. Therefore, our job in evangelism is to pray for conversions, and work for them by regularly and faithfully sharing the Gospel as well as we can. Work on your own understanding of the Gospel. Think carefully about ways you may be able to improve in sharing it. Work to create opportunities. You can't make sure someone becomes a Christian. But you can make sure they've heard the Gospel.

There is more to church growth than new converts. Those of us already converted can mature in our faith. We can learn to count trials joy, and grow in our love for one another. Remember that maturing is as much growth as seeing new people converted. Certainly in our own lives, we never finish growing in this life in terms of our spiritual maturity.

One way we are certain the church needs to grow is in we ourselves growing, and especially in our humility and self-conscious dependence on God. The Bible's teaching that God gives growth is important for us to remember so that we won't become prideful in our church when it does grow numerically. It is also important to encourage us in our humility. Knowing that growth is His gift should increase our time spent in prayer and remind us of our dependence upon Him.

Getting all this right calls us to trust God more and to thank Him for the growth that He does give. When Paul was discouraged in Corinth at the lack of growth in the church, God encouraged him in a vision by assuring him that many would be converted there (see [Acts 18:9–10](#)). Most of us, however, don't have that kind of supernatural encouragement. We do know from God's Word, however, that God promises His Word will not go out without accomplishing His purpose. But we may not be around to see the harvest from seeds that we plant. As Charles Bridges (a great nineteenth-century Anglican pastor) said, "The seed may lie under the clods till we lie there, and then spring up" (Christian Ministry, p. 75). Some sow, and others reap ([John 4:36–38](#)), but God deserves the praise for all the growth that happens.

Finally, realizing the truth about church growth should help us to keep going. It should encourage us to endure in the face of opposition, rejection or indifference. Ezekiel was called by God to preach to a people that wouldn't listen—their refusal to listen took nothing away from Ezekiel's faithfulness (see Ezek. (3:7–9; 33:32). How could evangelists go to unresponsive lands and keep preaching if they were constantly counting converts and gaining their main encouragement from that unsteady source? How could you and I be faithful in witnessing to friends and family over the years if we allowed ourselves to be discouraged by initial rejection, or even continuing disinterest? Our continuing to pray for someone is a testimony of our faith not in them or in ourselves, but in God. Jesus' parable of the sower warned us that there would be a variety of responses to the Word (see [Matt. 13:1–23](#)). And we can be confident that God will bring all His own to Christ, not one of them will be missing (see [John 6:37](#)). Present success is not always visible. We should be encouraged to realize that the calling all Christians and all congregations share is one to faithfulness, not immediately apparent success. God may in His providence even disperse our local congregation. But His plan for His universal church is certain victory. Of that we can be sure. The church's final and ultimate growth is not in question.

Keep The Faith,
Pastor Tommy

Flowers on the Altar and Gifts Given to the Glory of God

- 🌸 In memory of Bob Parker by Keith & Betsy Phillips
- 🌸 In memory of Debbie Herrington by Brenda Craw

Thank You

“Thank you to my church family for all the prayers, cards, phone calls, visits, meals and comfort in celebrating the life of Debbie. And thanks to the kitchen crew that provided us with a meal, the food and hospitality is greatly appreciated.”
~~ Robert Herrington ~~



- ✓ 06-10-24 Finance Meeting 6p
- ✓ 06-30-24 5th Sunday Lunch 11:30a
- ✓ 07/01-07/04 Office Closed
- ✓ 07-08-24 Finance Meeting 6p
- ✓ 07-08-24 Admin Council Meeting 6:30p
- ✓ 07-12-24 Blood Drive 1p-6p
- ✓ 07/14-07/17 Vacation Bible School 6p-8p
- ✓ 08-05-24 Finance Meeting 6p
- ✓ 09-02-24 Office Closed
- ✓ 09-09-24 Finance Meeting 6p
- ✓ 09-09-24 Admin Council Meeting 6:30p
- ✓ 09-29-24 5th Sunday Lunch 11:30a



New Concerns

Sara Colbert
Marilyn Fowler
Linda McIntosh
Family of Dan Mendenhall
Savannah Boggs
Mary Leary
Family of Jennifer Spence

Continue Prayers for:
Family of Debbie Herrington
Family of Alex Strozier
Terry Diesch
Gloria Nelson

Tom Gamble
Betty Bowen
Michael & Jennie Walston
Betty Byrd
Leon Hudson
Mary Prater
Jim & Mary Leary
Virginia Eadie
Bill Reedy
Our Country, Leaders, Military

Yard Sale

Postponed—Due to Worship Services being held in the Fellowship Hall while the a/c is out in the sanctuary and it’s until further notice - The Clothes Closet and Food Pantry community yard sale on June 7th and 8th has been postponed to the Fall... stay tuned for dates to be announced.

Community Missions

- Food Pantry totals for May:: Families served- 568; People served- 2175; Weight of food distributed- 16,538 lbs... the hands and feet of Jesus!
- The Food Pantry is open June 12, 10a-1p, come on out and volunteer! You will be blessed. Our Food Pantry Team rocks!
- The Open Door Mission Closet (Clothes Closet) is open every Wednesday from 9am until 12 noon. Tuesday is our new Sorting/Processing day and volunteers are also needed on that day.
- June 12 volunteers- Sherry Armour, Sabrina Williams, Joyce Wyatt

Youth News

Sundays- 9:30a-9:45a- breakfast and socialize; 9:45-10:15a- Sunday School lesson
June 23- Swimming and lunch after church at J.O. & Lynn Miller’s pool
July 3- Youth Bowling Night
July 14-17- VBS, there will teaching and activities age appropriate for teens
July 21- Swimming and lunch after church at J.O. & Lynn Miller’s pool
August 3- Wild Adventures for the day and Skillet concert that evening

Family Promise

Our next Family Promise rotation is June 30, July 1 and 2... volunteers are needed to provide meals. Supper times are Sunday- 4:30-5:30p; Monday and Tuesday- 6:30-7:30p... contact J.O. or Lynn, this is a very blessed ministry of our church... check out their website at <https://www.familypromisehoustonco.org/>


Men on a Mission

For our church members who may be widowed, a single mother, or an elderly couple: the Men at the Well offer a service called "Men on a Mission" to assist you with minor repairs and/or minor renovations to your home. You simply pay for the needed materials, and the Men ask that you donate a love offering (as you feel led) to our church to cover labor costs. Contact Stevie Bowen or our church office at 953-3090.

Men at the Well

Cooking Baby Back ribs for your July 4th \$25 each, pick up Wednesday, July 3, 8a-1p, See any “Man” or come by/call the office to get yours!





10
Hansel Morris
Emily Summers

15
Laneah Maddox

Bible Reading Plan	
Week of June 9 th :	
Sunday.....	2 Cor. 12
Monday... ..	2 Cor.13
Tuesday... ..	Galatians 1
Wednesday.....	Galatians 2
Thursday.....	Galatians 3
Friday.....	Galatians 4
Saturday.....	Galatians 5

Finance Report for	
June 2	
Operating Budget.....	\$8,251.44
Apportionments.....	100.00
Youth.....	50.00
Food Pantry.....	100.00
Total.....	\$8,501.44
Worship Attendance	
98	
Sunday School	
46	



Are you Looking for a place to serve? To get involved? We have it!

This Week's Schedule:

Sunday- June 9

Ushers

10:30a J.O. Miller, Tony Rozier
Mel Smeltz, Cheri' Cox, Roy Carter
Keith Mobley, Stevie Bowen
Joy Fleming, Sherrie Shell
9:15a Sunday School
10:30a Worship

Greeters

10:30a Sherrie Shell, Sharon Morrison

Communion Servers

Don & Sharron Schall
Sherrill Pinckney, Paula Williams

Finance Stewards

Nancy Hudson, Amber Gamble, Joy Fleming

Assisting with Children

Sunday- June 9
Nursery- Linda Blanton, Cinderella Sampson
Children- Sherry Armour
Sunday- June 16
Nursery- Lynn Miller, Laura, Cinderella
Children- Dawn Wilkins

Monday- June 10

6:00p Finance Meeting
7:30p Narcotics Anonymous

Tuesday- June 11

9:15a Movin' n Groovin'
10:00a Partners in Prayer
10:00a Yoga
6:00p Life Group III "LG3"

Wednesday- June 12

8:00a Men's Fellowship Breakfast
9a-12p Clothes Closet
10a-1p Food Pantry (2nd & 4th)
6:30p Choir Practice
7:30p Narcotics Anonymous

Thursday- June 13

9:15a Movin' n Groovin'
10:00a Yoga
4:30p Dulcimers
6:30p Men at the Well
7-9p Amateur Radio Club
7:30p Narcotics Anonymous

Friday- June 14

7:30p Narcotics Anonymous

Saturday- June 15

7:30p Narcotics Anonymous



Were here to
Serve



Women
at the
Well



Men
at the
Well



Sunday School at 9:15a

Are you looking to get involved in Sunday School? We have a great line up of classes to explore! Maybe you've been attending Sunday School regularly but see a topic you're interested in – it's okay to move around and try different classes – let's learn and grow together!

Sunday School Class

Seekers
Issues & Answers
New Beginnings
Christian Fellowship
Youth

Studies

Nehemiah
Mark
Revelation
Hebrews
Grace

Teacher

Kathy Rutke
Joy Fleming
Nancy Hudson
Don Schall
Eric & Gloria Nelson

