

Fil-Am Community Church
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27 July 2014
The Church as God Intended
Part 3 of 4

The Growth of the Church

Good morning Fil-Am, it is so good to see so many of you here this morning. I personally want to thank you for taking the time and celebrating Sunday with us.

This morning we are continuing with our series “The Church as God Intended.” Today specifically we will address the issue of “The Growth of the Church.”

Before we dig too much into the subject we need to first set a base line and understand what is the church.

Many people understand the church as a building or as a location; however this is not the Biblical understanding of the word.

The word Church comes from the Greek word, “**Ekklesia**” which is defined as an assembly, or a called-out people.

Therefore, the root meaning of Church is not a building but a **People!**

If people would have been asked in 1968 which nation would dominate the world in watch making during the 1900’s and 21st century the answer would have been “**Switzerland.**”

Why?

Because they dominated the industry for over the past 60 years.

Why?

The Swiss made the best watches in the world and were committed to constant refinement of their expertise.

It was the Swiss that came forward with the minute hand and the second hand.

They led the world in discovering better ways to manufacture the gears, bearings, and mainsprings of watches. They even led the way in waterproofing techniques and self-winding models.

By 1968 the Swiss made 65% of all watches sold in the world and laid claim to almost 90% of their profits.

However, by 1980 they had laid off thousands of watch makers and controlled less than 10% of the world market.

Their profit margin dropped less than 20%. Between 1979 & 1981 between 50-60 thousand watch makers lost their jobs.

Why?

The Swiss had refused to consider **New Development**, The Quartz movement, which was also invented by a Swiss.

Because it had no main-spring or knob, it was rejected; it was too much of a **paradigm shift** for them to embrace.

Seiko, on the other hand, accepted it along with a few other companies became the leader in the watch industry.

The lesson of the Swiss watchmaker is profound.

A past that was **secure**, so **profitable**, so **dominate**, was destroyed by an **unwillingness** to consider the future.

It was more than not being able to make predictions; it was an inability to **re-think** how they did business.

Past success had blinded them to the importance of seeing the implications of the changing world and to admit that past accomplishments was no guarantee of future success.

This morning we are going to address a few simple areas that will lead to Church Growth.

So for time sake let us get into the Word of God, or more importantly let us get the Word of God into us...

The first way the Church grows is by...

I. Growth happens by **Addition & Multiplication**

This is the simplest, most important, and most effective way to grow the church. It happens when you and I tell our friends, family, and acquaintances about Jesus.

It is the main method we see used in the Bible, and throughout the history of the Church.

Churches grow **Warmer** through **Fellowship**,
Churches grow **Deeper** through **Discipleship**,
Churches grow **Stronger** through **Worship**,
Churches grow **Larger** through **Evangelism**.

John 1:40-41

⁴⁰ One of the two, who heard John speak and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹ He found first his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which translated means Christ).

John 1:45

⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

Addition simply requires us to tell others about Christ, and yet that is one thing many have such a hard time doing.

Notice they found him that they had been looking for... And they didn't keep it a secret they **TOLD**...

Have you found him?
Who have you **TOLD**?

When you were in school you learned Addition and then eventually you moved onto Multiplication.

The same is true with Church Growth.

- ✓ When you tell your friends about Jesus
- ✓ And I tell my friends about Jesus, and they surrender their lives to Him,
- ✓ Then they are added to the church.

But what happens when your friends are added and my friends are added and everyone else's friends are added? The numbers begin to multiply. The possibilities are endless.

Take any pic on **Facebook** or **YouTube** and see they can go viral and have millions upon millions of likes and shares.

What are you **sharing**?

Acts 6:7

⁷The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

Acts 16:5

⁵So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.

- ✓ We see that Church Growth comes from Addition and Multiplication,
- ✓ It also comes from...

II. Growth happens when the Church it is built on Persecution

When you soak a sponge in water and then press down on it, what's inside comes out.

A trial is the pressure on our lives that shows what we've been soaking in. Trials show what's on the inside.

What comes **out of you** when you are squeezed?

Another way of looking at it is just like a photographer carefully develops his film in a darkroom.

God also allows us to go through **dark times**, because he is trying to develop a beautiful image of **Christ** in us.

Opposition to the Christian movement and specifically Church growth has always plagued Christianity.

Acts 5: 17-18

¹⁷ But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy. ¹⁸ They laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public jail.

You can see the Religious Elect of the day became **jealous** of the apostles and had them thrown in jail.

Their aim was to silence them once and for all, to keep them from spreading the Good News of the Gospel.

They wanted to somehow **contain the growth** of this new teaching which was spreading like wildfire throughout Jerusalem.

However, does anyone know that God had another plan?
Can someone say **But God?**

He miraculously released them from prison, and they went immediately in the temple to carry out their preaching ministry.

They realized that their work was so important and their message so urgent that not even the highest authority in the city can possibly stop them.

And when they are called to account for themselves before the ruling council, the Sanhedrin, their response is simple, in...

Acts 5:28,

“We must obey God rather than Man.”

Neither imprisonment, not floggings, not even death, will stop them.

How do we **cope** with outright opposition?

How should we go about building the Church that God intended?

- ✓ We see that Church Growth comes from Addition and Multiplication,
- ✓ Growth comes from Persecution,
- ✓ It also comes when the church is built on...

III. Growth happens when the Church it is built on TRUTH

These people were doctrinally sound, they upheld the truth that they had been taught, and they did not waiver from them...

One trait, of a Godly growing congregation is their strict adherence of scriptures.

Psalms 119:89,

⁸⁹*“Forever O Lord your word is settled in heaven.”*

And it should be settled in our hearts as well as our practice.

The Bible should be the sole **standard** for everything this church does.

John 17:17,

¹⁷“*Sanctify them in truth, your word is truth.*”

This world is filled with people who are **searching** for truth.

If a church offers **TRUTH** as the only dish on the menu, then it will **offend** some, but others will come to hear that truth and hopefully will give themselves to it.

The early church understood this principle and prospered under it, however it seems as if modern congregations have forgotten this and have drifted away.

- ✓ We see that Church Growth comes from Addition and Multiplication,
- ✓ It comes from Persecution,
- ✓ It also comes when the church is built on Truth
- ✓ It also grows when it is built on...

IV. Growth happens when Church is built on PRAYER

The early church understood the benefit and importance of prayer and had an active prayer life.

Their prayer was more than just a **ritual** we do before we eat or go to bed, or some habit, that they were supposed to indulge in once and a while.

Prayer was their **life line**...

It was their link with the Heavenly Father, the means by which he communicated with them.

In the modern church prayer has sometimes become mundane and ineffective.

For many of us, prayer is like the **National Anthem** before a football game. It gets the game started, but simply has no connection with what's happening on the field. It's simply a courtesy

It seems as if people just don't pray like they use to...They don't place a priority on prayer or time with God.

Ralph Neighbor talked about his meeting with a well-known Korean Pastor **David Cho** in Seoul Korea a few years ago.

He had an appointment, with Dr. Cho and they talked for some time. Then Pastor Cho's secretary came in and reminded him that it was time for his next appointment.

Ralph Neighbor politely excused himself and decided to wait in the outer office in order to meet with another friend shortly.

He sat there in the outer office for about 15 minutes and watched as no one entered or left Dr. Cho's office.

He finally got up the nerve and asked his secretary, was Dr. Cho's next appointment running late?

She smiles and said, "No" they are in there together now.

You see, every day at this time Dr. Cho takes this time to **talk to the Lord!**

The secret to his churches growth is that Dr. Cho has learned the priority of prayer in his **life** and in his **ministry**.

Philippians 4:6-7

⁶ *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God.* ⁷ *And the peace of God,*

which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:17,

¹⁷ *pray without ceasing;*

Psalm 145:18,

¹⁸ *The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth.*

Proverbs 15:29,

²⁹ *The LORD is far from the wicked; But He hears the prayer of the righteous.*

You would think that all we have learned over time we would figure out that a little “**kneeology**” would do a lot more good than a little **theology**!

- ✓ We see that Church Growth comes from Addition and Multiplication,
- ✓ It comes from Persecution,
- ✓ It also comes when the church is built on Truth
- ✓ It also grows when it is built on...
- ✓ Growth happens when Church is built on Prayer
- ✓ Growth happens when members are...

V. Growth happens when members are **Spiritually Minded**.

At many amusement parks, theaters, and museums, they have **3-D movies**.

When you walk into the theater, you receive a pair of **glasses**. If you try to watch the movie without the glasses, you see a distorted picture.

No matter how hard you strain and look and twist to try and make sense of what is happening on the screen, there is still a **distortion** because of the dimension through which you are looking.

By handing you a pair of glasses when you walk into the theater, they give you the **tool** you need to see the screen without distortions.

One of the problems many of us have is that we have a **distorted view**. We see what we see, but we don't see all there is to be seen.

If all you see is the **physical, visible scenario**, then you are looking at your situation without your glasses.

We need to have a **divine frame of reference** in order to see what is actually going on.

2 Corinthians 5:7

⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight...

1 Corinthians 13:9-12

⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part; ¹⁰ but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. ¹¹ When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. ¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

When people are spiritually minded and their **priorities** are in order, and their **hearts** are in order, they do not have to be **begged** and prodded to go to church.

They don't have to be encouraged to do their jobs at church correctly or with joy.

They do not have to be reminded to live for Jesus, during the week.

When the people in church are spiritually minded, there is an automatic gravitation toward the house of God and the Lord's work.

The major differences between Live Churches and Dead Churches

Live Churches have expenses;
Dead Churches don't need much money.

Live Churches have parking problems;
Dead Churches have plenty of space.

Live Churches have noisy Children;
Dead Churches are as quiet as a cemetery.

Live Churches keep changing their way of doing things;
Dead Churches see no need for change.

Live Churches support missions;
Dead Churches keep the money at home.

Live Churches are full of regular cheerful givers;
Dead Churches are full of grumpy tippers.

Live Churches move ahead on prayer & faith;
Dead Churches work only on sight.

Live Churches outgrow their Sunday school rooms;
Dead Churches have room to spare.

Live Churches welcome all classes of people;
Dead Churches stick to their own kind.

Live Churches read their Bible and bring it to church;
Dead Churches seldom do.

Live Churches look for someone they can help;
Dead Churches members look for something to complain about.

Live Churches members reach out to share their faith in Christ;
Dead Churches members don't have enough to share.

If Jesus, the great physician, were to walk in to Fil-Am Community Church this morning and place his finger on the **spiritual pulse** of our church would he say that we are **alive** of **dead**?

What if he were to do the same with you individually?

As you listened to the message today I trust that the Lord has pointed out **areas** where you need to make improvements in your own life.

If that is you this morning I invite you to bring these issues or needs to Jesus and let him take care of them today!

Let us Pray....