

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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How The Church Grows

(Caleb Westbrook)

There are a large variety of opinions in the religious world today as to how to bolster church growth.

Some denominations have used recreational activities, civic events, or even in some cases coffee shops to lure people into church. Even among our brethren there are some who believe that churches need to “compete” against other congregations for members, and that teaching the lost isn’t the most “practical” way to achieve strong church growth.

Despite these opinions of man, the Lord has made Himself clear as to how church growth should be achieved. In *Acts 2:14-40* Peter preached the first gospel sermon and in *Acts 4:2* we find Peter and John preaching “in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.” In both of these particular instances there were thousands of people who were converted to Christ. Yet, why were these people drawn to Christianity? Did Peter offer them free coffee? No, Peter presented the strong convicting gospel of Christ, which was exactly what people need to hear the most.

Continuing through the book of Acts we find another vital

aspect of church growth. “*And daily in the temple and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ (Acts 5:42).*” The appeal used by the apostles was not because the numbers they had or the building they met in, rather it was the powerful persuading message of Christ that they relied upon. In this passage we see not only the significance of the gospel, but also the vital importance of continuance and consistency of the message. Christ was being proclaimed in the assembly of the saints and privately from house to houses every day. This was not just a sermon on Sunday morning and evening, it was a daily confession of Christ through the preaching and teaching of the gospel.

In the beginning of Acts 8 we find Saul making “havoc of the church” by imprisoning and persecuting the saints. Reason might tell us that the best way to continue church growth under circumstances would be to make amends with the Jews, present a less confrontational message, and perhaps even start a community charity project. That is certainly NOT what the New Testament Christians did, “*Therefore, those*

who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4). They did not relent on preaching “the word,” and they did not back down and try to compromise. From *Acts 8:1*, we know that the apostles were not scattered, therefore we understand that this evangelism was done by all, not just a select few. Even if you are not an elder, evangelist, or deacon you have a very vital responsibility to the growth of the church.

In *Mark 16:15* Christ explicitly tells us what we should present to the world: “the gospel.” We have seen this enacted in the book of Acts, through (1) the strong and convicting preaching of the gospel; (2) the continual and consistent preaching of the gospel; and (3) the uncompromising evangelism by all members of the body.

In man’s eyes, this may appear simplistic, but it is God’s plan. Preaching the gospel genders proper growth, not man’s ideas or devices: God’s Word, not a beautiful building or numbers. We should strive with humility and gladness to follow His plan for church growth.