

## **A GROWING CHURCH**

### **Ephesians 4:11-16**

#### **Introduction:**

- 1. Growth is a fundamental law of life.**
  - a. Living things must grow or die.**
  - b. The same is true of Christians.**
  - c. It is also true of churches.**
  
- 2. Jesus emphasized the growth of the church in several of His parables:**
  - a. The parable of the sower (Matt. 13:3-9; 18-23).**
  - b. The parable of the mustard seed (Matt. 13:31, 32).**
  - c. The parable of the leaven (Matt. 13:33).**
  
- 3. There are four basic essentials for a growing church.**

#### **Discussion:**

- I. A GROWING CHURCH IS A LOVING CHURCH.**
  - A. The chief mark of identification for Christ's disciples is love:**

**“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34, 35).**
  
  - B. One cannot love GOD if he hates his brother (1 John 4:20, 21).**

**“If someone says, ‘I love GOD,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love GOD whom he has not seen” (1 John 4:20, 21)?**
  
  - C. If love is present, peace and unity will prevail.**
    - 1. Paul admonishes us to endeavor to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3).**
    - 2. He also commanded, “Let there be no divisions among you” (1 Cor. 1:10).**
    - 3. It is said that zebras when attacked by lions, form a circle with their heads together and kick with their heels.**

**“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8).**

**4. The Jerusalem church was a loving, united church.**

**“Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul...” (Acts 4:32).**

**5. Disunity will kill a church.**

**“But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another” (Gal. 5:15)!**

## **II. A GROWING CHURCH IS A PRAYING CHURCH.**

**A. The Jerusalem church was a praying church.**

- 1. They “continued steadfastly in ... prayers” (Acts 2:42).**
- 2. When Peter was imprisoned by Herod, “constant prayer was offered to GOD for him by the church” (Acts 12:5).**

**B. The church at Rome was admonished to “continue steadfastly in prayer” (Rom. 12:12).**

**C. Paul commanded: “I desire therefore, that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (1 Tim. 2:8).**

**D. We should always pray before making important decisions (Josh. 9).**

## **III. A GROWING CHURCH IS A STUDYING CHURCH.**

**A. An aged preacher observed several years ago: “Never before have we had better classrooms, more teachers, more beautiful literature, and less Bible knowledge than today” (Roy Hearn).**

- 1. Many members of the church cannot find the books of the Bible.**
- 2. Few can give the plan of salvation or find the Scriptures for it.**

**B. Israel was destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6).**

- 1. Attending Bible study is not an option but a must.**
- 2. Daily home Bible study is also essential.**
- 3. Have you ever read the Bible all the way through?**

**C. There are four parts to the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19, 20).**

**“Go therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...” (Matt. 28:19, 20).**

- 1. Go.**
- 2. Make disciples (teach).**
- 3. Baptize.**
- 4. Teach.**

**D. The Jerusalem church “continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine {teaching}” (Acts 2:42).**

#### **IV. A GROWING CHURCH IS A WORKING CHURCH.**

**A. In the average church, 10% of the members do 90% of the work.**

**B. Which church are we?**

- 1. Thyatira whose last works were more than the first (Rev. 2:19).**
- 2. Sardis whose works were not “perfect” (complete) before GOD (Rev. 3:2).**
- 3. Laodicea who was “lukewarm” (Rev. 3:15,16).**

**C. We must have vision (see the possibilities) to do the work.**

- 1. Jesus taught: “Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest?’ Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest” (John 4:35)!**
- 2. Two shoe salesmen sent to Africa had a very different outlook.**
- 3. Many churches are content to “ just hold their own.”**

#### **Conclusion:**

- 1. Churches, like other living things, will either grow or eventually die.**
- 2. Love, prayer, study of GOD’s Word and work on the part of every member are all essential for a church to grow.**
- 3. A question that each one of us needs to ask himself: “Would the church grow or die if it depended on me?”**