

Building Up the Body of Christ: How the Church Grows

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Introduction

- From the moment of conception, the human body is tasked with its most important mandate – g_____.
- Jesus told disciples from day one, come unto me and I will make you, not m_____ of an organization, but f_____ of m_____.
- Paul sees the Church as a body and as a body, the main purpose of the Church is to g_____ and r_____.

I. THE S_____ OF GROWTH

- In our natural bodies, all growth proceeds from the b_____ through a gland that is the size of a pea called the p_____ g_____.
- Like the human body, all growth in the Body of Christ is coming from our h_____, J_____.
- If you are a member of a church, it is because Jesus put you there to g_____ that church.

II. THE S_____ OF GROWTH

- A. **Growth Requires C_____** - The phrase “fitly joined together” is one word, “s_____” from “sun” meaning “w_____,” and “armologeo” meaning “to j_____ t_____ with.”
- B. **Growth Requires C_____**. The word “compacted” here is “s_____” – “sun” meaning “w_____” and “bibazo” meaning “to cause to coalesce” or “to k_____ together.”

III. THE S_____ OF GROWTH

- A. **Growth Requires E_____** - The phrase “the effective working” is one word – “e_____” made up of “en”, meaning “i_____”, and “ergon” meaning “w_____”.
- B. **Growth Requires E_____** – Each member is connected to other members in a two-way transfer of resources – r_____ and g_____.
- C. **Growth Requires E_____** – The word for “edifying” is “o_____”, from “oikos” meaning “h_____” and “doma” meaning “b_____,” therefore, it means “to build a building.”
 - The word edification is not referring exclusively to preaching, but to b_____ u_____ each other.
 - Growth is not just the function of good preaching but of good c_____.
 - The nature of our connection may best be shown by how we treat the ones with the least h_____.

IV. THE STANDARD OF GROWTH

- There is just one standard for growth in Scripture – l_____.
- Love is the t_____ that holds all the Christ-like v_____ together.
- Unity is one of the best forms of e_____.

How to Be a More Loving Church

1. **Celebrate Diversity:** A thriving church mirrors the diverse body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12), where each member is unique and plays a vital role. True diversity isn't mere tolerance; it's active appreciation and celebration of each individual unique backgrounds, experiences, and gifts.
2. **Forgive:** Conflicts are inevitable, but our response shapes our community. Following Matthew 18:15-17, approach disagreements humbly, seeking reconciliation and restoration. Forgiveness is the cornerstone of Christian faith. As Christ forgave us, we too must forgive one another (Colossians 3:13). Holding onto resentment hinders growth and unity. Forgiveness isn't condoning wrong actions, but releasing bitterness and anger, paving the way for healing and reconciliation.
3. **Humble Service:** Jesus' act of washing His disciples' feet exemplifies humble service (John 13:14-15). Do the work that others would think is beneath them.
4. **Pray Together:** Call others up to pray specifically for unity and harmony, in your church. This creates a powerful positive energy that spreads and brings change.
5. **Be Hospitable:** Create a welcoming environment for newcomers, ensuring they feel valued and supported. A warm welcome fosters belonging and encourages deeper connections.
6. **Uplift Each Other:** Let your words be sources of encouragement and inspiration (Proverbs 16:24). Build each other up. Speak life into others by offering affirmation and support. This strengthens community.
7. **Active Listening:** Practice active listening with empathy, genuinely hearing and understanding others' perspectives, as exemplified by Jesus (Luke 7:37-50). People will respect and trust you more for listening to them than for preaching to them.
8. **Support the Vulnerable:** Offer strength and hope to the weak. Support and give more attention to those who are weaker and struggling, reminding them of God's unwavering faithfulness (Colossians 2:23).
9. **Expressing Gratitude:** Express gratitude for the talents and contributions of others. (Philippians 1:3-5). Acknowledging each other's strengths builds appreciation and strengthens community bonds.
10. **Share Burdens:** Offer practical and emotional support to those facing challenges, demonstrating Christian love, and reflecting Christ's sacrificial character (Galatians 6:2).
11. **Accountability:** Hold each other accountable in love, promoting spiritual growth and holiness (James 5:16). Accountability, approached with grace and understanding, results in mutual growth and community.
12. **Peacemaking:** Seek peace and pursue it, embodying the spirit of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:9). Peacemaking requires effort.
13. **Encouraging Spiritual Growth:** The church can grow only if its members grow. Growth is not the job of the pastor. Great sermons are not sufficient to grow any church. We all need to support and encourage one another's faith journey by deliberately helping each other grow. Do not hide your struggles and testimonies. Help people go through what you yourself have gone through.
14. **Sacrificial Love:** Go out of your way for each other. Love till it hurts. This will provoke others to love, and the world will be drawn to the church when they see our sacrificial love.

