

(18) Repentance

When believers take care to walk with God in integrity, a watching world takes notice.

Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds... In this way **the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power** (19:18, 20). Read the rest of the details in Acts 19:13-20.

Can a fresh approach to this concept help your church grow and, if so, how?_____

(19) Persuasion

Even while under house arrest in Rome, Paul met with large numbers to persuade them about Jesus.

They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. **Some were convinced by what he said**, but others would not believe (Acts 28:23-24). Learn the rest of the story in Acts 28:17-24.

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Application

Why not take a few minutes and reflect on how closely your attitudes and approaches about church growth line up with the biblical approach. What changes, if any, would you like to make, and can that happen in your church? If yes, what are your next few steps?

19 Biblical Ways to Grow Your Church

Case Studies from the Book of Acts

Patrick Morley

Is church growth desirable? Yes. Every pastor worth his salt wants to reach as many people for Christ as possible.

Is church growth biblical? Yes. Numerical growth of the church was a major theme of the early church. Jesus wants the family to grow as large as possible.

For God so loved the whole world... He is not willing that any perish... He takes no delight in the death of the wicked... Whosoever believes in me will never die... I came to seek and to save the lost... Go ye into all the world... You will be my witnesses here, there, and to the ends of the earth... I am not willing that any of these little ones perish...

What is church growth? Growing a church includes adding new believers, growing those believers, and calling those believers to serve. It can be said many ways, but Jesus summarized it well in Luke 6:47: "I will show you what he is like who comes to me (evangelism) and hears my words (teaching) and puts them into practice (service)."

What will make a church grow today? Suppose you could do anything you want to grow your church. Where would you focus? You already know that *activity* and *results* don't always correlate. What activities will produce the best results? Through a sanctified common sense we can make a pretty good guess, but we don't have to. Instead, we can look at "cases" recorded in the Bible and apply them to our own situations.

What caused growth in the early church? Here are 19 cases of church growth from the book of Acts. As you read, think about your church and then complete the APPLICATION at the end of each case.

(1) Preaching the Gospel

At Pentecost the believers were speaking in foreign languages. Jews from every nation were in Jerusalem, and they heard the believers speaking in their own languages. Some were amazed. Others thought they were drunk. Peter, seizing the moment, stood to address the crowd and explained the gospel.

Those who accepted his message were baptized, **and about three thousand were added to their number that day** (Acts 2:41). Read the whole story in Acts 2:1-41.

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(2) Lifestyle Witness

No doubt some of the behavior of early Christians were inspired by the expectation that Christ's return was imminent. Nevertheless, the way they lived together in unity was a powerful witness to the broken, hurting people around them.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer... **And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved** (2:42, 47). Read all the other things they did together in Acts 2:42-47.

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(15) The Scriptures

As Paul explained the message of the gospel to the Bereans, they examined the Scriptures for themselves to see if what Paul said was true. And...

Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men (Acts 17:12). Read about it in Acts 17:10-14.

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(16) Relevant Preaching

Paul was a chameleon. He always tried to relate to people in terms of their own culture. It's not surprising, then, to see him describe the "Unknown God" to the Athenians and use it as a springboard to talk about the gospel. As a result...

A few men became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, **and a number of others** (Acts 17:34). Catch the whole story in Acts 17:16-34.

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(17) Preaching Under Opposition

Until Corinth, Paul was bi-vocational—like many pastors today. In Corinth Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, but he experienced much opposition. It didn't make any difference...

Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and **his entire household believed** in the Lord; **and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized** (Acts 18:8). Read more in Acts 18:1-8

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At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that **a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed** (14:1).

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(12) Itinerant Preaching

Preaching the good news certainly appears to be the main engine that thrust the early church forward.

They preached the good news in that city **and won a large number of disciples** (14:21).

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(13) Making Disciples

Interestingly, by strengthening those who believed, more believed.

As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. So the churches were strengthened in the faith **and grew daily in numbers** (Acts 16:4-5).

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(14) Preaching

Again, Paul went to the synagogue and used the Scriptures to reason with the Jews about Christ. And...

Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, **as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women** (Acts 17:4).

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(3) Teaching

The teaching of Peter and John was effective because it proclaimed life after death through faith in Jesus. Even jailing them overnight couldn't slow down this train.

But many who heard the message believed, **and the number of men grew to about five thousand** (Acts 4:4). Read how this happened in Acts 4:1-4.

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(4) Signs and Wonders

When God worked powerful miracles and wonders through the apostles, the people were afraid in a way that led them to salvation.

The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. **Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number** (Acts 5:12-14).

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(5) Acts of Social Justice

The widows of the Greek Jews were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. I suppose this would be like a food stamp program. When the disciples made things right, the church took another quantum leap.

So the word of God spread. **The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith** (Acts 6:7). Read the whole story for yourself in Acts 6:1-7.

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(6) The Holy Spirit

Paul was a vicious enemy of Christians. When he was converted the persecutions tapered off, allowing the church to grow.

Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it **grew in numbers**, living in the fear of the Lord (Acts 9:31). Read the whole story for yourself in Acts 9:19-31.

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(7) Persecution and Dispersion

Jesus had told the Christians to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. Instead, they had huddled up in Jerusalem. That all changed when Stephen was stoned.

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1). Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, **and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord** (Acts 11:19-21).

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(8) Mission Trips

When the church leaders heard what was happening in Antioch, they sent Barnabas as a missionary to encourage them in their faith.

He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, **and a great number of people were brought to the Lord** (11:24). Read the rest of the story in Acts 11:19-24.

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(9) Removal of the Wicked

Herod's wicked voice was snuffed out while God's voice increased and spread.

But the word of God continued to increase and spread. (12:24). Read the whole story in Acts 12:18-24.

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(10) An Inclusive Approach

When the Gentiles found out they too could embrace Christ they did so eagerly.

When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; **and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.** The word of the Lord spread through the whole region (13:48-49). Read the whole story in Acts 13:44-49.

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(11) Effective Speech

Paul and Barnabas spoke convincingly in a synagogue, where it was their custom to go when on their trips.