

Why a Church Doesn't Grow

- I. Churches go through seasons during which there is little or no numerical growth.
 - A. The ongoing deferral of expected reaping can dampen the spirit. **PRO 13:12.**
 - B. Much effort may be expended and no results seem forthcoming, which can cause tension and doubts. **GEN 30:1-2.**
- II. There is growth and there is growth.
 - A. If you love God, His truth and His church, you want ONLY the increase which God gives. **1CO 3:6; ACT 2:47; COL 2:19.**
 - B. Cancers, tumors and weeds grow--- effortlessly and quickly.
 1. These, though, add nothing beneficial to the body/husbandry.
 2. These actually work to the destruction of the body/husbandry.
 - C. Leaven gives the appearance of growth to dough.
 1. In reality, leaven pushes the particles of dough further apart from each other.
 2. It only takes a little of this kind of increase to affect the whole church. **1CO 5:6.**
- III. The kind of increase that is most important to the church is faith (**2TH 1:3**), love (**1TH 4:9-10**), grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (**2PE 3:18**), obedience (**1TH 4:1**), fruits of righteousness (**2CO 9:10**).
 - A. This growth should be the goal of the church.
 - B. Jesus called His disciples to follow Him and He would make them fishers of men. **MAT 4:19.**
 1. Following Christ is to be our focus.
 2. Let increased numbers be an added blessing from God.
- IV. God may be waiting to increase a church. He'll do it, but not now.
 - A. God sets a time to favour Zion. **PSA 102:13.**
 - B. This delay will test the faith of church members. Are you in the church for numbers or because it is right?
 - C. Numbers have never determined right.
 1. Ten out of twelve spies were wrong. **NUM 13-14.**
 2. Noah's church was a small one. **1PE 3:20.**
 3. The prophets of Baal outnumbered Elijah 450:1. **1KI 18:19.**
 4. **MAT 7:13-14; 22-23 c/w LUK 13:23-24.**
 - D. Abraham had to wait for the promised son.
 1. When Abraham tried to increase his house by his means, he produced an Ishmael who persecuted the promised son. **GAL 4:29.**
 2. This is in the Scripture to reprove such carnal efforts. **2TI 3:16; PSA 127:1.**
 - E. Therefore, we DARE NOT make ourselves of the number. **2CO 10:12.**
 - F. "Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath LONG patience for it..." (**JAM 5:7**). Patience is the great spouse of faith. **HEB 6:12.**
- V. Remember: of all the seven churches of Asia, only two were in good shape and only one had an open door: Philadelphia. **REV 3:8.**
 - A. Again, increase is of God and you must look to him for it.
 - B. Smyrna was a church in good shape, but had not the open door.
 - C. God does not distribute opportunities evenly, as the parable of the talents indicates. **MAT 25:14-15.**

- VI. Lack of growth may be owing to apostasy.
- A. **AMO 4:7-8** illustrates this.
 - B. We could be living in the end times when Satan is loosed. **REV 20:8; 2TH 2:3.**
 - C. Paul warned Timothy of defections in his epistles to him. **1TI 4:1; 2TI 4:3-4.**
 - D. There have always been times of decline in the church, both O.T. and N.T.
 1. The decline may be owing to negative things: apostasy, deaths, judgments.
 2. The decline may be owing to positive things: transfers which fill a need in another church (**1CO 12:18**) or ordinations. **ACT 13:3.**
- VII. Lack of growth may be because the church is keeping an appointment. **1TH 3:3 c/w PSA 107:39.**
- VIII. A church may be in a thicket of Pharisees.
- A. Evangelism is less productive amongst Pharisees. **MAT 21:31.**
 - B. Or a church may be leavened with Pharisaism. **MAT 23:13.**
- IX. A church may have harvested all the people God has in its area.
- A. The world of Noah's day was a write-off. That there were only eight members in Noah's church was not a statement against Noah's ministry nor his flock's condition.
 - B. There were not ten righteous in Sodom and Gomorrah (**GEN 18:32**). You could not have a large church of believers there.
 - C. Jeremiah had little success in evangelism because a door was being shut. **2CH 36:16.**
- X. A church may not grow because it is dead. **REV 3:1-6.**
- A. Dead things don't grow.
 - B. However, Sardis was not dead because it was small!
 - C. Sardis was dead because its works were not perfect before God. **v. 2.**
 1. There were deficiencies in their faith and obedience.
 2. Possible examples of deficiencies:
 - a. Too much doubting the words of God. "Does it really mean that?"
 - b. Lack of love for God and Truth; too much love of the world. **REV 2:4; MAT 22:5; LUK 8:14; JER 9:3 ct/w JOB 23:12; EZE 9:4.**
 - c. Lack of zeal. **REV 3:16, 19.**
 - d. Not enough heart service, too much lip service (**MAR 7:6; EZE 33:30-33**). This is the leaven of Pharisaism as noted above.
 - e. Lack of esteem and support for the pastor. **1TH 5:12-13.**
 - f. Lack of prayer. **COL 4:3; 2TH 3:1 c/w JAM 4:2.**
 - g. Marital disharmony among members hindering prayer. **1PE 3:7.**
 - h. Internal consumption. **GAL 5:15.**
 - i. Secret, unforsaken sin among members. **PSA 50:16-17; 51:12-13.**
 - j. Known, tolerated sin in the body. **REV 2:20; JOS 7:12-13.**
 - k. Unpreparedness to give an answer. **1PE 3:15.**
 - l. Lack of courage to witness. **MAT 25:25 c/w PSA 40:10.**
- XI. Being small is not necessarily a bad thing. **ECC 4:6; LUK 12:32; ZEC 4:10.**
- XII. The Answer: Be thankful for what you have and be faithful with what you have. **REV 2:25; 3:11.**
- A. Included in what you have are whatever opportunities God gives you to teach others.
 - B. Leave the results with God.