

# Understanding Church Growth

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When God's people talk about church growth, we are usually talking about increasing the number of people at church services. Church Growth can also mean an increase of maturity in Christ. This lesson will focus on increasing the number of people attending church, not Christian maturity.

Over the last 10 years the number of Americans attending church has fallen 20% from 49% attending church on Sunday in 1991 to 40% today according to Barna Research. Of the roughly 400,000 churches in America today only 5 to 10% average more than 1,000 members according to numerous studies. Some guidelines and commandments are found in the scripture.

## 1. We are to Spread the Word to the World

One of our duties is found in Mark 16:15-16 *"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation..."*

## 2. We are to plant the Seed.

a) Matt 13:1-23 and Luke 8:1-15, gives us a parable from Jesus about sowing the seed.

It matters not where the seed falls, we are not to pick and choose who we are to share God's Word.

b) 1 Cor 3:5-9 "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it and God made it grow...." We all have our part in preparing for God's growth.

c) 2 Cor 9:6-15 "Sow sparingly...reap sparingly, sow generously....reap generously..." What kind of sowing do you or your church sow?

## 3. God Adds to the Church, Many need to be Saved

Acts 2:46-47 *"... and the Lord added to their number daily..."*

Matt 9:35-38 *"... The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ..."*

John 4:34-38 *"...look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. ..."*

## 4. God's People have different talents and functions

Romans 12:1-8 *"... We have different gifts, ...."*

Now that we have laid some ground work through the scriptures, what are some of the ways that we can sow God's Word? In my mind, there are two avenues that we can use. We can send the Word to the unsaved who are outside the walls of the church building or we can pull the unbeliever into the church building for a variety of reasons.

## 5. We can Communicate Through Different Media to the Outside World

### 1. The Printed Media

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| a) Newspaper articles and Newspaper ads        | b) A Christian Newsletter or Magazine     |
| c) Direct Mailings (Letters, Postcard, Flyers) | d) Billboards                             |
| e) Printed Educational Materials               | f) Writing and publishing Christian Books |

### 2. Audio

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| a) Tape ministry of various issues, sermons | b) Audio Studio Recording Ministry        |
| c) Local/National 30 min to 1 hr Radio Show | d) Producer for a Christian Singing Group |
| e) Christian News Moments on the Radio      |   |

### 3. Video/Movie

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| a) Video Program of Church Service   | b) VHS tapes of various issues            |
| c) Cable/TV 15-30 sec ads            | d) Music Video of Christian Singing Group |
| e) Produce a Christian Cable Network | f) Produce DVDs of various issues         |

### 4. Personal Speakers

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| a) B2B Speakers on Christian values<br>Ethics and Morals | b) Public Seminars & Help Groups on Social Issues<br>(Gamblers, Drugs, Alcohol, Teen Pregnancy) |
| c) Political Speakers to various civic groups            | d) Good ole fashion Tent Meetings   |
| e) Corner preachers                                      | f) Door to Door Cold Calling  |

### 5. Telephone

- |                           |                              |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| a) Invitation to Services | b) Yellow Pages Telephone Ad |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|

### 6. Computers

- |                                      |                                  |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a) The Churches Internet Web Site    | b) Internet emailings            |
| c) Development of Christian Software | d) Banner Ads on other Web Sites |

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### 6. We Communicate to People Within the Church Building

People have a need when they come to church. That need, if it is not filled, will make the person stop coming to church. This all depends on the maturity of the Christian. At this point, we are talking about non-believers and babes in Christ. There are a variety of reasons why people come to the church building.

1. **Social reasons.** A person maybe lonely, or a widow, or a person looking for a mate. I like the fellowship meals and the class get togethers.
2. **The Physical Appearance of the Building** People will attend places that are beautiful, unique in some way or are brand new. Are the pews comfortable, is the carpet worn, does class rooms look outdated?
3. **A Good Program for Children or a Children's Program** Non-believers will come to VBS closing or Christmas programs. A large youth group is a plus and a good youth leader too.
4. **The Homogeneity of the Group** Does the person feel comfortable with the people around them?
5. **The Largeness or Smallness of the Group Attending** A larger group allows anonymity, non threatening. Some people don't like mega churches because they can attend and no one will notice.
6. **The Bible School Classes Offered** They never talk about the scriptures, all they talk about is their opinion. Wow, the bible school teacher is really good and he teaches without putting someone down what the scriptures say.
7. **The Location of the Church Building** I'm not going to drive all the way down there to attend church.
8. **The Doctrine Preached** Their teaching is right on. Or, I can't believe he just said that.
9. **The Preacher** If a preacher resigns or is fired, a number of people will stop attending. That preacher baptized me. He married me. I like his style of preaching. If he stays in the area, I'll attend there. The preacher is too young, or too old for me, he can't relate to my problems.
10. **The Leadership** I like what they did. You know, when I was sick in the hospital, he was the only one to come and visit me. Or I can't believe that he is the leader of a church. He's a hypocrite.
11. **My Friend Attends There** My friend seems to have an answer about the meaning of life, I want to know.
12. **Friendly People** Every time I attend, almost all of them say hello.
13. **A Multipurpose Building** I love the extra activities outside of worship. Volleyball, basketball and indoor soccer.
14. **Non-Denomination/denomination** My mom & dad were raised a (fill in the blank) and I and my family will be too. I don't like to be labeled, I'm a Christian Only.
15. **Music** I love singing in the church choir. I like the director. The congregational singing is wonderful. I like traditional songs and a mixture of scriptural chorus songs. I love playing my (fill in an instrument) for the Lord. I love the bell choir.
16. **Extra Functions of the Church** They have so many things going on at that church, I want to attend there. I went during the middle of the week and they had people working everywhere. Their day care center was packed, they had piano lessons in one room, they had aerobics class in another and they had a ton of people attending their consignment clothing shop.
17. **My Family Attends Here** My spouse and I decided that this was the church we would attend.
18. **To Worship God, to Break Bread and Fellowship** A non-believer does not fall into this category. This is the thoughts of a mature christian.

There are probably many other reasons that a person will attend a specific congregation. I believe that church growth comes from 1) using methods to get the message out to non church goers and 2) using extra functions to attract new people to the church building.

Once that person attends church for whatever reason, the seed can be planted. Now some people don't like the idea of extra functions, but one can incorporate the message of Jesus during the function. For example, I attended basketball games at a local church. They had attendance of sometimes 30 or more wanting to play basketball. Less than half attended that church. The leader of the group always stopped in the middle of the two hours of basketball and had a long devotion. He had everyone introduce themselves and their friend if they brought someone. He invited the group to the various functions of the church and stated that if you don't have a church family please consider coming here.

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### Ministries of Church Body

This is a partial listing of ministries that church members could do. They are not in any particular order.

1. Pantry Program, Feeding the Poor
2. Help the Church Widows
3. Benevolence Program
4. Elder
5. Deacon
6. Preacher
7. Music Director
8. Youth Director
9. Web Site Developer/Programmer
10. Organist
11. Pianist
12. Choir member
13. Bell Choir
14. Music Leader
15. Custodian
16. Bible School Teacher
17. Bible School Superintendent
18. Attendance Keeper
19. Directory Program (Names, addresses, photos)
20. Nursing Home Program
21. Jail Program
22. Special in Song
23. Special in Poem
24. Special in Skit/Play
25. Easter Sunrise service
26. Church Picnic
27. Clothing Program
28. Van/Bus Program
29. Vacation Bible School
30. Church Treasurer
31. Newspaper Ad Program
32. Billboard Ad Program
33. Tape Ministry
34. Telephone Yellow Pages Ad Program
35. Tract & Flyer program
36. Door to Door Cold Calling Program
37. Children Program Director
38. Calendar Program (Shows events, Birthdays, Anniv)
39. Summer Camp
40. Summer Camp Leader/Teacher
41. Christian Investment Club
42. Latch Key Kids Program
43. Day Care Center
44. Librarian
45. Newsletter Program
46. Weekly Bulletin Program
47. Communion Program
48. Coffee/Snacks Program for Sunday Mornings
49. Newspaper Ad Program
50. Aerobics Class
51. Weight Watchers Class
52. Church Yard Sale Program
53. Video Program of Church Service for TV
54. Direct Mail Program
55. Basketball Program
56. Volleyball Program
57. Mothers Day Program
58. Fathers Day Program
59. Bible Bowl Program
60. Christmas Program
61. Fellowship Dinners
62. Adults Night Out
63. Church Band Program
64. Video Ad Program
65. New Christians Bible Program
66. Grass Cutting Program
67. Easter Egg Hunt Program
68. University Campus Ministry
69. Home Communion/ Shut In Program
70. Nursery Program
71. Bible Handout Program
72. Golf Outing Program
73. Church Campout (during summer)
74. Softball Program
75. Home made Ice Cream Social
76. Dance Classes
77. Neighborhood Bible Study Program
78. Class Get together
79. Radio Ad Program
80. Radio Show Program
81. Thanksgiving Day Meal Program
82. Low Income Housing
83. Homeless Shelter Program
84. Craft work (Carpenters, Electrician, Plumbers, etc)
85. Planting New Churches
86. Offerings
87. Contributing Stocks, Bonds, Land, Money
88. Bible Study Programs
89. Missions Program
90. Junior Church Program
91. Piano Classes
92. Prayer Circle Group
93. Daily Prayer
94. Email Program
95. Christian Development Software Program
96. Producer of Christian Music Group
97. Church Band
98. Home Coming Program
99. Ski Trip Retreat
100. Fall Retreat
101. DVD Authoring program
102. Theater Ad Program
103. New Visitors Followup
104. Church Door Greeter
105. Christian Animation Program
106. Christian Book Writers Program
107. Facilities Director (updates to building)
108. Childrens Reading Program
109. Business Mentor Program
110. Mall Walking Program
111. Church Decorations
112. Valentines Day Program
113. Leadership Development Program
114. Hospital Visitation Program
115. Political Action Group
116. Quilting Program