

HOW TO MAKE THE CHURCH GROW (1)

Acts 2:37-47

INTRODUCTION:

- A. The church in the first century had a phenomenal growth
- B. Twelve men preached - 3,000 added Acts 2:41 - later became 5,000 Acts 4:4 - then number multiplied exceedingly Acts 6:7 - all in probably less than two years
 - 1. During this time Peter & John (two leaders) put in prison
 - 2. Two members (Ananias & Sapphira) killed for lying
- C. The parable in Matt 13:31,32 (mustard seed) had its fulfillment in the growth of the church
- D. Persecution came and they went everywhere preaching the word Acts 8:4
- E. In a few short years (aprox 30) Paul said the Gospel had been preached in all creation under heaven Col 1:23
- F. The church grew then through teaching and manifesting (to show, cause to shine or make known) the Truth. Jhn 17:17 (2Tim 4:2) 2Cor 4:1-5
- G. Let's look at how this was done so we can do the same

DISCUSSION:

I. TEACH ONLY THE TRUTH

- A. The disciples were convinced they had the truth
 - 1. "Word" - "Truth" - "Gospel" all the same Jhn 1:14; Eph 1:13; 1Thess 2:13;
 - 2. Begotten by "Word" & "Gospel" Jas 1:18; 1Cor 4:15
 - 3. Truth makes free - sanctifies Jhn 8:32; 17:17
 - 4. Gives hope of salvation 1Cor 15:1,2
- B. Teach the truth regardless of circumstances
 - 1. They were not ashamed Rom 1:16
 - 2. Not by opposition or persecution Acts 5:29; 7:51
 - 3. Not by geographical distance (Paul's journeys)

II. WORK AT TEACHING THE TRUTH

- A. Diligence: steady, earnest, energetic application & effort
 - 1. Daily in the temple and every house Acts 5:42
 - 2. Night and day with tears Acts 20:31
- B. The early disciples were persistent
 - 1. When one person didn't listen they didn't give up Acts 13:46; 26:28 (Agrippa)
 - 2. The gospel was refused by many
 - 3. In selling law of averages says if knock on enough doors you will have some success

III. TEACH TRUTH REGARDLESS OF CIRCUMSTANCES

- A. Short time after church established opposition arose
 - 1. At first it was mild but became very severe
 - 2. Disciples fled Jerusalem for their lives Acts ch. 4,5
- B. Persecution did not seal their lips

- 1. Went everywhere preaching Acts 8:4
- 2. What do we do today when someone says something about our teaching and practice?
- 3. What do we do when someone rejects our teaching

IV. MAKE KNOWN THE TRUTH BY THE WAY WE LIVE

- A. Many great principles of conduct contained in the Gospel (certainly we do not have time to deal with all of these)
 - 1. However, these principles of conduct stood out in the lives of the early Christians
 - 2. We are to be a peculiar people 1Pet 2:9; Tit 2:14
 - 3. They think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot 1Pet 4:4
 - 4. They could see a difference in the Christians and the world 1Jhn 2:15-17
- B. They became new creatures 2Cor 5:17
 - 1. They were walking a new life Rom 6:3,4
 - 2. The old man had been crucified Rom 6:6

V. MAKE KNOWN THE TRUTH BY CONCERN FOR OTHERS

- A. When someone makes mistake - strong must help
 - 1. Those who are spiritual restore Gal 6:1,2
 - 2. Bear one another's burdens
- B. Show concern for others in all circumstances
 - 1. Prayer for Peter when he was in prison Acts 12:5
 - 2. Epaphroditus cared for Paul Phil 2:25-30
 - 3. Strong must bear infirmities of weak Rom 15:1,2

CONCLUSION:

- A. Yes, I know there was a special set of circumstances involved in the phenomenal growth of the church in its infancy. It was the right time, the right place, etc because it was the time the Lord chose. Gal 4:4
- B. However, the church can and should continue to grow today, because we have the same teaching (the "Truth" spiritual food) that the early church had and the same need (People are lost in sin) Isa 55:11
- C. The only thing keeping the church from growing is US - the human element
- D. What we have talked about primarily involves the way the human element handles the truth 2Tim 2:15
- E. In another lesson we will continue to explore how we can make the church grow today.
- F. The church grows by individuals becoming members of it and that is accomplished through a spiritual birth Jhn 3:3,5.
- G. Then those members must continue to grow to spiritual maturity Eph 4:15; 1Pet 2:2; 2Pet 3:18