

# Methods Of Growth

**Introduction.** I am pretty certain I have never met anyone who has said, "I am part of a dying congregation and I love it!" People want to be associated with something vibrant and alive. That attitude is not necessarily erroneous.

However, the religious world uses several methods to try to produce growth in their congregations. If you only measure growth in numbers, rapid growth often occurs with worldly methods. However, this is not the will of God. God has specific ways in which we can water and plant, and He will give the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6). We need to identify both the worldly methods and the godly methods of growth, and then make sure we come down on the side of truth.

## ***I. Bad Methods Of Growth***

- A. The "come as you are" method.
  1. When you first hear this slogan, you think of casual clothing. There is nothing wrong with casual clothing so long as it is the best someone can do and they come before the Lord with the utmost respect.
  2. However, in current religious thought, "come as you are" means that you will not have to give up your sin. You can continue in adultery, still drink, gamble, dress immodestly, and curse, and you can keep your own moral standards.
  3. God commanded men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30), and repentance demands the cessation of sin (2 Corinthians 12:20-21; 1 Peter 2:9-12).
- B. The "have fun" method.
  1. This includes involving the church in every conceivable program of recreation and social activities.
  2. Youth parties and games comprise a great deal of the total work of these congregations. Basketball courts, workout centers, fellowship halls, kitchens, and coffee bars are built. Banquet tables, sports equipment, and uniforms are major church expenditures.
  3. The work of the church simply includes evangelism (1 Thessalonians 1:8), edification (Ephesians 4:16), and benevolence (Acts 11:28-30).
- C. The "believe as you please" method.
  1. Is Jesus God's Son, or just an exceptionally good man? Is baptism immersion or sprinkling? Is Jesus coming again or not? Is there really a Heaven and Hell? Is the Qur'an inspired? Take your pick!

2. Naturally, by such a process many unlearned people (those who do not know what the Bible teaches) and many unstable ones (those who do not care what the Bible teaches) are led into such churches.
3. Jesus prayed for unity (John 17:20-21) and the apostles commanded unity (1 Corinthians 1:10). But this unity was built on agreement in truth, not the promotion of error by the ignoring of differences.

## **II. Good Methods Of Growth**

### A. The "be awake" method.

1. Some people have just enough religion to make them miserable. The true Christian will be zealous and devoted (Haggai 2:4; Luke 14:23; Galatians 4:18; Revelation 3:19).
2. This is more than a hyped-up feeling in the heart of a true Christian. It is a constant awareness of the condition of man that weighs heavily on them. The needs of the church in the future weighs heavily on them.
3. Enthusiasm is contagious and a zealous life will radiate with love for God and man. This influence will lead others to faith and obedience to Christ through the gospel.

### B. The "let your light shine" method.

1. The power of influence from the lives of devoted Christians will glorify God attract others (Matthew 5:13-16; 2 Corinthians 9:2).
2. This is more than a "goody goody" appearance; it is people who live through some of the darkest moments of human existence. Because they can do this, they become a beacon for others to see and desire the knowledge of how to cope with life's problems.
3. Doing good and keeping oneself unspotted from the world makes a Christian useful and fruitful in bringing others to Christ (Galatians 6:10; James 1:27).

### C. The "practice what you preach" method.

1. Hypocrisy is "putting on a mask" to fool people (Romans 2:21-24; Galatians 2:11-14; Titus 1:16).
2. The apostle John was keenly aware of the need for honest living (1 John 1:6; 2:4, 9; 4:20). Furthermore, the Lord knows if we are trying to "put on an act" to fool people (Revelation 2:9; 3:1, 9).
3. Preach the whole, unadulterated truth, and then live it out in your life (Romans 12:9; 1 Peter 2:1-2).

**Conclusion.** Do not be fooled by the wisdom of men (1 Corinthians 1:20). The days of aggressive evangelism were not limited to the first century (Acts 8:4). God wants all men to be saved, but we need to save them in the way God has designed: with the gospel and our virtuous lives.