

# Why The Early Church Grew

**Introduction.** The growth of the early church was phenomenal. It began with 3,000 souls on Pentecost and grew to 5,000 members in Jerusalem, not counting women and children (Acts 4:4). Paul said he took the gospel into the entire world, just as the Lord had commanded (Colossians 1:23). Today the church stretches around the world and by God's grace continues to grow. The church was prophesied to turn into a powerful kingdom (Daniel 2:44). What began merely as a promise had grown and culminated into a powerful entity that would turn the world upside down (Acts 17:6).

How did all of this happen? What are the key components of the early church's growth? Can it be duplicated today without the multi-million dollar "church growth" industry? We can answer these questions by looking at Acts 2:41-47.

## I. ***The Bible***

- A. The people "gladly received the word" (Acts 2:41). The seed in the parable of the sower was the word of God (Luke 8:11). As the farmer sowed, some seed fell on good soil.
- B. The early church grew because Peter and the apostles preached the pure, unadulterated word of God, and it fell into good and noble hearts that treasured it (2 Timothy 4:2).

## II. ***Faith***

- A. Luke confirms they "believed" (Acts 2:44). Perhaps this is part of what lies behind the fact that they "gladly received" Peter's sermon (Acts 2:41; 17:11).
- B. Equally as important is the truth that faith without works is dead (James 2:20, 26). Even the demons believe and tremble (James 2:19). The faith of the early church did not end at conversion. It also motivated them to live for the Lord every day (cf. Matthew 17:20).

## III. ***Obedience***

- A. Luke says they were "baptized" or immersed (Acts 2:41; cf. Romans 6:4). Their faith motivated them to obey the command of Jesus (Mark 16:16) and Peter (Acts 2:38).
- B. They did not join the church; by His grace the Lord added them to it (Acts 2:47). The early church was growing "daily" because those who heard the word believed and obeyed (cf. Acts 18:8). The early church grew because they did not compromise the Lord's plan.

#### IV. **Steadfastness**

- A. The church “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:42). What was the “apostles’ doctrine”? Was it a form of early creed like the Didache in the second century?
- B. It was not a creed but merely the teachings of Jesus. Before the Lord ascended to heaven, He gave the early church her marching orders (Matthew 28:19-20). The early church taught and practiced what the Lord taught them. This was the perfect blueprint for growth (cf. Matthew 13:31-32; Luke 13:19).

#### V. **Worship**

- A. Luke diagrammed the worship pattern of the early church as “breaking of bread and prayers” (Acts 2:42). “Breaking of bread” refers to the communion (Matthew 26:26; 1 Corinthians 10:16; cf. 20:7). The disciples observed the Lord’s supper from the church’s beginning. The also followed the Lord’s example in prayer (Luke 6:12).
- B. Worship would include a cappella singing (Ephesians 5:19) and giving (1 Corinthians 16:1-2), all upon the first day of the week or Sunday. Finally, faithful gospel preaching characterized the early church’s worship. Why did they worship the Lord this way? Because in Acts 2:47, they sought to “praise God.”

#### VI. **Unity**

- A. Luke said “all who believed were together,” meaning doctrinally they agreed (Acts 2:44). He also wrote that they had “all things in common,” denoting the lack of a social class system or sectarianism (Acts 2:44). They were willing to sell their goods indicating incredible sacrifice (Acts 2:45). Their sacrifices were so great that by the time we get to 1 Corinthians the Jerusalem church is poor and greatly in need of assistance.
- B. They distributed their goods to “anyone who had need,” signaling wonderfully charitable hearts (Acts 2:45). They continued daily with “one accord” in the temple (Acts 2:46). They were of “one heart and one soul” (Acts 4:32). They broke bread in different Christian’s homes (Acts 2:46; cf. Hebrews 13:1-2). They ate their meals with “gladness and singleness of heart” (Acts 2:46).
- C. The early church grew because they were united as the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12, 20). When they were united, the church grew.

#### VII. **Praise**

- A. Luke capped his description of the growth of the early church by saying that Christians were “praising God and having favor with all the people” (Acts 2:47). Whether in church, at home, or in the work place,

they sought to honor the Lord with their lives. This was their “living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1).

- B. Not everything they did was worship, but everything they did in life was to glorify God (1 Corinthians 10:31). Other people could not help liking what they saw in the early Christians. They loved each other, they rejoiced, and were happy. This appealed to other people. They wanted what the Christians enjoyed on a daily basis.

### VIII. **Challenges**

- A. The same book that describes in exciting fashion the growth of the early church also chronicles the obstacles that it faced.
  1. Persecution (Acts 4:1-4, 13-22; 7:1-8:4).
  2. Needs were overlooked (Acts 6:1-8).
  3. The inclusion of Gentiles (Acts 11:1-3).
  4. False teachers and false doctrine (Acts 15:1-29; 20:29-30).
- B. In spite of these challenges and more, the early church grew. Men like Paul were willing to sow the seed, water it, and trust God to bring forth the increase (1 Corinthians 3:5-7).

**Conclusion.** They did everything according to the authority of Jesus (Colossians 3:17). God can cause the same growth today if we will only stick to His word and believe that He can still make the church grow.