

5 Platforms of a Strong Church

Introduction. Church growth can mean a lot of things to a lot of people, but when we open God's Word, we discover that Jesus is aiming at something deeper than numbers alone. He's preparing a people for Himself, shaping His church into a beautiful bride, radiant in holiness, and ready for His coming. That means the true measure of growth isn't just how large we become, but how much we are being made like Christ.

Ephesians 5:27 lifts our eyes and reminds us that Christ loves His church with a sanctifying love. He isn't content merely to gather a crowd; He's committed to forming a people who reflect His beauty, purity, and grace. And the growth of the church is ultimately not our work to manufacture, but His work to accomplish among us (1 Corinthians 3:6).

The Lord is building something glorious, and He calls us to be part of that holy work. Consequently, there are five divine platforms upon which a local church is constructed that I'd like us to go over today.

I. A Christ-Centered Foundation

- A. Paul declared that Jesus Christ is the only foundation upon which the church is built (1 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 2:19-20; cp. Isaiah 28:16). Anyone or anything else won't stand, including the pope or an apostle or prophet.
- B. Therefore, it's needful to preach Christ (Acts 2:22-36; 8:5, 12). We preach Him as our Savior, Lord, guide, hope, and judge. Christ must be the centerpiece of every local congregation or it simply won't stand (1 Corinthians 2:1-2).

II. Doctrine That's Healthy

- A. The only way to build a local congregation pleasing to God is to build it on the gospel message.
- B. Several times in the letters to Timothy and Titus Paul describes true doctrine as "sound" or "healthy" (1 Timothy 1:10; 2 Timothy 1:13; 4:3; Titus 1:9, 13; 2:1-2).
 - 1. Healthy doctrine must be preached, believed, and obeyed. Healthy doctrine molds and shapes man into a God fearing, obedient disciple (Romans 12:2). Man mustn't add to, subtract from, or change God's divine message in any way (Galatians 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11).
 - 2. While we can't investigate all elements of sound doctrine in this lesson, here are a few examples of which we must be uncompromising:
 - a) The nature of the Godhead (Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19; 1 Peter 1:2).
 - b) The authority of the Scriptures (Psalm 119:89; 2 Peter 1:20-21).
 - c) The plan of salvation (Romans 10:17; Ephesians 1:13; Acts 17:30; Romans 10:10; 1 Peter 3:21).
 - d) The mission of the church (2 Thessalonians 1:6-8; Hebrews 10:23-24; Acts 4:32-35).
 - e) The lives of Christians (Romans 8:5-8; 12:1-2; Titus 2:11-12).
 - 3. A local church won't stand if it's built upon a perverted message (Matthew 7:21-23; John 12:48). We're to stand in grace (Romans 5:1-2; 1 Peter 5:12).

III. Unity Among the Saints

- A. Jesus prayed for unity (John 17:20-26), Paul pleaded for it (1 Corinthians 1:10), and he gave the platform for it (Ephesians 4:1-6).
- B. No local congregation will ever attract the lost of the world in a divided state. Churches that fuss or fight will never arouse any interest in the gospel and salvation. If the local church has a deep conviction of truth, that church will have “favor with all the people” (Acts 2:47).
- C. If Christians are convinced about the effectiveness of the gospel and the church, then unbelievers will be attracted to it and want to learn about the righteousness of God.

IV. A Vigorous Spirit

- A. The church is the spiritual army of God (Ephesians 6:10-12).
 - 1. The church is engaged in a spiritual warfare fighting the devil and all his cohorts (1 Peter 5:8-9).
 - 2. “Fight the good fight of faith” is the command of the captain of our salvation (1 Timothy 6:12; cp. 1 Corinthians 14:37). Wage war on the “enemy of all righteousness” (Acts 13:10).
- B. The Lord’s “Great Commission” gives the marching orders to His spiritual soldiers (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16). A soul-conscious church is a church that sees lost people being led to obey the gospel.
 - 1. We do need to invite people to worship (John 1:46). Definitely don’t stop inviting people to worship!
 - 2. However, we’ve got to get to the point where we can talk to people about Jesus Christ, not just be satisfied with “churching” them.
 - a) Jude exhorts us to pull people “out of the fire” (v. 23). If any of us passed by a house that was on fire, and we knew someone was trapped inside that we could save, we’d do everything within our power to rescue them.
 - b) Yet our friends and neighbors are headed for an eternal fire and we put forth little if any effort to rescue them from this fate. Those people are outside of Christ and are in danger. The only reason they’re not in hell is God’s patience (2 Peter 3:9). We must rescue them before time runs out. The power to save is not ours, but the responsibility certainly is.
 - c) Jesus saw humanity as being sick with sin (Matthew 9:12). He saw humanity as lost and in need of a shepherd and a savior (Matthew 9:36; Luke 19:10). He knew what heaven is like and He knew what hell is like. His love caused Him to “rescue the perishing.”
 - 3. I wonder if the greatest problem about the church growing today isn’t the rise of secularism, but the simple fact that we aren’t motivating one another to talk to people who are lost about Jesus Christ.

V. People Who Worship God

- A. Each week begins with the church coming together on Sunday to worship God “in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24).
- B. When Christians empty themselves of the cares of the world and join together to lift high the banner of the cross in worship, they will positively influence their

community. They'll attest to the fact that God's the one and only true God. Then, and only then, will Jesus become the central focus of existence.

- C. If you love Jesus you should love what Jesus loves, and that ultimately means you should be an official, active, serving, and worshiping member of your local church (Ephesians 5:25).
 - 1. Church membership should be normal for Christians. Lives lived in regular accountability demonstrate the gospel's reality to the world, particularly through the mutual love that Jesus identified as the mark of His followers.
 - 2. Weaker and newer Christians gain feeding and accountability through membership, and mature and seasoned saints demonstrate authentic Christian living.
 - 3. Jesus worshiped His Father. Luke 4:16 says that it was His custom to attend synagogue on the Sabbath. Jesus went to the Jerusalem temple for major festivals (Luke 2:41-49), and taught there as an adult (John 7-8). He even admonished Satan that man's duty was to worship God (Matthew 4:10).
- D. You can't build a local church without members being willing to bow before the Almighty on Sunday to worship the King of Kings.
 - 1. We certainly don't want Christians who are lukewarm (Revelation 3:15-17). Using the imagery of Luke 13:15 and 14:5, David Weak said, "If you discover your ox in a ditch this morning, pull him out and come on to worship. If he's fallen into the ditch for the second time, pull him out, fill in the hole, and come on to worship. If your ox has found a third ditch to fall into, barbecue the ox when you get home from worship!"
 - 2. This is a humorous, albeit useful, way to demonstrate why we emphasize, even to the extent of marking those who neglect to worship God (2 Thessalonians 3:6), the absolute necessity of faithful worship.

Conclusion. Church growth is beautiful when we remember what kind of growth truly matters. The Lord isn't simply building larger gatherings; He's forming a people who look more like Christ, love more deeply, and bear witness more faithfully.

Therefore, rejoice in every sign of life, every step of maturity, and every act of faithfulness among God's people. If Christ is at the center, then the church will grow in the way that matters most.

I am deeply indebted to Mark A. Posey for the use of his material