

A Growing Church

1 Thessalonians 5:12-15

Introduction: If you spend time in Christian book stores, on their websites or even in their mailers you will see many books on how to grow a church. Often pastors will share the strategy that lead to their massive congregations. These books can be encouraging or discouraging. I know I have thumbed through a few of them. The church is not a club or organization, it is a growing organism. Just as the human body must have proper nutrition to grow the body of Christ must have certain things to grow as well. To understand this we must first understand Gods idea of Church growth. That is where we are in our series on 1 Thessalonians. We have seen the universal Church and how the Lord will return to Rapture it at His appointed time. What we must see next and embrace until then is the life and growth of the individual believer. That is accomplished through the local Church. As we continue this morning understand this; numerical growth cannot occur biblically until spiritual growth has first taken root. I want to share with you two things that drive the growth of a church...

I. A churches growth is value driven. V.v.12-13

- A. By the leadership's work. v.12
- B. By the laity's acknowledgment. v.13a
- C. By the reign of peace. v.13b

II. A churches growth is virtue driven V.v.14-15

- A. To discipline disorder. V.14a
- B. To encourage the timid. V.14b
- C. To help the weak. V.14c
- D. To be tempered with all v.14d-15

Conclusion: As we visited these injunctions for holy living we must also remember; only Jesus can live "the Christian life." He modeled it for 33 and ½ years. Peter reminded us in Acts 10:38 that "He went about doing good". Realizing the Lord was both God and man we must acknowledge He lived His life on the same terms you and I are living under. Jesus gave us one example to follow that we often miss. In every situation Jesus made Himself totally available to God the Father. Jesus never relied on Himself, He always looked to God. Likewise God was always available. The Holy Spirit was always available as mediator between the God Man (Jesus) and God the Father. What does that mean to us? If we want to see the Church grow as God wants it to grow we must as Christians make ourselves totally available to God! That means being totally obedient as leaders and laity. Do you realize as either leader or laity it is utterly impossible for even the sincerest born again Christian to live the kind of life that God demands from our own strength. That means we must be totally dependent on Jesus Christ. If we are our churches will be value and virtue driven, which will draw others to Jesus Christ. Isn't that our only true calling?