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# The Church – It's Growth

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## 1 Introduction

Inherent to our understanding of the nature and the mission of the church is the principle and expectation of growth! It is in the nature of the church to grow; her mission is to multiply. Growth matters because it is integral to the increase of God's kingdom. In this session, therefore, we consider the Biblical principles of church growth.

God wants our churches to grow! He has blessed and commissioned growth [Ge 1:28, Mt 28:19]; He has established the principle of growth, fruitfulness and reproduction in creation itself [Ge 2:9]; we have been chosen and appointed to bear lasting fruit [Jn 15:16]; and growth in our lives and churches brings Him glory! [Jn 15:8]. Indeed, God is the author of all authentic church growth:

I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but **God made it grow**. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only **God, who makes things grow**. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labour.

1Co 3:6-8

Despite Jesus's assurance that the harvest was plentiful and ready [Mt 9:37, Lk 10:2, Jn 4:35], many churches do not experience meaningful growth. A recent UK survey by Tearfund<sup>1</sup> found that only 15% of adults regularly attend church<sup>2</sup> and two-thirds have no connection with church at all (comprising both 'non-churched' and 'de-churched')<sup>3 4</sup>. We must conclude that whilst our cities and communities are ready for harvest, the church at large is failing to reap as it should and could.

Our task as leaders is vast and challenging - but completely possible! "God intends a post-denominational united Church to fill the world with His glory"<sup>5</sup>. The Bible gives us both dynamic principles of growth and dynamic examples of growth - keys which will unlock church growth - and it is to these we must turn in order to find out what God has to show us about succeeding in our mission.

<sup>1</sup> Churchgoing in the UK, Authors: Jacinta Ashworth, Research Matters & Ian Farthing, Tearfund, April 2007

<sup>2</sup> 7.6 million UK adults (15% of UK adults) attend church at least monthly. A further 5 million are fringe/occasional churchgoers and 2.9 million (6%) consider themselves likely to go to church in the future.

<sup>3</sup> 32.2 million (66%) have no connection with church (or another religion) at all. These people are evenly divided between those who have been in the past but have since left (the "de-churched") and those who have never been in their lives (the "non-churched"); and most (29.3 million) say they are unreceptive to an invitation to church.

<sup>4</sup> The Tearfund survey also found that regular churchgoers are more likely to be women (65% compared with 52% of UK adults) aged over 65 (30% compared with 18% of UK adults) and middle-class (25% are AB social grade compared to 19% of UK adults).

<sup>5</sup> Bryn Jones, The Radical Church, p15



We are not looking for methods or formulae; rather, we simply want to embrace divine principles, laying hold of everything the Holy Spirit longs to do amongst us, and discovering 'church that works'. As Snyder says: "There is something spontaneous about genuine church growth. Normal growth does not depend upon successful techniques or programs, although planning has its place. Rather, growth is the normal consequence of spiritual life. What is alive grows. Normal church growth is spontaneous in the sense that the nature of the church is to grow – spiritually, numerically and in its cultural impact."<sup>6</sup> **The Lord of the Harvest wants us to experience church growth which is natural, spontaneous, consistent and abundant!...**

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<sup>6</sup> Howard A Snyder, *The Community of the King*, IVP, 1977, p118

## 2 Dynamic Growth: Principles

The Bible contains important underlying principles of growth; rich, deep truths which must form the basis of our expectation and experience. Here are twelve keys which will underpin our growth:

1. **God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."**

a. **Ge 1:28**

God has commissioned us to be fruitful and multiply. Numerical growth is essential to Kingdom-increase. God wants us to 'multiply' (more than just occasional 'addition!'). We must raise our expectations, change our thinking and embrace a vision and plan of growth which is big enough!...

2. **Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the LORD blessed him.**

a. **Ge 26:12**

It's the rich blessing of God which brings much fruit and growth, whatever our environment [cf **Ge 26:1**; it was a time of severe famine]. Isaac's growth had nothing to do with his farming skills and everything to do with God's blessing (which was God's response to obedience [**Ge 26:5**]) so that He alone takes the credit. This is our starting-point: God brings growth...

3. **And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with men **1Sa 2:26**. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and with men.**

a. **Lk 2:52**

The growth God gives will bring an increase in the stature, wisdom and favour of our churches with the world; as we grow we can expect a cultural impact which causes the world to take notice. Growth will bring visibility and prominence which will test us, and which we must handle properly...

4. **The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon.**

a. **Ps 95:12**

God blesses the righteous, causing flourishing growth. The word used means just, lawful, right, and correct, and applies to our leadership as well as our own conduct and character. God brings blessing and growth where He sees righteousness and justice in our lives and leadership...

- 5. Where there are no oxen, the manger is empty, but from the strength of an ox comes an abundant harvest.**  
**a. Pr 14:4**

Harvest-time involves hard work. We must therefore remain spiritually strong and physically fit so as to be ready at all times...

- 6. Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing."**  
**a. Ez 47:12**

If we remain spiritually refreshed and connected to the Source, consistent growth will be inevitable; the world will know we have "been with Jesus" [Ac 4:13] as we serve food and healing to our cities and communities...

- 7. Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."**  
**a. Mt 9:35-38**

The harvest should move us with compassion (love plus action) as we see multitudes without a shepherd. We must embrace and reflect God's heart for the lost. The Lord of the Harvest wants to send out compassionate workers into the harvest-fields. Unbelievers soon know whether we care or not, and outreach devoid of compassion will bear little fruit...

- 8. "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."**  
**a. Lk 4:18-19**

Jesus came for the poor, the prisoners, the blind and the oppressed. His care and concern for the poor <sup>7</sup>, was shared by the apostles [Gal 2:10]. Biblically and historically, the most significant church growth has always occurred amongst the poor. Growth comes as we are moved and motivated to release the oppressed and proclaim freedom to prisoners. If we have very little concern for the poor we will see very little growth...

<sup>7</sup> Eg Mt 11:5, 19:21, Mk 12:42-43, Lk 6:20, 14:13-14

- 9. "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?"**

**a. Lk 16:10-12**

God looks for those He can trust, and church growth involves important stewardship principles: if we are faithful with what we have now, God will add to us. Also, if we are faithful with material things, we prove ourselves trustworthy with true riches (including lives); and if we are faithful in serving someone else, God will reward us with our own growth...

- 10. Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest**

**a. Jn 4:35**

There is always a ripe harvest. There are no 'no-go' areas, and no places too hard or too dark. We must learn to recognise ripe harvest. All around us, people want to be saved and added to our churches...

- 11. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.... This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.**

**a. Jn 15:5,8**

We can't grow outside Christ, but if we abide in Him we can expect growth. If Christ is in the church then we have everything necessary for growth; "the seeds of growth are already present"<sup>8</sup>. Experiencing growth is therefore not primarily a matter of adding other additional things to the church, but rather of removing any hindrances to growth (eg: sin, disunity, false doctrine, unbiblical traditions and inflexible structures)...

- 12. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.**

**a. Eph 4:16**

Churches grow as each member is released, encouraged and empowered to find their place and play their part. Our people want us to grow and succeed - and they were born to be part of the process!...

<sup>8</sup> Snyder, *The Community of the King*, p119



Here, then, are vital and dynamic principles of growth we must embrace. The Biblical promise is that GROWTH will result from God’s gracious blessing of the righteous; such blessing will refresh the world, where the harvest is always ready. GROWTH in our churches will continue as long as we remain close to Christ, free from growth-hindrances, moved with compassion, and trustworthy stewards of whatever He gives us. GROWTH will often be amongst the poor, will require hard work, and the resources of the whole church, but will cause the world to take notice, and will bring much glory to “the God who makes things grow”. All genuine growth will be on the basis of these principles.



## 3 Dynamic Growth: Examples

Against this background, we can now look at the Biblical examples of church growth - the story of the explosive growth of the NT churches - which will provide further important keys to unlock growth in our own churches:

### 3.1 Acts Of The Apostles

Acts is the story of Christ's continuing works [Jn 21:25 cf Ac 1:1-2]; men and women changing their world! Spearheaded by the apostles, the growth of the church was the result of the life and faith of thousands of Spirit-filled believers.

Sidlow Baxter writes "Never since writing began was a more gripping record penned. If the epochal events here narrated do not electrify the imagination and stir the emotions of any serious reader, nothing ever could"<sup>9</sup>. And JB Phillips describes the life and dynamic of the "young church" as follows:

"The new-born church, as vulnerable as any human child, having neither money nor influence nor power in the ordinary sense, is setting forth joyfully and courageously to win the pagan world for God through Christ... Here we are seeing the church in its first youth, valiant and unspoiled - a body of ordinary men and women joined in an unconquerable fellowship never before seen on this earth... It is vigorous and flexible, for these are the days before it ever became fat and short of breath through prosperity, or muscle-bound by over-organisation... Perhaps because of their very simplicity, perhaps because of the readiness to believe, to obey, to give, to suffer, and if need be to die, the Spirit of God found what surely He must always be seeking - a fellowship of men and women so united in love and faith that He can work in them and through them with the minimum of let or hindrance. Consequently it is a matter of sober historical fact that never before has any small body of ordinary people so moved the world that their enemies could say, with tears of rage in their eyes, that these men 'have turned their world upside down'!... the fresh air of heaven is plainly blowing."<sup>10</sup>

**JB Phillips**

Bryn Jones writes similarly: "The ordinary people loved [Jesus's] message of the Kingdom. They heard Him gladly and flocked en masse to where they could be with Him. They were warmly embraced by His compassionate heart, lifted from their misery, healed of their sicknesses, set free from demonic powers, and introduced to a new way of life... In Acts the story is one of continuing liberty and power in the life of the early Church. Emerging within the larger community of

<sup>9</sup> J Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book, Volume 6*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1960, p9

<sup>10</sup> JB Phillips, *Preface to The Young Church in Action*, Fontana, 1955, pp 11-12

the world was a new kind of community...It is not surprising that this Christian community found the same favour with the mass of disenfranchised, distressed, and dispersed peoples that Jesus did. Its residents proclaimed a new life, a new power, a new rule of God in the earth. Before long it was being said that these early Christians had ‘turned the world upside down’<sup>11</sup>

Acts is a story of GROWTH! The world around them was amazed [3:10], astonished [3:11, 4:13, 9:21], fearful [19:17] and divided [14:4]: they responded with favour [2:47] as well as with persecution [19:23ff]. Above all, however, the world around them was changed with multitudes<sup>12</sup> saved and set free:

- “about three thousand were added to their number that day” (2:41)
- “the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (2:47)
- “the number of men grew to about five thousand” (4:4)
- “more and more...believed and were added to their number” (5:14)
- “the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly” (6:7)
- “the church...grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord” (9:31)
- “a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord” (11:21)
- “a great number of people were brought to the Lord” (11:24)
- “the word of God continued to increase and spread” (12:24)
- “the word of the Lord spread through the whole region” (13:49)
- “a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed” (14:1)
- “they preached...and won a large number of disciples” (14:21)
- “so the churches...grew daily in numbers” (16:5)
- “In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power” (19:20)

## 3.2 The Power Of Pentecost!

The key to the entire book of Acts is set forth in Jesus’s final words to His disciples, and the glorious outpouring which followed:

**“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**

**Ac 1:8**

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting... They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each

<sup>11</sup> Bryn Jones, *The Radical Church*, Destiny Image, 1999, p10-11

<sup>12</sup> Snyder notes: “We have the startling and yet very matter-of-fact recording of numerical growth in the book of Acts. Luke gives enough statistics to show that when the Spirit acts the church grows numerically, but not enough to allow us to seize on numerical growth as the essence of the Church or as the only measure of a church’s life and effectiveness. It is crucial to maintain a biblical balance here.” Snyder, *The Community of the King*, p118



of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

### Ac 2:1-4

We cannot understand Acts without understanding Pentecost, an unprecedented event which changed everything. Consider its meaning and impact:

- Ascended and glorified, Jesus now sent His Spirit to fill and empower His disciples. It was His final act of redemption: saved men and women were enabled to live in the realm of Spirit - and limitless possibilities were thus opened up [Jn 7:37, Jn 14:12].
- The scattered crowd became a unified community [Ac 2:14 cf 42ff] and the church was born - a Spirit-filled Body with a new language <sup>15</sup> and a new purpose. Jesus was alive: living and breathing in thousands of believers, and ready to begin filling the earth with His Kingdom!
- God unveiled His sole strategy for filling the earth with His people and glory: filling the church with His Spirit! He has no other plan. Pentecost enables the Adamic Commission and the Great Commission to be fulfilled.

In Acts we discover that “God makes things grow” [1Co 3:7-7] through the work of the Spirit. The Mighty Third Person is here seen fulfilling His threefold ministry of completing the Father’s work, manifesting God’s Presence in the world, and imparting God’s power to believers. It’s the Holy Spirit - by the power of His Baptism - who produces growth.

Wuest defines ‘baptize’ (baptizo) as “the introduction or placing of a person or thing into a new environment or union with something else so as to alter its condition or its relationship to its previous environment or condition.”<sup>14</sup> Pentecost introduced the disciples into a brand new life and environment of (union with) the Spirit, which was so radical that it completely altered their condition and their relationship towards the world they lived in. So vital and fundamental is the Baptism of the Spirit to the story of Acts that Peter refers to Pentecost (rather than his original calling by Jesus) as “the beginning” [11:15]. The church in Acts modeled ‘life in the Spirit’: life under His direction <sup>15</sup> and encouragement [Ac 9:31] where visions <sup>16</sup> and angelic visitations <sup>17</sup> were commonplace.

<sup>13</sup> Compare Ge 11:6

<sup>14</sup> Kenneth S Wuest, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, Vol III, Untranslatable Riches From the Greek New Testament, Eerdmans, p85

<sup>15</sup> The Holy Spirit sent them out as witnesses (1:8); filled all of them (2:4); enabled Peter to preach (4:8) and everyone to speak boldly (4:31); sent Philip to the Ethiopian (8:29) and transported him away to Azotus (8:39); encouraged the believers (9:31); directed Peter to Cornelius (10:19, 11:12); warned the believers of the coming famine (11:28); set apart Paul and Barnabas for Himself (13:2,4); constrained the apostles from going to places (16:6-7); warned Paul about his trials (20:22-23, 21:11); made the elders overseers (20:28).

<sup>16</sup> It was through visions that Ananias was instructed to visit Saul (9:10), and Saul saw Ananias come to him (9:12); Peter was prepared to go to Cornelius (10:17); Paul was told to go to Macedonia (16:9); and was encouraged when under pressure (18:9).

<sup>17</sup> God sent angels to open prison doors (5:19, 12:7); strike down Herod because of his pride (12:23); encourage Paul during the storm (27:23).

Thus the Spirit-baptised believers became witnesses [Ac 1:8]. It wasn't just that the Holy Spirit empowered them to witness. Rather, He empowered them "to be witnesses". The Spirit-filled life was a powerful witness to the world! Witnessing (testifying) was part of it; but their new-found life and lifestyle was what made them such effective witnesses.

### 3.3 Outline Of Acts

The rest of the book describes the fulfillment of the Acts 1:8 promise, as follows:

Receiving Power	Preparation Pentecost	Acts 1 Acts 2
Witness in Jerusalem	Birth of Church Miraculous Healing Fear of the Lord Establishing leadership Martyrdom	Acts 2 Acts 3-4 Acts 5 Acts 6 Acts 7
Witness in Judea & Samaria	Philip's ministry in Samaria Saul's conversion Peter's ministry in Caesarea	Acts 8 Acts 9 Acts 10-11
Witness to the Ends of the Earth	Church established in Antioch Paul's first missionary journey Paul's second missionary journey Paul's third missionary journey Paul's arrest, trials and journey to Rome	Acts 11 Acts 13-15 Acts 15-18 Acts 18-21 Acts 21-28

The church's success in fulfilling the Ac 1:8 commission is captured in these verses:

So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in **Jerusalem** increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

**Ac 6:7**

Then the church throughout **Judea, Galilee and Samaria** enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.

**Ac 9:31**

**All over the world** this gospel is bearing fruit and growing.

**Col 1:6**

We will now look in more detail at how the Holy Spirit empowers growth.

## 4 Growth Factors In Acts

### 4.1 The World's First Spirit-Filled Church

The Bible's first detailed description of the world's first Spirit-filled church is of great significance to us:

**42** They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. **43** Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. **44** All the believers were together and had everything in common. **45** Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. **46** Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, **47** praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

**Ac 2:42-47**

This 'first-mention' reveals important characteristics of Spirit-filled church-life:

- A devotion to **PRAYER** [Ac 2:42]
- Signs and wonders [43] evidencing Holy Spirit life and **POWER** and resulting in a deep sense of awe [43]
- A lifestyle which was itself a **WITNESS**, drawing favour from people [47]
- Daily addition and **GROWTH** [47]
- A devotion to the apostolic foundations and teachings [42] which formed the basis of ongoing **DISCIPLESHIP**
- A devotion to fellowship, breaking bread [42], and meeting together [46], expressions of **COMMUNITY** life and togetherness [44] resulting in shared possessions [44] and radical generosity [45]
- A **LEADERSHIP** which was amongst the people and setting the pace [42-43]

These characteristics of the early church created a Holy Spirit empowered pattern of increase, which can be expressed as a 'growth cycle' or 'life-cycle':

It seems that each component contributed to (each of) the others to create an ongoing cycle of growth. Eg, **prayer** resulted in **power** [Ac 4:31] which inevitably led to powerful



**witness** [Ac 1:8] and hence **growth** – and the necessity to lay foundations and **make disciples**, build a **community** and establish **leadership**. But it is also clear that (eg) Spirit-filled community living was of itself a witness leading to further growth [Ac 5:13-14]. Similarly, the establishing of godly leadership was both a response to and a trigger for growth [see Ac 6:1-2 cf 6:7].

## 4.2 Spirit Empowered Growth

The continuing multiplication throughout Acts shows these characteristics were integral to the series of ‘growth-cycles’. The following passages illustrate this:

**31** After they **prayed**, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all **filled with the Holy Spirit** and spoke the word of God boldly. **32** All the believers were **one in heart and mind**. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. **33** With **great power** the **apostles** continued to **testify to the resurrection** of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. **34** There were no needy persons among them...

**Ac 4:31-34**

**12** The **apostles** performed many **miraculous signs and wonders** among the people. And all the believers used to **meet together** in Solomon’s Colonnade. **13** No one else dared join them, even though they were **highly regarded** by the people. **14** Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were **added to their number**. **15** As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter’s shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. **16** **Crowds gathered** also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were **healed**.

**Ac 5:12-16**

The repeat-pattern throughout Acts is shown below:

	Prayer	Power	Witness	Growth	Disciple ship	Communi ty	Leader ship
<i>Jerusalem...</i>							
Early days [3-4]	3:1 4:24ff	3:7-8 4:8 4:31-33	3:13-16 4:2-13 4:20,33	4:4	3:19-23 4:12	4:23 4:32-34	3:12 4:35
Further growth [5-6]		5:3ff 5:12ff 6:8-10	5:20-21 5:30-32	5:14 6:1-7	5:25 5:30-32 5:42	5:42	5:3ff 5:12 6:2-6
<i>Judea &amp; Samaria...</i>							
Samaria [8]		8:6,13	8:4-5	8:8,12	8:12 8:14-17		
Ethiopian [8]		8:26-29	8:35	8:35	8:37-38		
Saul's conversion [9]	9:10-11	9:3-4	9:20ff	9:5	9:17-18	9:28	
Lydda and Joppa [9]		9:33-34 9:40		9:35 9:42	9:43	9:43	
Caesarea [10-11]	10:3-4 10:9-11	10:3-4 10:9-11	10:24ff 10:37ff	10:43ff	10:44 10:48	10:48b	10:26 10:48
<i>...Ends of the Earth</i>							
Antioch [11]		11:24	11:20	11:21 11:24	11:26 14:22	11:26ff	13:1ff 14:23
Cyprus [13]	13:2-3	13:9ff	13:5	13:12			
Pisidian Antioch [13]			13:32ff	13:43 13:48	13:52	13:52	14:23
Iconium [14]		14:3	14:1	14:1	14:3 14:22		14:23
Lystra & Derbe [14]		14:8ff	14:7 14:21	14:21	14:22		14:15 14:23
Philippi [16]	16:13 16:16	16:18	16:13 16:30ff	16:14 16:31ff	16:15 16:33	16:15 16:34	
Thessalonica [17]			17:2-3	17:4			
Corinth [18]			18:4-5	18:8	18:8,11	18:3	
Ephesus [19-20]	20:36	19:11ff	19:8ff	19:18ff	19:3-7	20:37	20:28ff

### 4.3 Keys To Growth

The dynamic growth of the early church was, it seems, the result of a recurring life-cycle of these important 'growth factors'. Based on our reading of Acts, we can now describe these more fully, and summarise some of the keys which will enable us to unlock the same dynamic growth in our own churches:

- **PRAYER:** A devotion to prayer in the context of praise and thankfulness; with prayer and fasting being regarded as integral to faith and church-life....





For us, a powerful, vibrant life of intimacy, worship, prayer and fasting is the fuel for dynamic growth. **We can UNLOCK GROWTH by thanking God for every breakthrough we experience and calling on Him for more.**

- **POWER:** The Baptism of the Spirit, with manifestations of His gifts and a dependence upon His leading and guiding. Healings, miracles, signs and wonders were frequently experienced, and believers lived with a healthy fear of the Lord...

For us, the radical, transformational Baptism in the Spirit – and the ongoing life of power He brings – is an indispensable key to growth. We must lay these foundations carefully and relentlessly, and teach a life of faith lived in the Spirit. **We can UNLOCK GROWTH by our life and example, by demonstrations of power, and by ensuring all our people are filled with the Spirit and moving in gifts.**

- **WITNESS:** A clear vision and sense of mission. A compassion for the lost leading to a bold witness of resurrection-life by ordinary believers; a determination to fulfil His commission by telling others what they'd seen, heard and experienced ...

For us, reflecting God's heart and preaching good news to the poor – with compassion and practical actions – is fundamental to our growth. We must express grace, kindness, hope and unconditional love. It will mean equipping from evangelists, releasing and empowering every member, and investing in long-term relationships and commitments. **We can UNLOCK GROWTH by reflecting God's heart, so that multitudes of the shepherdless are loved, valued, embraced and restored.**

- **GROWTH:** An expectation of and readiness for daily growth; and a willingness and ability to embrace multitudes into the life and community of the church, with wineskins flexible enough to expand rapidly...

For us, realistic expectation and practical preparation are vital keys to experiencing the growth God wants to give us. **We can UNLOCK GROWTH by leading a 'cultural revolution' and 'climate change' in our churches: thinking bigger, expecting more, making every preparation and inspecting every wineskin with a willingness to make changes.**

- **DISCIPLESHIP:** The apostolic foundations of faith were laid clearly, consistently and uncompromisingly: the Lordship of Christ; the need to respond in repentance and immediate baptism in water and in the Spirit; and an ongoing commitment to maturity and holiness amongst the believers...

For us, making disciples remains the commission's goal, and is a key to seeing sustained, authentic growth. **We can UNLOCK GROWTH by ensuring newcomers are quickly integrated, foundations are properly laid, and our leadership and teaching builds a mature, holy and outward-looking people.**



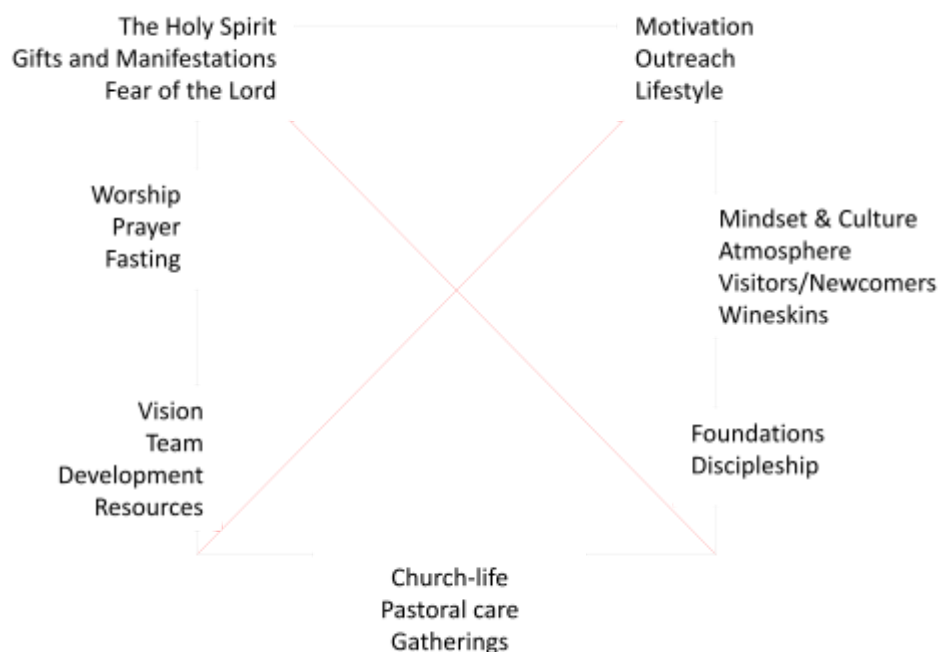
- **COMMUNITY:** A devotion to fellowship in warm and loving communities; gathering together with unity of heart and mind. Church-life is based simply around homes and hospitality in an atmosphere and joy and rejoicing. Lives shared in a new covenant, with believers being devoted to and dependent on one another, and expressing radical generosity...

For us, the building of fantastic Spirit-filled communities of grace and generosity is a key to growth. Snyder writes: “Many churches do not share the gospel effectively because their communal experience of the gospel is too weak and tasteless to be worth sharing. It does not excite the believer to the point where he wants to witness, and (as the believer uncomfortably suspects) it is not all that attractive to the unbeliever.”<sup>18</sup> **We can UNLOCK GROWTH by working amongst our people to teach, encourage and model vibrant community life and pastoral care, expressed in our larger gatherings and from house-to-house, so that every member wants to share it and give it away.**

- **LEADERSHIP:** Bold, ordered, and charismatic leadership, which set a vision and example for the church to follow. The appointment of elders to ensure order and deacons to facilitate continuing growth. Leaders and ministries worked together in teams; and Jesus honoured as Lord of all...

For us, developing an expanding and gifted leadership in our churches is a necessary key to sustaining growth of Biblical proportions. **We can UNLOCK GROWTH by setting a dynamic and compelling vision, building a gifted team, and by inspiring and raising up others to share with us in the magnificent task of leadership.**

We can therefore now add some key-words to describe the Acts ‘life-cycle’:



<sup>18</sup> Snyder, *The Community of the King*, p125-5



These, then, were the vital ingredients in the growth of the early church. **And if we want to unlock the same Biblical growth we must cooperate with the Holy Spirit and allow Him to create these same characteristics in our churches today...**



## | 5 Unlocking Growth In Our Churches

### 5.1 Daily Addition

In the OT, Ezekiel describes fruit every month [Ez 47:12]...but the NT experience was fruit every day [Ac 2:47]. **Daily addition is not only completely possible but should become our serious expectation.** And, to the extent that we are not currently experiencing it, we must ask ourselves searching questions which will enable us to ‘work backwards’ and evaluate reasons why, so that we can make any adjustments necessary to become more Biblical. In other words, if we accept that daily addition is the Biblical norm, then we cannot be content with anything less: we must be willing to undertake an honest evaluation of what we are doing and experiencing in the light of the keys to growth we have discovered from these Biblical principles and examples of growth.

We will therefore now use these keys to ask some necessary questions. We must look at everything that is relevant and honestly consider: “Is the wineskin suitable? Are we positioned for Biblical growth? Have we considered all it will involve? Have we thought through the challenges, costs and consequences? Have we removed all and any hindrances to growth? How much do we want it?...” Asking and responding to searching questions will determine whether daily addition is a vague hope...or a real possibility. The Appendix therefore contains 365 questions designed to help you consider whether your church (or your area of responsibility) is ready for daily addition?!...



## **| 6 Conclusion And Action Plan**

The Lord of the Harvest wants us to experience dynamic church growth; growth which is natural, spontaneous, consistent and abundant – and empowered by the Holy Spirit!

The Bible provides us with principles and examples of growth – and if we will apply them into our own lives and churches, allowing them to challenge and evaluate us, and being willing to adjust where necessary, we will begin developing a wineskin into which the Holy Spirit can create the life and growth which will extend God’s Kingdom and bring glory to Him.

Daily addition is the work of the Spirit, and the Biblical norm, and should therefore be our growing longing and expectation. It is completely possible, and it is what we were born for!...



# Appendix: Vague Hope Or Real Possibility? 365 Questions

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## 1 Evaluating Our Prayer

**Do we have a powerful, vibrant life of intimacy, worship, prayer and fasting?  
Does our prayer-life fuel dynamic growth in the church?** Consider...

### Worship

1. Does the 'fresh air of heaven' blow through your gatherings?
2. Is Jesus central in everything you do?
3. Do you give thanks for the growth you're seeing?
4. Is your worship 'sterile'?
5. Are you locked-into traditions and inflexible patterns?
6. Do your songs express your vision and hope?
7. Is worship a priority in your weekly gatherings?
8. Is worship a priority in your small groups?
9. Are you teaching and inspiring your children to worship?
10. Are you teaching and inspiring your youth to worship?

### Prayer

11. Do you have a fresh and vibrant prayer-life?
12. Do you pray for growth and fruit?
13. How often does your church gather for prayer?
14. Do your people know what to pray for?
15. Do you pray with a burden for the lost or out of 'duty'?
16. Do you update people with answers to prayer, stories of new birth, etc?
17. Do you lay hands on those with a burden to win souls?
18. Have you taught recently about the meaning and value of prayer?
19. Is prayer a priority in your weekly gatherings?
20. Is prayer a priority in your small groups?
21. Are you teaching and inspiring your children to pray?
22. Are you teaching and inspiring your youth to pray?

### Fasting

23. Does your church understand the benefits of fasting?
24. Do you fast regularly with a focus on asking God for more?
25. Do your leaders fast regularly with a focus on asking God for more?
26. Have you taught recently about the meaning and value of fasting?
27. Are you teaching and inspiring your children to fast?
28. Are you teaching and inspiring your youth to fast?
29. Have you seen breakthroughs as a result of your fasting?



## 2 Evaluating Our Power

**Has Pentecost changed everything for us?**

**Are we experiencing powerful, dynamic, expansive 'life in the Spirit'?**

Consider...

### The Holy Spirit

30. Do you love the Holy Spirit?
31. Do you hunger and thirst for a more intimate relationship with Him?
32. How much does He mean to you?
33. Are you quick to put right anything and everything that grieves Him?
34. How much of your personal activity would carry on without the Holy Spirit?
35. How much of your church activity would carry on without the Holy Spirit?
36. Are we 'witnesses' (by our life of power); or do we simply 'witness'?
37. Do your people know the Holy Spirit as a Person?
38. Is your experience of Baptism in Spirit as radical and transformational as it should be?
39. How reliant on God's empowering are you?
40. Has the Holy Spirit made you more burdened and compassionate?
41. Has the Holy Spirit made you more zealous?
42. Has the Holy Spirit made you more effective?
43. Has the Holy Spirit fundamentally altered your condition?
44. Has baptism in the Spirit fundamentally altered your relationship with the world?
45. Have you been 'baptised' or merely 'sprinkled' with the Holy Spirit?
46. Do you need a fresh empowering?
47. Are you focused simply on having more of Him – or allowing Him to have more of you?!

### Gifts and Manifestations

48. How do you ensure every member is baptized in the Spirit?
49. How do you ensure every member is speaking in tongues?
50. Are all the gifts active in your life and ministry?
51. Are all the gifts active in the church?
52. Are you relying on gifts of the Spirit to help you reach unbelievers?
53. How full are you?
54. How thirsty are you?
55. Do your people see demonstrations and manifestations through your ministry?
56. When did you last experience a healing?
57. When did you last experience a miracle?
58. Are the demonized set free through your ministry and gatherings?
59. Would visitors experience 'signs and wonders' amongst you?
60. Are your people a 'river of life' into the community?
61. Could your gatherings be described as 'dynamic'?



- 62. Are your gatherings unmissable?
- 63. When did you last 'groan' and intercede for the lost in your community?

### **Fear of the Lord**

- 64. Is there a healthy fear of God in your life?
- 65. Is there a healthy fear of God in the church?
- 66. Do you address sin in the church?
- 67. Do you address loose talk in the church?
- 68. Do you have ways of being practically accountable?
- 69. Do people in the church live with a sense of responsibility and accountability?
- 70. Is God honoured in your 'platform ministry'?
- 71. Do you take care around the Lord's Table?
- 72. Are people casual in their approach to God?
- 73. Are you taking any of God's credit for growth?

## 3 Evaluating Our Witness

**Are we reflecting God's heart and expressing God's love?  
Do the shepherdless flock to us?** Consider...

### Motivation

74. What motivates your outreach?
75. Are you moved with compassion?
76. Are you motivated by a sense of justice?
77. Do you have a heart for the poor?
78. Do you ever weep when confronted by someone's situation?
79. Are you reaching out with practical expressions of love?
80. Do unbelievers experience God's grace and goodness amongst you?
81. Do your visitors experience the love of God or merely hear about it?
82. In what ways are you meeting practical needs?
83. Is your outreach characterized by unconditional love?
84. Do you have a genuine burden for the lost?
85. Do unbelievers know that you care?
86. Do unbelievers feel embraced by you?
87. Do unbelievers feel valued by you?

### Outreach

88. Could you be accused of 'turning your world upside down'?
89. How are you reaching out to the local community?
90. Do you have a God-given focus for your outreach?
91. Are you reaching all ages?
92. Are you reaching all classes?
93. Are you reaching all nationalities?
94. Are you reaching the poor and needy?
95. Are you building relationships with unbelievers?
96. Are you building relationships with the local community?
97. Are you growing in stature and favour in the local community?
98. Are you willing to invest in long-term relationships?
99. Are you willing to get your hands dirty?
100. Is your outreach 'numbers-focussed' or 'people-focussed'?
101. Do the people you're reaching out to feel loved, blessed and supported?
102. Are your gatherings accessible?
103. Are your gatherings visible?
104. Are your gatherings prominent?
105. Do people know how to reach you?
106. Is your website effective in reaching people?
107. Are all your events high quality?
108. Would your people be embarrassed to invite their friends to your events?
109. Would your people be embarrassed to invite their boss to your events?
110. Do your events display a modern, contemporary church?





- 111. Do your weekly gatherings display a modern, contemporary church?
- 112. Are your events stuck in a previous decade?
- 113. Are your weekly gatherings stuck in a previous decade?
- 114. Are you over-reliant on 'crusade'-style outreach events?
- 115. Do unbelievers feel relaxed in your outreach events?
- 116. Do you try and 'link' your events to create easy access for people?
- 117. Do you plan the calendar strategically?
- 118. Do visitors ever say "WOW!"?
- 119. Are the shepherdless drawn to you?
- 120. Have you got room for them?

## Lifestyle

- 121. Do your people know who they are?
- 122. Do your people understand what they have?
- 123. Do your people live to give it away?
- 124. Do your people feel confident to share their faith with others?
- 125. Do you teach people the Luke 10 principles?
- 126. Are you teaching people how to be good witnesses?
- 127. Are you encouraging your people to develop good networks of unsaved friends?
- 128. Do you encourage people to undertake simple acts of obedience?
- 129. Do you encourage people to undertake simple acts of kindness?
- 130. Do you actively encourage people to reach out to their friends?
- 131. Do you encourage new outreach initiatives and ideas?
- 132. Do you empower and release people to fulfil their God-given burdens?
- 133. Are you creating a culture in which everyone feels involved in outreach/growth?
- 134. Are people confident to reach out?
- 135. Do your people recognize and respond to 'harvest language'?
- 136. Are you drawing on the ministries of recognized evangelists to equip people?
- 137. Do you enjoy getting to know unbelievers?
- 138. Are you modeling personal evangelism?

## 4 Evaluating Our Growth

**Do we need a cultural revolution?**

**Could our wineskins expand rapidly enough?** Consider...

### Mindset & Culture

139. Is your thinking big enough?
140. Is your church 'culture' expansive enough?
141. Do you believe the harvest is plentiful?
142. Do you believe the harvest is ready?
143. Do you believe the harvest is all around you?
144. Do you talk about growth?
145. Do you encourage people to invite their friends?
146. Do you expect and anticipate growth?
147. Do your people expect and anticipate growth?
148. Do you expect visitors every week?
149. Do your people expect visitors on Sundays?
150. Do you expect people to be saved every week?
151. Do you make appeals every week?
152. Do you share stories of new birth?
153. Do you actively encourage people to get involved in outreach/growth?
154. Do your people really believe that 'all things are possible'?
155. Do you believe people want to be saved?
156. Do you believe people want to be added to your church?
157. Could you be accused of having 'cliques' in the church?
158. Do your people understand that growth will bring change?
159. Does the church mindset need to shift?
160. Does the church culture need to shift?
161. Do you seriously expect to see people added every day?

### Atmosphere

162. How would you describe the 'atmosphere' of your church?
163. Is there a sense of faith amongst people?
164. Is there an excitement about what God is doing?
165. Is there an excitement about the church's vision?
166. Is there a healthy 'buzz' in the gatherings?
167. Would visitors describe your gatherings as warm and welcoming?
168. Do people arrive late?
169. Do people leave early?
170. Do people stay for coffee?
171. Do visitors 'feel something' when they're amongst you?
172. Do visitors want to come back?
173. Is God honoured and exalted?
174. Does the church 'climate' need to change?

### Visitors & Newcomers

175. Do visitors attend your gatherings?
176. Do visitors attend your small groups?
177. Do you have clear and focused ways of welcoming visitors on Sundays?
178. Do you have ways of meeting visitors?
179. Do you have a trained and dedicated Welcome Team?
180. Do you have ways of making sure visitors feel relaxed and at ease?
181. Have your Welcome Team visited bigger churches to glean from them?
182. Is your 'language' on Sundays inclusive (or prohibitive)?
183. Are you willing to invest in those who are 'being saved' ('not there yet')?
184. Do your visitors feel warmly welcomed on Sundays?
185. Do your visitors feel warmly welcomed at small groups?
186. How easy is it for newcomers to 'get in' to your church?
187. Are your Sunday mornings suitable and accessible for newcomers?
188. Is your children's ministry suitable and accessible for newcomers?
189. Is your youth ministry suitable and accessible for newcomers?
190. Is your older members' ministry suitable and accessible for newcomers?
191. Do you have proven ways of connecting new people to small groups?
192. Do you have proven ways of connecting new people to other ministries?
193. Do you have proven ways of connecting new people to pastoral input?

### Wineskins

194. Have you taught people what growth will mean?
195. Have you prepared people for change?
196. How flexible are you?
197. How often do you do things differently?
198. Do people always sit in the same place?
199. Do you actively challenge inflexibility, rigidity and sterility?
200. Do you actively create change?
201. Do your structures and formats enable growth?
202. Could you add new small groups quickly and easily?
203. Could you add extra gatherings/services quickly and easily?
204. Will you be ready to plant-out another congregation when necessary?
205. Could you expand your children's ministry quickly and easily?
206. Could you expand your youth ministry quickly and easily?
207. Do your people resist change?
208. Do you actively help people to embrace change and progress?
209. When was the last time you changed anything significant?
210. Are any of your younger members frustrated with a lack of change/progress?
211. Do you genuinely embrace growth and change?
212. Do you have any sacred cows?

## | 5 Evaluating Our Discipleship

**Are we laying apostolic foundations?**

**Are we building a mature and holy people?** Consider...

### Foundations

- 213. How are new believers followed-up in your church?
- 214. Have you invested time and resources in an effective follow-up process
- 215. Do you have literature/tools available to ensure apostolic foundations are laid?
- 216. Who is responsible for follow-up of new believers?
- 217. Does follow-up depend on the elders or leaders?
- 218. Have you trained enough people to follow-up new believers?
- 219. Are new believers immediately baptized in water?
- 220. Do you see new believers quickly baptized in the Spirit?

### Discipleship

- 221. What is the content of your 'membership' course?
- 222. Does your membership course reflect our apostolic foundations and gospel?
- 223. What are you preaching and teaching?
- 224. Is your preaching outward-focussed?
- 225. Are you training people in how to reach out?
- 226. Are you equipping people to hear from God?
- 227. Are you training your people to be good listeners?
- 228. Are you training your people to be good conversationalists?
- 229. Are you teaching people how to abide/remain 'in Christ'?
- 230. Do you have ways of helping people apply the Word?
- 231. Do your small groups give time to apply the Word?
- 232. Do your people want to become mature?
- 233. Do you emphasize practical holiness?
- 234. Do you emphasize righteousness?
- 235. Do you have settings for teaching people to handle the Word?
- 236. Do you have ways of teaching doctrines?
- 237. Do you have ways of instructing people in their roots and heritage?
- 238. Do you challenge rebellion?
- 239. Do you challenge immorality?
- 240. Do you exercise church discipline?
- 241. Do your people know what's expected of them?
- 242. Do you talk about discipleship and making disciples?
- 243. Have you inspired people in their walk with God?

## 6 Evaluating Our Community

**Do we enjoy a community-life which others long for?  
Can God trust us to care for His people?** Consider...

### Church-Life

244. Do people feel they belong?
245. Do people regard it as a privilege to belong?
246. Are attendance rates high?
247. Are participation rates high?
248. Is church-life a priority for people?
249. Is there a good sense of unity?
250. Do you challenge disunity?
251. Do you address gossip?
252. Do you address divisiveness?
253. How generous are you?
254. How generous are your people?
255. Does your generosity turn-heads?
256. Are there many needy amongst you?
257. Do you actively help the poor amongst you?
258. Are you working hard to help everyone find their place and play their part?
259. Do most people know where they fit in?
260. Do people regard it as a privilege to serve?
261. Are you suffering from the 80/20 principle?
262. Do you actively find ways of honouring people?
263. Do people feel overlooked?
264. Do people feel used?
265. Do people feel unnoticed?
266. Do lay hands on volunteers?
267. Do your people regard themselves as 'ministers'?
268. Is there any sense of clergy/laity in your church?
269. Do you have a fantastic children's ministry?
270. Do you have a fantastic youth ministry?
271. Do you have a fantastic older members' ministry?
272. Do people see each other between meetings?
273. Do you have effective ways of communicating with people?
274. Do people know what's going on?
275. Do you have a church calendar?
276. Do you have contact lists?
277. Do you have an effective website?
278. Do you have regular social events?
279. Do you host men's and ladies events?
280. Do your people meet for sporting activities?
281. How creative are you in facilitating church-life?
282. Do you encourage people to eat together?
283. Do you make use of homes for meetings?
284. Do you encourage hospitality?



- 285. Do you model hospitality?
- 286. Do you treat people well?
- 287. Are you a community or a congregation?

### Pastoral Care

- 288. Can God trust you with people?
- 289. Are you taking good care of all He's given you?
- 290. Do you regard your present allotment as a joy?
- 291. Are you focused on good stewardship of all you've been given?
- 292. Do you have an effective pastoral care structure?
- 293. Does pastoral care depend on you?
- 294. Does pastoral care depend on the elders?
- 295. Do people 'slip through the net'?
- 296. Do you have facilities and abilities to care for single parents?
- 297. Do you have facilities and abilities to care for those in debt?
- 298. Do you have facilities and abilities to care for recovering addicts?
- 299. Do you have facilities and abilities to care for the mentally ill?
- 300. Do you have facilities and abilities to care for the abused?
- 301. Are you seeing captives set free?
- 302. Are you seeing the oppressed released?
- 303. Is it easy for people to contact you?
- 304. Is it easy for people to talk to you?
- 305. Is it easy for people to meet you if necessary?

### Gatherings

- 306. Are your gatherings vibrant and exciting?
- 307. Are your gatherings predictable?
- 308. Do people experience God's presence and power in your gatherings?
- 309. Do visitors experience life and passion in your gatherings?
- 310. Are all your members actively involved in a small group?
- 311. Are your small groups of consistently high quality?
- 312. Do your small groups work effectively?
- 313. Do people experience God's presence and power in the small groups?
- 314. Do your small group leaders carry your vision?
- 315. Do your small group leaders carry your heart?
- 316. Do your small groups act as a doorway into the church?
- 317. Do people want to invite their friends to the weekly gatherings?
- 318. Do people want to invite their friends to the small groups?



## 7 Evaluating Our Leadership

**Is our vision dynamic and compelling?**

**Are we inspiring and raising-up an expanding team?** Consider...

### Vision

- 319. Do you have a clear vision?
- 320. Does the church have a clear vision?
- 321. Do people know where you're going?
- 322. Do people know where they're going?
- 323. Are you envisioning your leaders for growth?
- 324. Are you envisioning the church for growth?
- 325. What are you preaching and teaching?
- 326. Have you visited bigger churches to glean from them?
- 327. Have your leaders visited bigger churches to glean from them?
- 328. Have your Helps ministries visited bigger churches to glean from them?
- 329. Have you met with leaders of bigger churches to glean from them?
- 330. Are you thinking and planning ahead?
- 331. Is the vision big enough?
- 332. Is the vision compelling?

### Team

- 333. Do your leaders feel part of a team?
- 334. Do your staff feel part of a team?
- 335. Do you enjoy working together?
- 336. Are you deliberate in building a great team?
- 337. Are you spending quality time with your colleagues?
- 338. Are you physically fit and healthy?
- 339. Are your leaders physically fit and healthy?
- 340. Do you have sufficient elders?
- 341. Do you have sufficient deacons?
- 342. Do you have sufficient staff?
- 343. Have your leaders visited bigger churches to glean from them?

### Development

- 344. Is the work over-reliant on you?
- 345. How good are you at delegating/releasing others?
- 346. How many new elders would you need each year to accommodate daily addition?
- 347. How many new deacons would you need each year to accommodate daily addition?
- 348. How many new group leaders would you need each year to accommodate daily addition?
- 349. How many new kids' workers would you need each year to accommodate daily addition?



- 350. How many youth leaders would you need each year to accommodate daily addition?
- 351. How many new Helps ministries would you need each year to accommodate daily addition?
- 352. How are you training and develop new leaders?
- 353. How does your training need to change to produce enough leaders?
- 354. Are you too hasty in releasing new leaders? Or too slow?
- 355. Who spends time investing in emerging leaders?

## Resources

- 356. Are you a good steward of finances?
- 357. Are you a good steward of the church finances?
- 358. Are you making proper use of the tithe?
- 359. Are you faithfully tithing your tithes and offerings income?
- 360. What finances would you need to accommodate daily addition?
- 361. What meeting-rooms would you need to accommodate daily addition?
- 362. How many gatherings would you need on Sundays to accommodate daily addition?
- 363. How much space would your children need to accommodate their classes?
- 364. How much space would your youth need to accommodate their classes?
- 365. What other resources would you need to accommodate daily addition?