

GROW IN GRACE

NEWSLETTER

Volume 40, No. 17, April 29, 2014 / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / **The Grow in Grace Newsletter** is a weekly Bible Study, plus local church news notes— designed first and foremost for members and those attending services at Southside Church. It is sent forth with the desire to aid one and all, (including friends far and wide), in the experience of 2 Peter 3:18. **"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."**

Growth— As a Natural Expression of Life!

A LOCAL EXPRESSION of the Bride of Christ, (a local congregation), is primarily a LIVING organism and secondarily an organization. Everything about the church involves LIFE! **Jesus Christ, the head of the church, is the LIVING Savior.** The church is comprised of individuals who have been **made ALIVE** spiritually as a result of God-given new birth (John 3:3; Ephesians 2:1-3). Both individually and together as a local assembly the church is **inhabited by the LIVING Holy Spirit** (John 14; I Corinthians 3:16-17); and its affairs and the business of the local church are **governed by the LIVING book**, the written Word of God, (Hebrews 4:12)! Since the church is flooded with **the LIVING LIFE of Christ**, we expect the church to grow, unless growth is held back by disease— **TO NOT GROW IS TO BE SICK!** There is no other choice, because living things grow. YES, FROM TIME TO TIME and for a variety of reasons a church or an individual Christian may be found in DECLINE. A genuine Christian may come under DISCIPLINE and die— be taken HOME early. (1 Corinthians 11:28-32) A local church, which today or in previous days was a living expression of the Bride of Christ may forsake the gospel and literally become HISTORY! (Revelation 2-3) However, GROWTH is the CALL

OF GOD UPON EVERY BELIEVER AND EVERY LOCAL CHURCH! A true church may or may not be growing in numbers. (Matthew 24:9-13; 2 Timothy 3:1-17) However, if we as a congregation are OBEDIENT to the Great Commission— normally, there should and will be growth in the numbers of disciples of Jesus Christ. **ALWAYS**, there should be this:

"But grow in GRACE, and in the KNOWLEDGE Of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen." (2 Peter 3:18)

***** Ephesians 4:11-16 Gives us a Fine PORTRAIT of a Healthy Church! *****

1. The healthy church has a broad view of servant leadership. (vv.11-12) God has given gifted men, with specific responsibilities, to the church. The pastors/teachers are to "prepare God's people for works of service" (v.12). The full-time leadership of the local body must assist the members to do (and do well) what God has called and gifted them, [THE CONGREGATION!], to do. A pastor's purpose is not to perform all the work, but to effectively develop others' leadership and service capabilities. Many pastors become extremely frustrated because the congregations they serve expect them to do most or all ministry. A healthy church on the other hand, recognizes the proper role of leadership and works to develop all members to be functioning, ministering servants. A church will grow IN GRACE and new disciples only when such servant ministers are developed, throughout the body. [IF A VISITOR WALKS IN to our worship service and cries out, 'WHERE IS THE MINISTER?'—EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD BE moved upon by the Holy Spirit to respond, "I'M ONE! HOW MAY I BE THE LORD'S SERVANT TO YOU?" (Ephesians 4:16]

2. The healthy church develops a certain kind of person and body. A healthy church has a Christ-likeness of behavior and character (vv. 13-15) which includes qualities of unity, love, stability, and maturity that ultimately result in "...attaining the full measure of perfection found in Christ" (v.13). We look at Jesus Christ and long to be like Him. This is the aim and the result of the "equipping" of verse 12 (NASB). Equipping calls for men in our pulpits who possess a personal passion for God- men who exemplify Christ-like qualities and who

are seeking to equip the congregation to have the same qualities. Equipping is more than placing people into functional jobs in the church. It means that a visitor walking into a church Sunday School Class or Worship Service; or a neighbor or co-worker walking into the presences of these Christians while in the neighborhood or at the workplace **should sense in the pastors and/or in the congregation**— love, purity, kindness, compassion, integrity, a genuineness of life, and a preoccupation with Jesus Christ.

3. The healthy church develops ministry that is structured around the involvement of its members. This characteristic follows from the first two. A healthy church is an active body. Its members are serving. The pews are filled with involving people. A good sign of health is a high percentage of the members involved in at least one ministry. A church whose members are being led - (through teaching, modeling, and training) - to be like Christ will take on more and more of Christ's attitude about serving. Through seeing others serve, new members should sense that it is normal and natural to find their own places of service within the body. **The church grows as "each part does its work" (v.16).**

4. NECESSITIES for real Growth!

*** **WE MUST want to grow.** BEWARE OF TWO DITCHES: Some church members fear that "if we grow in numbers, things will not be as they are now." Sadly, to such ones the local church is NOT a church but a religious club. But also, the GROWTH which the New Testament sets before us is not related to the present day 'nickels and noses'... church-growth movement mentality which builds around pleasing the flesh rather than around living and proclaiming the gospel.

*** **WE MUST be willing to pay the price.** REAL Growth will be costly. **WE church members must decide that "we will OBEY the Great Commission."** Deliberate sin cannot be tolerated because sin is 'disease' and a diseased body will not grow. Prayer, planning, and commitment must be in place so as to provide for the various needs of new members. **FRANKLY**, if a desire to grow does not exist— there will be no willingness to pay the price to obey the Great Commission and stay healthy.

*** **WE MUST EMBRACE certain priorities.** God has called **US** to SPREAD THE GOSPEL of CHRIST to the whole world: **ACTS 1:8!** THE LORD HAS ALREADY CALLED US — **ALL OF US**, EACH ONE OF US — to go to the ends of the earth: **ACTS 1:8; MATTHEW 28:19-20!** We are part of God's plan for illuminating the whole world with the gospel— starting in our own 'Jerusalem!' **GOD'S METHOD is not** fancy buildings; or flesh-appealing music; or religious productions; or ear-tickling preaching; or humanistic humanitarian efforts— these are some of the methods used in the building up of the world's impressive HARLOT religious institutions. **IN CONTRAST**, there is a reason that **the New Testament Epistles FOCUS on** (1) the nature of the GOSPEL of grace and the wealth/resources which the REDEEMED have IN CHRIST; and (2) on Christians loving one another, forgiving one another, and on living pure and holy lives! **THE REASON?**

REDEEMED, LOVING, FORGIVING, PRAISING, THANKFUL, PURE, and HOLY SPIRIT FILLED CHRISTIANS— **are the ATTRACTION method of God!** Christians are set before a watching world! WE FACE ALL THE SAME STUFF that happens to other humans in a fallen world. HOWEVER, those who are IN CHRIST have supernatural resources with which to face them. **Our 'attraction factor' is our RADICAL DIFFERERNCCE from the world.** We are NEVER called upon to attract the lost world by music or drama performances/productions/comedy, etc.

CHRIST-LIKENESS is the attraction factor! In other words, the Divine method to reach the world is through healthy Holy Spirit-filled individuals, families, and local churches.

5. REAL, lasting growth depends on God— therefore WE MUST PRAY!

*** ***At best we are planters and waterers.*** God supplies the life and growth. He must receive the credit. How does this relate to prayer? **IF we are convinced** that REAL growth comes from God and is therefore supernatural, **AND IF we are equally convinced** that we are dependent on Him for lasting results— THEN prayer will be at the top of our individual, family, and church-wide propriety list. SINCE God causes growth, we must be in touch with Him! IF WE ARE NOT, we labor in vain, spinning our wheels in a flurry of vain activity and wishful thinking!

Genuine spiritual change will occur only in answer to prayer, as we learn to depend on Him. The focus must shift from ourselves to God. If our adequacy is from God and not from ourselves, then our focus must be on Him as the resource from which we draw our strength. **NOTHING IS MORE REVEALING ABOUT THE TRUE SPIRITUAL HEALTH OF A LOCAL CHURCH THAN THEIR (OUR!) CHURCH-WIDE PRAYER MEETING!

***** *The Holy Spirit establishes the church* as He convicts, (John 16:8-11); as He converts (Titus 3:5); and as He brings sinners to confession (I Corinthians 12:3). **BUT WAIT:** CAN WE EXPECT HIM TO WORK THROUGH US AS INDIVIDUALS OR THROUGH US AS A CHURCH FAMILY **IF WE ARE** GRIEVING AND QUENCHING THE HOLY SPIRIT AND/OR **IF WE ARE NOT** BEING CONTINUOUSLY FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT?**

***** *The Holy Spirit INDWELLS and EMPOWERS every Christian in the church* with fruit (Galatians 5:22); with the living Word (John 16:13; Hebrews 4:12); with gifted men (Ephesians 4:12); and with spiritual gifts for every member (Romans 12; I Corinthians 12). **AGAIN:** The HARLOT can be and is impressively built by means of pleasing music, performances, productions, comedians, and ‘sermons’ that leave folks comfortable in their sin. **IN CONTRAST**, expressions of the Bride of Christ are WHOLLY DEPENDENT upon the Holy Spirit; **and, therefore, we must not grieve or quench the Holy Spirit; we must be being filled with the Holy Spirit!****

***** *THEREFORE, WE MUST PRAY.* WHY? — BECAUSE, we cannot create repentant hearts, genuine love for one another, or spiritual growth. **ONLY GOD** can work beneath the surface of men’s hearts and lives. Human manipulation and promotion can create an impressive religionist; but not a member of the Bride of Christ! **We must pray and PLANT the gospel.** The Bible gives us many MODELS for our prayers. For example, the Apostle Paul prayed for deepening love between believers, for a clearer understanding of who Jesus is, for comprehension of our wealth and resources in Christ, for increased patience in tribulation/persecution, and for an open door for the gospel, etc.**

When we begin to see that nothing that really matters will occur except in answer to prayer— **then PRAYER MEETING will become more than an**

optional program for the faithful few! Instead CHURCH PRAYER MEETINGS will become the driving force for us— AS IT WAS in the New Testament Churches in the Acts of the Apostles: 1:14; 4:24; 12:12; 21:5.

**** WHAT IS OUR DECISION ABOUT THE CHURCH PRAYER MEETING?**

**** ONLY GOD can do extraordinary things.** When we accept that simple premise, we will begin to pray in a way that will change us. **We will pray, because NOT TO PRAY will be a continuation of our present folly.** Prayer indeed is the foundation for Biblical church growth.

6. Vibrant worship influences church growth.

TRAGICALLY, much modern worship has become an experience **in which man is the focus.** Worship has deteriorated into an “I didn’t get anything out of the sermon” experience. **Man has become an object of his own worship. He is present to be entertained and spiritually massaged. IN CONTRAST, GENUINE, CHRISTIAN Worship is an act in which the devout soul prostrates himself before God in humble homage and entire submission.** Genuine worship involves the recognition of worth in God; and the offering of our honor, praise, adoration, and LOVING OBEDIENCE to the One who is altogether worthy. **To know and worship God genuinely is to be in a king/subject relationship with Him.** Worship acknowledges His kingship in our lives and His right, as our sovereign Lord, to rule over us. Corporate worship means church members gather to ascribe worth and submission to God. God has center stage. I Chronicles 29:11-13 gives us a biblical description and the correct focus of worship. IN God-centered, God-focused worship, we recognize God’s glory, greatness, power, victory, majesty, and dominion! We yield ourselves to the rule and dominion of God. It is the Body of Christ confessing its dependence on God as its sovereign Head.

7. A team spirit is vital to Biblical church growth.

A plant manager had to fire an employee. Why? The man had a bad, negative spirit. What is so bad about that? It has an effect on others! **The Manager said,** “We just cannot have that sort of thing going on!” A store manager said, **“One negative employee affects the whole store. When you walk in you can detect a certain spirit. We just can’t**

tolerate it. We must have a team spirit.” If those statements are true in a factory and in a store, how much more true they are in a Body of Believers, the Church! Through the years, MANY CHURCHES have been stopped dead in their tracks by negativism:

“I don’t like and I don’t agree therefore, I’m not going to be committed nor loyal. I’ll be aloof, critical, and independent.” Very often the difference between profit and loss is team work. The difference between winning and losing is **team work. And in the church; no church will grow without team work.** The dictionary defines teamwork as “work done by a number of associates, all subordinating personal prominence to the efficiency of the whole.”

Team work is one of the fundamental patterns that the Book of Acts leave us with:

“These all continued with **one accord** in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.” Acts 1:14 “And when the day of Pentecost was full come, they were **all with one accord** in one place.” Acts 2:1 “And they, continuing **daily with one accord** in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.” Acts 2:46 “And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God **with one accord**, and said, Lord thou art God, which has made heaven, and earth, and sea, and all that in them is.” Acts 4:24 “And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people, and they were all **with one accord** in Solomon’s porch.” Acts 5:12 “It seemed good unto us, being assembled **with one accord**, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul.” Acts 15:25

Teamwork is not the result of a group of individuals agreeing 100%. Rather, it is the result of submission—

“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.” (Ephesians 5:21) “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they must must give an account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you.” Hebrews 13:17 In contrast, the church at Corinth loved their individuality.

They refused to work together as a team. They were useless! (See I Corinthians 13:4-25)

8. There will be no church growth without much continuous HARD WORK!

Testimony from a church: "Adult classes are organized with outreach leaders. The weaker classes have two outreach leaders. Classes are organized with group leaders also. The church has a regular organized visitation day- Tuesday is the visitation day." "Visitation is extremely important in the outreach of the church. Both absentees and lost people are visited. In addition to this, lost people are visited. People are asked for the names of un-churched neighbors or friends." **It takes a lot of PRAYER and hard work to teach people. There is no contradiction between the "pray much" and the "work hard."** As you have heard all your life, "You are to pray as if everything depended on God and work as if everything depended on you." Those through whom God has done the most are usually those who have been willing to pray and work the hardest. The apostle Paul is a case in point. He explained this own ministry in comparison to the other apostles by saying, "***I labored more abundantly than they all***" (I Corinthians 15:10). **LET US remind ourselves that there is always enough time for the important things. WE ALL make time to do the things that are important! REALITY CHECK: IF A CHURCH FAMILY WILL NOT COMMIT TO CHURCH-WIDE PRAYER, (IN ACCORDANCE WITH NEW TESTAMENT PATTERN) AND IF THEY WILL NOT COMMIT TO OBEYING THE GREAT COMMISSION IN THEIR JERUSALEM, ETC... — WHAT IS THE SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF THAT CHURCH?**

SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES!

TUESDAYS: Come and sing every Tuesday night at Gallatin Health Care nursing home. Meet at the front door at 5:30PM. Questions call Bradley Pennington at 615-804-3054.

***** WEDNESDAYS: PRAYER SERVICE at 7:00PM! NOTE:** Jody Allen is ministering to young Children, up to about age 10 during Prayer Service. Older children, but not old enough for the Youth Group... will be

with their parents in the Prayer Service. **YOUTH GROUP: Wednesdays 6-8pm...** led by Byron Smith_

☐ **NEXT LADIES BIBLE STUDY— Thursday, May 1, 11:00AM,**
led by Cindy Bell

*** SATURDAY MORNINGS @ 8am: Men's Fellowship/Bible Study! ***

****** SUNDAY SCHEDULE FOR MAY 4 ******

1. 9:30am- Sunday Schoolà Bible Study and Small Group Fellowship

2. 10:45am- Morning Worship / Children's Church

3. Noon: Fellowship 'covered-dish' Meal together!

4. 1:00pm- Early afternoon Service, in the AUDITORIUM: WE NEED THE ENTIRE CHURCH FAMILY PRESENT. WE WILL BE DISCUSSING/MAKING SOME IMPORTANT DECISIONS. **Examples:**

a. Home FELLOWSHIP Groups on THIRD Sunday Evenings ... **INSTEAD OF the** at THE CHURCH BUILDING NOON MEAL and early afternoon service.

b. Improved CARE of widows/shut-ins.— helped by Care Groups? S.S. Classes?

c. This summer: VBS or CAMP?

d. Improved strategy for transportation to Church Services for those needing it.

e. A CHAIR/LIFT directly from the auditorium straight down to the Fellowship Hall.

f. Updates on Elders and Deacons.

g. What about the New Testament call to church-wide prayer?

h. FIFTH SUNDAY EVENINGS filled with those from our local assembly SINGING (Individuals, families, duets, trios, quartets, families, Choir, etc.); Reading/Quoting SCRIPTURE; etc.

SOUTHSIDE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL! *Children are like young plants in a garden— while young and tender they must be protected.* Southside Christian School works in harmony with the local Church and empowers parents! <http://www.aceministries.com/curriculum/?content=presentingACE>

☐ **MOTHER'S DAY, MAY 11** and ☐ **FATHER'S DAY, JUNE 15:** As last year, instead of honoring these dear ones with flowers or a 'bookmark' or whatever— **WE ENCOURAGE everyone to give GIDEON BIBLES in honor of your Mother, or Grandmother; Father, or Grandfather.**