

The Divine Process for Local Church Growth

- The church in the first Century experienced rapid growth! Acts 2:41; 5:14; 6:7; 19:9-10; Colossians 1:23
- “Church Growth” Occurs:
 - When men and women are brought into an “in Christ” relationship, 2 Timothy 2:10
 - When members of the church grow in the divine likeness, 2 Peter 1:4-11; 3:18.

Basic Facts:

- Numerical growth is embedded in the divine purpose for the church.
- Growth is inherent in the very nature of the church.
- Achieved thru a partnership effort.
- Essential to continuity of the church.
- Numerical growth is related to the spiritual nature of the church

Other Basic Facts:

- Members of the church must be “growth” conscious and involved!
- People who are “growth conscious” are concerned about How Growth is accomplished.
- “Process” is important!

“Process”

- Important in any successful enterprise. cf. architect, dressmaker, coach, traveler, etc.
- Defined: “a graphic representation of the steps, operations, or activities required in reaching the objectives.”

“Process” set forth in the Great Commission, Matt. 28:18-20.

- “All Authority ... heaven ... on earth,” v.18
 - “right to issue commands, enforce obedience.
 - “All Authority” an astonishing claim!
- “Go therefore,” v. 19.
 - “Go” is a verb of action
- “Make Disciples of all nations,” v. 19.

“Disciples”

- From *mathetensate*, the first part of which is the root word for “disciple.”
- “Go,” “baptizing,” “teaching” are verb forms or participles, each of which is a part of the whole, and a part of the discipling process.
- This is what they did in the first century, Acts 6:1; 11:26; 20:7, etc.

Definitions – “Make Disciples” in a Practical Sense:

- Means to bring a lost person into a saved or an “in Christ” relationship.
- Means to bring such a person into a maturing relationship with fellow members of the church.
- Means to bring one into a teaching relationship with the world – the last two relationships an outgrowth of 1st.

“Disciple”

- From *mathtes*, “a learner,” and denotes “thought accompanied by endeavor.”
- One who follows the teachings of another, Matthew 9:14; 9:37; 22:15-16
- A Disciple is:
 - A student, John 8:31-32.
 - An imitator, Luke 6:40; Matthew 10:25.

A Disciple of Jesus is One who:

- Continues in His word, John 8:31.
- Loves his brother in Christ, John 13:34-35.
- Bears Fruit, John 15:8.
- Imitates Jesus, Luke 6:40.
- Forsakes all and follows Jesus, Luke 14:33.

Observe: “We” have emphasized Baptism more than Discipleship

- Do not misunderstand! One can not over emphasize baptism, for it:
 - Necessary to salvation, Mark 16:16.
 - Necessary to forgiveness, Acts 2:38
 - Necessary to entering Christ, Gal. 3:27.
 - Necessary to entering the one body, I Cor. 12:13.
 - Baptism saves, I Peter 3:21.

However!

- Baptism is not an end within itself. It is a part of the discipling process. We are not simply to “go” and baptize; we are to “go and make disciples!”
- Consider the JW’s
 - Doctrine wrong! Disciples of WBTS.
 - But their “converts” know that when won to that religion, they must do the thing the one who taught them is doing!

From Standpoint of “Church Growth,” we Must:

- “Go.” Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:19; I Timothy 3:15; Acts 1:8.
- “Make Disciples of all nations.”
 - To the *Jews* of the first century this charge must have been an appalling concept!
- Teach those disciples to observe all the Lord has commanded, Matt. 28:19-20.

Semi-Final Observations:

- The Lord's people in the first century took this command seriously. Acts 1:8; 5:40-42; 7:59; 8:1,4, etc.
- The church in the first century did not have imposing buildings and huge bank balances. All they could do was pray for courage, share the gospel, baptize the taught, encourage them to grow, and repeat the process, 2 Tim.2:2

Final Observations:

- So often the Lord's church in the 21st century has reduced the great commission down to two main objectives:
 - Build a meeting house for those who attend.
 - Be friendly to visitors.
- "We" have largely taken the "go" out of the great commission!

Conclusion – The "Divine Process" in four Statements:

- "Go"
- "Make Disciples"
- "Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."
- Teach them to observe all that the Lord has commanded:

Conclusion: Those disciplined are:

- Saved, Mark 16:15-16.
- Added to the church, Acts 2:47.
- People who have been brought into a teaching relationship to the world.