



How many days did the friends of Job sit in silence and mourn with him?

To Grow? Why or why not?

Every time church growth surfaces as a subject, some people get defensive. What's wrong with small churches? Why are so many people obsessed with growth? And some people go hyper-spiritual and start quoting scripture verses to justify why church growth is a bad thing. God knows the hearts of people, and just because some people may want a church to grow

because of ego does not mean all growth is bad. Healthy things grow. The mission of the church at its best throughout the centuries has been outward focused - sharing the love Jesus has for the world with the world. That's why this subject matters (and to so many). So with that in mind, here's a list of ten things that might be holding our church back from realizing the potential of its mission. We're often the last to see what so many see, and once we see it, we can deal with it. Progress often promotes growth.

Here are ten *possible* reasons our church isn't growing (in no particular order):

- 1. We're in conflict.** Ever been in someone's home as a guest only to have your hosts start to argue? It doesn't happen that often, but the few times it's happened, it made me want to leave. Why would church be any different? If we're arguing, why would any new people stay? It's not that Christians shouldn't have conflict, but we should be the best in the world at handling it. The New Testament is a manual of conflict resolution, but so many of us prefer gossip, non-confrontation, and dealing with anyone but the person involved. Growing churches handle conflict biblically and in a healthy way.
- 2. We're more in love with the past than the future.** This can be true of churches that are in love with tradition and churches that have had some amazing days recently. When leaders become more in love with the past than they are with the future, the end is near. If our church is a museum to 1950 or even 2010, the likelihood of reaching the next generation diminishes with every passing day. Will we be here tomorrow?
- 3. We're not that awesome to be around.** You've heard it: Fake. Judgmental. Hypocritical. Angry. Narrow. Unkind. Those are adjectives often used to describe Christians (and *sometimes* they have their basis in truth). There are certain people who are energizing to be around. Unfortunately, too many Christians don't fit that description. Jesus was mesmerizing. Paul caused conflict for sure, but he had many deep relationships and incredible influence. The early church was known for compassion and generosity. If people don't want to be around us, don't let the reason be because we haven't let Christ reshape our character or social skills.
- 4. We're focused on self.** Too many churches are focused on their wants, preferences, and perceived needs. They are self-focused organizations and self-focused people. It would be no surprise that outsiders may feel unwelcomed or excluded. If we want to reach people, we can't be self-focused. A life devoted to self ultimately leaves one all alone.
- 5. We think culture is the enemy.** If all we ever are is angry at the culture around us, how are we going to reach people in that culture? Why would Christians expect non-Christians to act like Christians? If we treat our unchurched neighbor like an enemy, why would he or she ever want to be a friend? Food for thought...
- 6. We're afraid to risk "What Is" for the sake of "What Might Be."** Let's face it...at least we've got something going for us. We're paying the bills. We at least have X amount of people. And if we've had any success recently, we're going to be hesitant to risk "what is" for "what could be." The greatest enemy of our future success is our current success. When we're perpetually afraid to risk "what is" for the sake of "what might be," we may not be around to see any growth.
- 7. We can't make a decision.** Governance will become a major issue for the future. When our decision making is rooted in complex levels of thinking or congregational approval for every single change, it makes decision making difficult and courageous change will be almost impossible.
- 8. We talk more than we act.** Most church leaders like to think on and debate over "issues." Effective leaders often add one more component. They act! Most church leaders often overthink and underact. If we acted on even a few more of our good ideas, we could possibly be twice as effective in a very short timeframe. Possibilities abound.
- 9. We don't think there's anything wrong.** There are a surprising amount of leaders and church members who love their church but can't figure out why anyone else does. Well, those churches are on their way to soon having not much more than a small social club for the already convinced. Take heed lest ye fall.
- 10. We're more focused on growth than we are on God.** Some get so excited about growth that they forget it's truly about God and His mission. This is a danger every motivated person needs to keep in mind. We're leading other people to Jesus, not to "us" or our awesome church. Keeping the focus on Christ ensures genuine life-changing happenings that last and last.

These are 10 *possible* reasons holding us back from growing. There may be more. What are we doing to promote the cause of Christianity? What are the possible reasons you aren't helping us grow?

Help us grow as we go in 2019! (Matthew 28:18-20)

To all our visitors: *Please feel free to participate!*

You should expect to hear singing with voices only, a few "family" announcements, prayers spoken, and see the Lord's Supper offered, then free-willed giving, and gospel preaching from the Bible. Any response is up to you and will be kindly received.

We are glad you decided to worship God with us on this first day of the week!

BirthDay/Anniversary Lunch: 2nd Sunday...
NMCCH: Spray & Wash and Bar Bath Soap (pick up April 6, 2019)
Friday Bible Study: on 1/4/2019 at 7PM. Romans chapters 1 through 6
Men's Bible Study: resumes 1/9/2019 at 10AM
Ladies Bible Class: resumes 1/16/2019 at 10AM
Building Relationships Seminar: at Howe, January 11-13, 2019 (more INFO on bulletin board)