**BIBLE - GROWTH OF THE CHURCH**

***ACTS 9:26-31 – TEXT***

**INTRODUCTION** – I am sure that it is the desire of each member of the church here that we should experience growth. We want to expand the borders of the kingdom of God in this area so much good can be accomplished thru the sowing the seed of the kingdom the word of God. in the area in which we live. We want to make special note of the phrase “the church multiplied when” as this indicates growth. TEXT – **ACTS 9:26-31** -***And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. 28 So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. 29 And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. 30 When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus. 31 Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.***

We want to study today the factors involved when the church multiplied and grew in NT times. The purpose of this lesson is to understand what we must do in order for the church to grow today.

***CAN THE CHURCH GROW TODAY?*** **YES IF:**

1. **DILIGENTLY STUDY THE SCRIPTURES** – Private study time is essential. I.E. – Chemistry – Symbols for the elements.
   1. **2 TIM. 2:15 –** Paul exhorts Timothy to give due diligence to study.
   2. **ACTS 2:46** – Look at the examples of the first century Christians. They had a willingness to study daily - ***So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,***
   3. **ACTS 17**:11 – Note the example of the brethren at Berea. They examined the scriptures daily to see if the things taught were indeed in agreement with the scripture. Look in the book. Get your head in the book and the book in your head!!!
   4. **HEB. 5:12-14** – We cannot teach others that which we don’t know. The Lord’s church will not grow if we do not teach the soul saving gospel of Jesus Christ – **MARK 16:16** - Have you had time to be a teacher? Are you teaching anyone?
   5. **2 TIM. 2:2** – Look at the instructions that Paul gave Timothy - ***And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also***.
   6. **2 PET. 3:18** – You might be saying well I just don’t know very much yet - ***but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen***. Even babies quickly learn to turnover, sit-up, crawl, scoot, walk, and run. How long is it going to take for you to teach others? Depends solely on your study habits.
2. **GIVE CHRIST PREEMINENCE IN OUR LIVES** –
   1. **MATT. 6:33** – Christ wants us to give him first place in our lives - ***But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.***
   2. **COL. 1:18** – Paul says give him preeminence in our lives – first place - ***And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.***
   3. **COL**. **3:1-2** – The failure to study gives way to more interest in the material than the spiritual things of life. The steps are progressive in nature and brethren lose sight of the spiritual mission of the church – evangelism and edification.
   4. **ACTS 4:1-22** – If the church is to grow and multiply we must be willing to teach the gospel to others even if it means receiving persecution. Did this deter Peter and John from teaching the gospel?
   5. **ACTS 5:33-42** – The apostles ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ. Most people today are looking for an excuse for their laziness – “people are just not receptive to the gospel as they used to be.” The church of the Lord will grow if and only if we sow the seed of the kingdom. Are you sowing the seed o f the kingdom brother?
   6. **GAL. 6:7-8** – If we multiply our seed being sown we multiply our harvest. The harvest will be in direct proportion to the amount of seed sown - ***Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.***
   7. **ACTS 8**:**26-30** – If God has first place in our life we will gladly obey him. Do I manifest that God has preeminence in my life?
3. **EVERYONE DOES THEIR PART** – Do you do your share of the work?
   1. **EPH. 4:14-16** – Every joint must supply, every part must do its share! We are going to look at some things that every member can do!!!
   2. **HEB. 10:24-25** – We cannot begin to consider one another and provoke each other to love and good works if we choose to miss assemblies. The least we can do is be faithful to all the assemblies. Yes, this means even if family or friends or in town to visit.
   3. **2 COR. 9:6-7** – Everyone can choose to give to the point of sacrifice. Again the principle of sowing and reaping applies.
   4. **ACTS 2:42**- Do I zealously do my part in praying for the church and its members? Do I serve the Lord with zeal and knowledge?
   5. **REV. 3:1-3** – Can a lack of zeal in the membership really affect a local church and its growth? Sardis had a name they were alive but they were dead. Why? Vs. 4 – Some but not all were doing their share.

**CONLCUSION** –

Can the church in Mary Esther grow? YES!!!

Are you willing to do your share? Everyone must be willing to pitch in and help.

Does Christ have first place in your life?