

# Daily Church Growth

by Cyril H. Brooks

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*The sermon highlights the necessity of individual spiritual growth for the overall growth of the church community.*

**Scripture:** Acts 2:47, Acts 14:23, Acts 16:5, Acts 20:20, 1 Peter 2:2

**Topics:** "Church Growth", "Spiritual Development"

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## Description

Cyril H. Brooks emphasizes the importance of church growth and planting, drawing from the New Testament where Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in new churches and Paul's missionary journeys led to the strengthening and growth of these young churches. The focus is on the daily spiritual growth of individual believers, which is essential for real church growth. Brooks highlights the need for believers to be strengthened in the faith through systematic Bible teaching and application of truth to daily life, likening spiritual malnutrition to a lack of appetite for God's Word, which hinders growth.

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## Transcript

Considerable attention has been given in recent years to Church Growth and Church Planting. This is most commendable because it is also scriptural. However, sometimes the proponents of Church Growth sound as if they had just discovered some new approach and some new objective in missionary work. It is not new to those who have studied missions in the light of the New Testament.

On their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas evidently encouraged the new believers to gather together in local church fellowships. This must have been new truth to those believers, yet we find that on the return part of their journey, Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in each church (Acts 14:23).

Later on, Paul, along with Silas, started on a second journey and one of their objectives was to visit many of those young churches. At Lystra there was a young man, Timothy, who had probably been saved on their first visit there. With the commendation of the brethren at Lystra and Iconium, Paul took Timothy as his companion and fellow worker. Then we read, "So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers" (Acts 16:5 NIV).

Many of the commentaries seem to pass over this verse as self-explanatory but it does merit some consideration. In fact it is quite a remarkable statement! We have no idea what period of time is covered here, whether days, weeks or months. We can only surmise what a great amount of missionary energy and effort was expended. No doubt there were many hours of faithful teaching of the Word of God. On

another occasion Paul wrote, "You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house" (Acts 20:20 NIV). Paul and Silas had been obedient to the Great Commission - "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt.26:20 NIV).

What is impressive in Acts 16:5 is the word "daily." As in the first days of the church souls were being saved regularly and daily, "The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). What a challenge this presents! Is this happening anywhere today? Here was church growth on a daily basis. No doubt, as the churches grew in numbers, there would be hive-offs with new churches established. Yet church growth is not simply a matter of statistics. Reports of churches with thousands of members may be largely meaningless in terms of spiritual growth. Possibly many in such churches are merely church joiners or pew warmers - people lost in the crowd without any active participation in the work of the Lord.

There can be no real church growth without spiritual growth in the lives of individual believers. Driving past a church building I saw this on the bulletin board-- "What does C-H-R-C-H spell without U?" Are you involved in the growth of your local church? Is there even weekly or monthly growth in your assembly? Sad to say, some seem to have no growth at all. An elder from an assembly in the Philippines recently visited the United States. On his return he wondered, whimsically, if we shouldn't be sending missionaries there! The key to church growth is the personal, spiritual growth of each member, growth that will result in serving the Lord in witnessing and winning souls for Christ.

Such spiritual growth is suggested in the first part of this verse, "So the churches were strengthened in the faith." A strong church will be a growing church. There can be little growth where there is weakness. This is often seen in the physical realm. Children who are weak through malnutrition do not grow and develop as they should. Spiritual malnutrition is far too common among God's children. They are not being strengthened in the faith and so the church is not strong and is not growing. Systematic Bible teaching is needed, along with application of the truth to the daily life.

Sometimes spiritual malnutrition is due to lack of appetite for the Word. An interesting illustration of this is found in 2 Samuel 13. Amnon, one of David's sons, was asked by his friend Jonadab, "why do you, the king's son, look so haggard morning after morning?" It was evident that Amnon was not eating much, even though, as the king's son, ample food was available. The effect of this was obvious in his appearance! Then the truth came out! He was in love with his half-sister, a forbidden relationship. So some Christians, the King's sons, are weak and haggard spiritually. Is it not because of lack of appetite for the bountiful provision for them in the Word of God? That lack of appetite is often due to an illicit love, a desire for something which is not according to God's will.

Cause and effect! When believers are feeding on God's Word they will be "strengthened" or "made firm" in the faith. "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation" (1 Peter 2:2 NIV). Thus the churches will be strengthened in the faith and the effect of this will be church growth. Is there any reason why there should not be daily growth, as in Paul's day, if each one does his part?

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