

What Will Make the Church Grow? (1 Corinthians 3)

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Introduction: God has a plan that will produce His results in church growth.

A. Too much of the emphasis we see on church growth comes from a carnal emphasis.

“We are faithful because we grow”

1. Some view the church like a potential stock. “What is the growth rate?”

2. The one factor missing in this analysis is: “What does God say about growth?”

What is **true growth**? How do we achieve this kind of growth?

B. God’s approach will produce God’s results.

1. The pagans at Cornith could testify to this point. (**Acts 18:8; 1 Cor 6:9-11**)

2. What could change a pagan?

3. We do not always see results as God wills. (**2 Cor 2:14-17**)

C. This chapter will give us insight into how God works with men.

I. Things that Hinder the Gospel (3:1-4)

A. Dull hearers.

1. Any good teacher will analyze his audience. Where are they?

2. Have you ever felt the frustration Paul experienced here? He wanted to give them more, but he could not. Why? (**Heb 5:11-14**)

3. How you hear is a product of what is really important to you.

a. **Example:** Someone talking to me during a football game.

b. Good hearing is like an athletic event, it takes exercise to build up an ability.

4. The key is what we have done in time: (**v. 2**) “not yet able...not even now.”

5. Why do people remain “dull hearers”?

B. Worldly Thinking.

1. The root of worldliness is the flesh. (**1 John 2:15-17**)

2. How do worldly people view the things of God? (**1 Cor 2:14; Rom 8:5-8**)

a. The worldly think in terms of what men see.

b. Worldly people are shallow they will not pay the price of study and meditation.

C. The expressions of worldly thinking.

1. **Envy** - The first step of the proud person.

a. Does the honor of someone become a dishonor to you?

b. Sometimes as at Corinth a faction is produced by those of like minds joining together. It is not uncommon for the weak to be pulled in.

c. Sometimes are described as: “The fellowship of the miserable.” Sadly there is an appeal to those who seek to try to bring out how one has been wronged.

d. Examples: “why are not others in the church working as hard as me...”

2. **Strife** - This is what a worldly person feels justified in doing because of envy.

a. Normally this involves the tongue. (**Jas 3:1; 3:13-16**)

b. It takes two carnal men to fight. How will you react when wronged?

3. **Divisions** - This is the end result of a carnal process.

a. A church can be divided without splitting. What is a clique?

- b. Are you only associating with a certain few in the church?
- c. Do you spend time with others in tearing down and magnifying the sins of others without trying to help the one in sin? This is a cowardly act.
- d. Carnal groups in a church can destroy an eldership.
- 4. **The respect of men. (v.4)**
 - a. How do you know when one has placed a man above God?
 - b. When they cannot accept doctrines that are in opposition to a respected man.
(1 Tim 6:3-4)
 - c. When they are afraid to go against these men. **(John 12:42-43)**

II. The kind of Preachers that God wants. (v. 5-11)

- A. Men who know who they are. They are a product of God's grace. **(v. 5)**
 - 1. Without God we are nothing.
 - 2. Pride is a constant danger for all who will do this work.
 - 3. Who do we wish to have the glory? **(1 Tim 1:12-17)**
 - 4. Men who build upon their own personality will be in for a big disappointment.
- B. Men who will submit to the work that God gives. **(v. 5 - 7)**
 - 1. What is planted? What is watered? **(Acts 20:27,32)**
 - 2. Who receives the glory in this work? God! **(v. 7)**
 - 3. What is the end product of this approach? **(1 Cor 2:4-5; 2 Cor 4:5)**
- C. Men who want the fellowship of God above all else. **(v. 8-9)**
 - 1. What is the preacher's reward? Not yet fully received. **(Matt 28:20)**
 - 2. The preacher is moved by the fact of the judgment. **(2 Cor 5:14-15, 11)**
 - 3. Some people fear this kind of preacher? Why?
- D. Men who know how to build. **(v. 10)**
 - 1. What does it mean to build upon Christ? **(John 12:48)**
 - 2. We want to build a faith that will reach our hearts.
 - 3. This involves what we do at all times. **(John 14:7-9)**

III. The kind of men good preaching builds. (v 12-17)

- A. There are two possible results. Which are you? **(2 Cor 13:5)**
 - 1. Gold ,silver, stones?
 - 2. Wood, hay, stubble?
- B. The day of judgment will reveal what we are. **(1 Peter 1:6-7)**
 - 1. Would it not be better to know now and change? **(2 Tim 2:19-22)**
 - 2. There is a kind of preaching that will help people see, another will only keep them in the dark. **(2 Tim 4:3-4)**
- C. Who receives the reward or the loss? **(v. 14-15)**
- D. Watch what you teach! **(v. 16-17)**

Conclusion: Let us not think that we are wiser than God. **(2 Thess 2:10-11)**