Why The Church Grew So Fast In The First Century

Intro: The fact that the church grew in the first century is obvious; Acts 2:41, 47 “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls....” Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”; Acts 4:4 “Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.” But growth is a conditional thing. We must comply with certain conditions or die. What did they do?

I. They Made A United Effort.
   A. Acts 2:44 “And all that believed were together, and had all things common;”
   B. Did not have the strife of denominationalism.
      1. They did not have many bodies, names, faiths and baptisms to confuse people.
      2. John 17:20-21 “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 21That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”
   C. They stood together.
      1. Today we must spend too much time fighting each other.
      2. Gal. 5:15 “But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.”
      3. They worked for peace.
         a. Rom. 14:19 “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.”
         b. Eph. 4:3 “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”
      4. Are we peacemakers or peacebreakers? Matt. 5:9 “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”
   D. Examples of cooperation.
      1. Ecc. 4:9-12 “Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. 10For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. 11Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? 12And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”
      2. 1 Cor. 12:25 “That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.”

II. They Were Steadfast.
   A. Steadfastness.
      1. Acts 2:42 “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”
      2. 1 Cor. 15:58 “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”
      3. 1 Cor. 16:13 “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”
   B. Unstable members weaken the church.
      1. Jam. 1:6-8 “But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. 8For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. 9A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”
      2. Illustration: an Indian went to a missionary and showed him some poetry he had
written. There were several verses but each was exactly like the first. It is not much poetry, but it is good principle. It read:

Go on, Go on, Go on, Go on
Go on, Go on, Go on, Go on.

III. THEY BELIEVED THEIR MESSAGE.

A. Had faith
   1. Enough to preach to the lost
      a. Col. 1:23 “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; wherefore I Paul am made a minister;”
      b. Those who came out of Egypt were not allowed to go into the promised land because of unbelief (Heb. 3-4).
         (1) When they sent spies into the land they became afraid because of what they saw.
         (2) God said this was a lack of faith.
      c. We have been given the great commission to go preach the message of salvation to a lost world. Do we have the faith that will cause us to do this?
   2. They were unafraid.
      a. Acts 4:19-20 “But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”
      b. Paul made saints in Caesar’s household; Phi. 4:22 “All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar’s household.”
   3. They tried to save rather than please the people.
      a. Gal. 1:10 “For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.”
      b. 1 The. 2:4 “But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.”

B. Their faith was so strong that it weathered them against the storms of opposition.
   1. Acts 8:4 “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.”
   2. 2 Cor. 11:23-28 “Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.”

IV. THEY WERE SACRIFICIAL.

A. They sacrificed.
   1. Acts 2:45 “And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.”
   2. 2 Cor. 8:5 “And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.”
3. 2 Cor. 12:15 “And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.”
4. Rom. 12:1 “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

B. Sacrificing comes easy if one has devotion and faith.
1. They believed in their work.
2. Little faith is the cause of poor attendance.

V. The Church Was A Candlestick Upholding The Light.

A. We are to be light.
1. Phi. 2:15 “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;”
2. Mat. 5:14-16 “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. 15Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. 16Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

B. An unconverted church cannot uphold the light.
1. Rev. 2:5 “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.”
2. They would not tolerate sin within the camp.

Conclusion: We too can grow as a people, and as an individual congregation. However, we must do those things that are necessary to growth.