

First United Pentecostal Church

“...And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47).

The best way to learn about how to have an authentic United Pentecostal Church (or any Pentecostal Church) is to look back into history. The First United Pentecostal Church is found in the New Testament where the first church is established in Acts 2. Through determining New Testament principles used in planting the first church we will be better able to achieve New Testament results in this present day. We cannot cause the church to grow but we can help create the right environment where we can sow the seed and watch it grow. That is what planting a church is about. We sow the seed and then watch God make it grow. Paul confirmed this when he wrote, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase...For we are labourers together with God” (1 Corinthians 3:6, 9).

Planter’s Points to Ponder

- It is God’s will for the church to grow.
- Church Growth is a natural result of a healthy church.
- It can be expected as you would expect your child to grow.
- If the church is not growing then it must be dying.
- If we want church growth then we must pay the price.
- Ministry must be Christ-centered and people-oriented.

I always like to tell visitors, “Welcome to the United Pentecostal Church; a church where everybody is somebody but Jesus Christ is Lord. Every time you make a step through the doors of the UPCI you have made a step in the right direction.”

Churches are healthiest when they give God glory. God’s Word deserves the place of highest importance in church services. We must also love people and try to meet their needs. After all, one of the purposes for having the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is to receive power to be a witness to others (Acts 1:8). As we concentrate on church planting and church growth we must continue to preach the Apostles’ doctrine. You cannot have realistic church growth without preaching the message of the Early Church (Acts 2:38). Preaching from the pulpit must always be Word-centered, anointed, and also relevant and practical to the people.

There are five elements of church growth outlined in this lesson. In order for the church to grow, each of these principles must be operating in the church and they must be in balance. There is not one that is considered to be more important than another and each are necessary.

1. Fellowship

The First UPC members were in unity; shared in fellowship and in breaking of bread. This is why it is important for each member to attend church regularly. The church where fellowship is strong is a caring church. Believers demonstrate a genuine concern for each other. “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much more, as ye see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25).

Not only did the Early Church fellowship with each other but they also had fellowship with their God through prayer. The first church was brought into existence as a result of a prayer meeting and continued to grow as a result of prayer.

Miracles began taking place in Acts 3 when they were on their way to prayer. The prerequisite to a miracle is someone in need.

2. Discipleship

We are called to make disciples; to reproduce ourselves.

“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2).

In the Great Commission Jesus Christ placed “discipleship” at the top of the list of things needed to be done. Sometimes we write out “To Do” lists of things we want to accomplish on any given day. Many times the church forgets about discipling and enabling their members on their list. This causes the real priority to be shifted lower on the list each day. The result is that the church lacks the needed power in transforming lives.

Elton Trueblood said, “The real test of the vitality of a religion can be seen in its impact on the culture.” Are we making a difference in our culture and country? How can we make a greater impact in a shorter period of time? This can be done through discipleship (training and teaching). The Early Church “ceased not to preach and teach” (Acts 5:42), and therefore “filled Jerusalem with their doctrine” (Acts 5:28).

Hosea said, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6).

If we do not teach people what is expected of them from the Bible we are rendering them “Bible Illiterates.”

3. Worship

Worship and praise are vital to church growth. In sports we realize there is something greater about a game that is played in front of thousands of people compared to a game played in front of a few hundred people. As we gather together at church, there is an atmosphere of

celebration. When we begin to celebrate our God and what He has done for us we are expressing our love for God.

“And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deuteronomy 6:5).

“O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together” (Psalm 34:3).

**“We worship God for who He is...(concerns His character). We praise God for what He does...(concerns His actions)”
(Jack Hayford).**

4. Ministry

This is expressing our love for others and meeting their needs. If we are not meeting people's needs then we are not ministering. The church ministers to different types of people (ladies, men, children, youth, prisons, hospitals) with different types of needs. These needs fall into the four categories that make up a man: spiritual, physical, social, and emotional.

Some churches have cell groups where 5-12 people get together and minister to each other in a small group setting. In Acts they ministered from “house to house.”

5. Evangelism

If we do not try to witness and evangelize, people will not come into the church. We cannot expect people to walk in off the streets but we must go to where the people are. When we make an effort to evangelize we are showing the world we are a reaching body.

We are reaching for those outside of our church who are in need with a desire to provide hope and help.

If we are able to have all five elements operating in our churches, and give them equal attention, then we will receive the results we are looking for.

“And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47).

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end” (Jeremiah 29:11).

Study Questions

1. Where is the best place to study the way the UPCI should be? Why? _____

2. What are the five elements of church growth? _____

3. What is the real test of the vitality of a religion? _____

4. What should preaching from the pulpit be like? _____

5. What is the difference between our praise and worship according to Jack Hayford? _____

6. What was the result of the Early Church practicing “discipleship”? _____

7. What happens when we do not teach people what is expected from them? _____

8. What is the end result of incorporating the five elements of church growth into the church? _____
