

The Healthy Growth of the Church unto God's Glory

The church is recognized everywhere as a community of faith, fellowship, witness and service. Jesus Christ founded the church on the day of Pentecost with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Those who accepted the message of Peter were baptized, and about 3000 were added to their number that day (Acts. 2:41). The growth factor is evident with the daily Spirit-anointed ministry of early apostles (2:47). We need to be enthusiastic about promoting church growth in number and to be passionate regarding church growth in quality as the early church initiated.

1. Growing together as a holy temple in the Lord. Paul uses a metaphor of the temple which indicates the purpose for which God has established His church. Here, the church is to be a community in whom the Holy Spirit dwells (2 Cor. 6:16). It should increase our awareness of God's very presence dwelling in our midst as we meet
2. Growing together as the body of Christ (Eph. 4:15-16). Here, Christ is the head and the church is like the rest of the body, as distinguished from the head. It should increase our interdependence on one another and our appreciation of the diversity of gifts within the body. It is significant to grow collectively in Christian stewardship where to share our blessings with others.
3. Growing together as a family. God is our heavenly Father (Eph. 3:14) and we are his sons and daughters. The relationship between members of church as brothers and sisters make this family unique in the world. It should increase our love and fellowship with each other. Here, we are to treat others with more affection and respect for upholding family values.
4. Growing together as a holy priesthood that can offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God (1 Pet. 2:5). History shows that the great reformation of the church restored this biblical principle for recognizing the true-identity of the believers. The concept of the church as priesthood should help us to see more clearly the delight God has in the sacrifices of praise and good deeds that we offer to Him (Heb. 13:15-16). The corporate worship in the church is the result of acknowledging the sovereignty of God alone as worthy of worship.
5. Growing together in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior of Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18). This is an antidote to the false teachers who boasted in their esoteric knowledge. Turning to God-breathed scripture is the need, when the emerging generation is well attracted to the concept of 'no religion' as an influence of post-modernism.

God bless you.

In His glorious service,

Rev. K. P. Mathew

(Senior Pastor, IPC Hebron, Los Angeles)

Bridges Not Walls

Jijo John (Sunday School Teacher)

In our everyday life, do we build more walls or bridges around us?

Walls separate but bridges connect.

God's design for the church is to be a place where believers grow up and grow together. Growth is the important sign of life and health. When something stops growing, it starts to decline. Spiritual growth is a vital part of spiritual health.

What do we mean when we say growing together? Is it, growing spiritually closer to God? Or growing in deeper fellowship with fellow Christians? Or growing in ministry involvement in the church? Or more members added to church? When the Bible talks about us growing together it means all these things. Ephesians. 4:16 says, "from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supply, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love".

Here we see the example of a body and a healthy body grows in many directions at once. If someone's body is growing, but their minds aren't growing, something is wrong. If someone's body and mind are maturing and growing, but if they are not emotionally growing, something is wrong. We expect our bodies to grow in all these areas, not in just one.

As we grow in spiritual maturity and discernment, we will no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting (Ephesians 4:14). As we grow closer to Jesus our lives will reflect him more. God doesn't want us to stay the way you are, He wants mold us into what He intended to be. Closer to God is not the result of trying harder but of surrendering more.

Growing together, in Christ, means you will love and accept people without placing conditions upon them. You will begin to desire to restore broken relationships. Unconditional and sacrificial kindness, care, generosity and concern will begin to blossom as you grow in Christ and with others.

We care for each other. We pray for each other. Life gets hard at times, and what's better than knowing that there are people you can count on to help. Best of all, being part of a church community is much more that we can imagine.

Growing together not only happens in the community but also in our own home. As you mature in Christ and learn His word you will have a desire to impact your family God has surrounded you with.

Fellowship is all about doing life together during the good and bad times. It is about encouraging and caring for others. We are all part of God's family and he wants us to grow in our love for others. True love is about forgiveness and reconciliation.

May God helps all of us to grow together in spirit, truth, love and closer to God in this New year.