

Theme: The church becomes vibrant and grows as each person uses their gifts and calling to serve others for Christ.

I. Celebrating Great Moments

- A. Linda & I went to Italy - a great celebration of 30 years!
- B. Churches also need to celebrate what God is doing
- C. Today we are celebrating a lot of things
- D. A vibrant, growing church has things to celebrate

II. A Growing Church

- A. Luke is telling us that the church is growing
In those days when the number of disciples was increasing...⁷ So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith. Acts 6:1, 7
 - 1. The number of disciples was increasing
 - 2. The word of God is spreading
 - 3. The number of disciples is growing
 - 4. Both Greeks (v1) and Jews (v7) included
- B. This is a major theme in the book of Acts
 - 1. Structure of the book - geographic & social growth
But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Acts 1:8
 - a. Geographic - from Jerusalem out to ends of earth
 - b. Social - Jews, Samaritans, Gentiles

- c. Acts is structured to show these two types of growth
- 2. The growth panels or statements
Those who accepted his message were baptized, and **about three thousand were added to their number that day...⁴⁷ And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.** Acts 2:41, 47

So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith. Acts 6:7

Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and **encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers**, living in the fear of the Lord. Acts 9:31

But the word of God continued to increase and spread. Acts 12:24

So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers. Acts 16:5

In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power. Acts 19:20

For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him.³¹ **Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.** Acts 28:30–31

- C. There are several things we should learn from this
 - 1. We should expect the church to grow! We are optimists - not pessimists!

2. Growth is not just numbers - it is also the spread of God's Word, and growth in maturity
3. Growth is not just 'people like us' - it is everyone!
4. Not even persecution can stop the growth of God's Word and church!
 - a. In fact, most of growth statements follow persecution and difficulty
 - b. It is not ease that produces growth, but strain!
 - c. You want to limit the irrigation, 'cause it makes the vines struggle... intensifies the flavor. A comfortable grape, a well-watered, well-fertilized grape... grows into a lazy ingredient of a lousy wine. (Bottleshock)

III. A Vibrant Church

A. The church is not just growing - it is vibrant and alive!

1. This is not about great marketing and hype
2. This is produced by God - not humans
3. The church is no mere shell- it is alive and vibrant to the core!

B. A church with vibrant ministry of the word and prayer

So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to **wait** on tables. ³ Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴ and will give our attention to prayer and the **ministry** of the word." Acts 6:2-4

1. Apostles are given to the word and prayer
2. Wordplay - ministry of word or ministry at tables

3. A vibrant church must have strong ministry of word and prayer
4. This is why so many of 'growth' statements are about the Word growing
5. And prayer undergirds ministry of Word in Acts
 - a. Praying on Pentecost when Spirit comes, Peter preaches
 - b. Praying in Acts 4 when Spirit refills and they speak Word boldly
 - c. Praying when Spirit sends out Saul and Barnabas
6. A church can not grow biblically apart from Word and prayer

C. A church with vibrant ministry by every member

1. The leadership delegates real ministry to others
So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³ **Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them** ⁴ and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." Acts 6:2-4
 - a. There is a lot at stake here - church has division
 - b. Apostles delegate ministry to others - they can not do it all
 - c. Vibrant ministry of word and prayer is only possible if others help bear the load of ministry
 - d. This is why deacons were established in the church
2. More than just official positions - everyone must

minister

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Ephesians 4:16

- a. The body is only vibrant if everything is working
- b. There are no parts which have no function!
- c. The Church is not an assembly of spectators!!!

D. There are several things we should learn from this

1. The church does not grow by gimmicks but by Word and prayer
2. The church does not grow by the ministry of a few superstars
3. Real growth requires everyone to use their gifts and to serve others
4. Real growth requires each of us to be willing to receive from each and every member - not just the leaders

IV. Applying the Word

A. Am I part of a vibrant, growing church?

1. All believers are called to be part of a local church
2. Do I see I need the whole local church?
3. Do I see the whole local church needs me?
4. Am I a vital, participating member - or just a spectator and consumer?

B. Thanks to all who are part of BRCC's vibrancy, health,

and growth

1. We are vibrant, healthy and growing because so many participate
2. People serve in so many capacities in BRCC - children, kitchen, worship, usher, greeters, communion, elders, church council, set up and check building, using gifts, small group leaders and hosts, hospitality, Lighthouse ministries, jail ministry, youth group, etc,
3. Thanks to each and every one of you - you are why BRCC is healthy

C. Setting in new deacons

1. Today we are setting in five new deacons
 - a. Ronnie Younger, Theresa Allison, Karen Trostle, Renee Younger, Patrick Allison
 - b. We are so grateful for all these folks have done - and continue to do
 - c. We have spent time in prayer - and their selection has been confirmed
 - d. Today we will set them in
2. The elders will pray for the new deacons

A Vibrant, Growing Church

Acts 6:1-7

November 16, 2014

Set in deacons

Deuteronomy 1:11

Teaching keywords: Deacons, ordination, spiritual gifts, leadership

May the Lord, the God of your fathers, increase you a thousand times and bless you as he has promised! Deuteronomy 1:11

1 In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. 2 So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. 3 Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them 4 and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

5 This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. 6 They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

7 So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith. Acts 6:1–7