

## News and Notes

### PLEASE PRAY FOR:

**Janice Ruffner** - Roelf Ruffner's wife, Columbia, TN. Blood clots, Fibromyalgia, Lung problems.

**Pat Miller** - Wife of Jim Miller, Gray, Maine preacher. In therapy from auto accident.

**Nancy Reed** - Various health issues.

**Patrick King** - Hemiplegic Migraine.

**Sandy Craig** - Ongoing kidney problems.

**Jo Ann McLerran** - COPD.

**Glenda Marble** - Lexington, Okla. - Heart problems.

**Debbie Post** - Wife of Salisbury, Maryland preacher Doug Post - Cancer.

**Sissy Craig** - For spiritual and emotional strength.

**Charles and Linda Pogue** - Congestive heart failure.

**Nancy Verkist** - Ellensburg, Washington. Von Hippel Lindau disease.

**Chuck Verkist** - Ellensburg, Washington. Undergoing treatment for Prostate Cancer.

**Don Smith** - Faithful brother in Christ persecuted for teaching fellow inmates in an Ohio prison.

**"THANK YOU"** - Jo Ann McLerran expresses her love and thanks to the Northeast church for the aid we provide her each month.

**PREACHING THIS WEEK** - Patrick King will preach in both worship periods this Lord's Day.

**KENYA REPORT** - Contributing this week to the Kenya fund were, Holley Brewer, Weatherford, Okla.; The Bellview church of Christ, Pensacola, Fla.; Gary and Jacque Rogers, Quanah, Texas, Texas; Jess and Terry Whitlock, Denison, Texas; and the Eastside church of Christ, Lexington, Okla. We are grateful to all of our generous brethren who aid us in this great work. We are losing about 40 percent of our monthly support, so any additional support will be more than welcomed.

**ANNUAL CFTF LECTURESHIP** - The annual Contending For The Faith Lectureship will be held Feb. 23-25 at Spring, Texas. The theme is "The 'I Am' Statements of Jesus." Jerry and Sherlene will attend and he will speak Saturday, Feb. 24 on the topic, "I Am The Alpha And Omega." Feb. 25 is the fourth Sunday, so Earl will preach at Northeast in Jerry's absence.

Our building is located at East Avenue C and North Locust in Elk City, Oklahoma, one block east of Van Buren on Avenue C. You are invited to visit with us at any of our meeting times.

### Weekly Meeting Times

Sunday Morning Bible Classes.....9:30  
 Sunday Morning Worship.....10:30  
 Sunday Afternoon Worship.....5:00

### Visit Us on The Web

**You Tube** - [www.youtube.com/channel/UCjd5rSEV1vXCNx52ouOrXoQ](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjd5rSEV1vXCNx52ouOrXoQ)

**Website** - [www.necocelkcity.com](http://www.necocelkcity.com)

**Face Book** - [www.facebook.com/nechurchofchristecok](http://www.facebook.com/nechurchofchristecok)



# Sound Doctrine

**"But speak thou the things that become sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1)**

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## "Church Growth"

**Jerry C. Brewer**

Ill-informed, Biblically ignorant, and carnally minded members of the church, who are tainted with denominational influences, generally become overly concerned when the "church doesn't grow." By that, they mean that numbers are not being added to the membership and they usually lay the blame at the feet of the local preacher. That concept is as far from the New Testament as the worship of Mary by Catholics. The only kind of "church growth" that is mentioned in the New Testament is the spiritual growth of individual members. Peter commanded, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2). There is not a single precept, inference or example in the New Testament about the preacher "growing the church" and those who complain about him are the same ones who have failed to grow spiritually, as Peter enjoins.

There are even congregations that are otherwise "sound" whose members believe an increase in numbers is the responsibility of the preacher. And, though they would never admit it, they view the preacher as their "Pastor" whose job is to "get things going" and bring in numbers. They need to read First and Second Timothy and Titus again. Those books constitute the "manual" for gospel preachers and Paul did not say a single word about "church growth" as part of the work of an evangelist. Not only is that the case, but there is not a single passage in the New Testament that makes "church growth" the responsibility of any Christian. There are, however, a number of passages which lay out responsibilities and examples for evangelism by all Christians.

In Matthew's account of the Great Commission, Jesus said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19). Mark's account reads this way: "Go ye into all the world, and preach

the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). Luke recorded, “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47). In none of those accounts did the Lord say, “grow the church.”

“Church growth” is not an end in itself. If that were so, then games, door prizes, \$20 bills strategically taped to the underside of the pews, concerts, dramas, puppet shows, carnivals, bingo, and other entertainments could be provided to “grow the church.” Growth in numbers of any congregation does not result from those things. It results from, 1) preaching the gospel in its simplicity to the lost and, 2) obedience to the gospel by hearts which “hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Matt. 5:6). It is the responsibility of the preacher to do the first and the responsibility of lost souls to do the latter. No congregation’s numbers will increase unless those things are present.

Neither does the local preacher have the sole responsibility to teach the lost. That is the responsibility of *every Christian*. When the church was scattered from Jerusalem upon the death of Stephen, “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word” (Acts 8:4). It is worthy of note in that chapter that, “they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, *except the apostles* ([Emph. JB] (Acts 8:1). The preachers (the apostles) did *not* go “every where preaching the word.” Who went “every where preaching the word”? The members of the church in Jerusalem. In Samaria, and on the Gaza road the church’s numbers increased because of Philip who “preached Christ unto them” (Acts 8:5) and to the Ethiopian, “preached unto him Jesus” (Acts 8:35). Philip, and those who “went every where preaching the word” preached Christ as Jesus had commanded in the Great Commission. We later learn that those who were “scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch” (Acts 11:19). As a result of their preaching, “The hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord” (Acts 11:21). *There* was “church growth”—“a great number believed and turned unto the Lord.” Very simply, the church “grew” because faithful Christians loved men’s souls, preached the gospel of Christ to the lost, and those to whom they preached obeyed and were saved by the blood of Christ. There was no “Pastor” among them who was charged with “making the church grow.”

If neither preachers nor other members are charged with “church growth,” then whose responsibility is it? According to Paul, it is *God’s*. Of himself and Apollos, Paul asked the church at Corinth, “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase” (1 Cor. 3:5-6). the church “grows” when the gospel is preached, men obey it, and they are *added* to the church (Acts 2:47).

Legion are church members (and even elders) who carp and complain about “church growth,” blame the preacher for its lack, replace him with one who will “get things going” and then sit back and do nothing while he works his public relations “magic.”

There are three reasons a church should stop supporting a preacher, and none of those has anything to do with growth in church numbers. A preacher who preaches false doctrine should not be supported, but marked and avoided (Rom. 16:17-18). If he refuses to preach “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27) he should not be supported. If he sins, bringing public shame on Christ, and refuses to repent, he should not be supported. But as long as the preacher is living according to the doctrine of Christ and preaching it in its simplicity and completeness (1 Tim. 4:16), the church is duty bound to support him to the very best of its ability. “Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:14).

A faithful gospel preacher whom we once knew was told that he was responsible for the church’s lack of growth. After hearing that charge, he developed a form to hand out to members of the congregation, on which they could write the names and contact information of prospects, including their family members. Of the 30 or 40 he handed out, only one member returned it, with the note that this member didn’t know anyone and had no names for him. The gospel preacher who is faithful to his charge (2 Tim. 4:1-5) is not a public relations expert charged with “church growth” and those who believe he is need to repent or find a comfortable denomination with the kind of “Pastor” they desire.

If every member of the church took the words of Christ seriously, instead of considering the preacher a “hireling” to “grow the church,” numbers *would* increase, not because numbers were being sought, but because Christians were obeying the Lord. “Church growth” is God’s province. Ours is to “preach the word.”

## A Question: Timothy, Titus And Circumcision

**Foy E. Wallace, Jr.**

Your question concerning “Paul’s circumcising Timothy” is answered by the acts as to the origin of the rite (see Genesis 17) and the subsequent use made of it by Judaizing teachers in the early days of Christianity. It originated as the “token of a covenant betwixt” Jehovah and the Jewish nation; and as a mark of national distinction among the Jews. Its practice has never been out of place.

Paul could circumcise Timothy, whose mother was a Jewess. ” Because of the Jews that were in those parts (Acts 16:3); but, with equal consistency, he could refuse to circumcise Titus (Gal. 2:3) who was not only a Greek, but who presents a case in which the Judaizers incorporated circumcision as a part of their system of being “justified by the law” (Gal. 5:2-6). Hence, while, as a mark of national distinction and the token of God’s covenant with the Jews, Paul could practice it, as he did in the case of Timothy; yet, when it meant the acceptance of the legal system of justification, as in the case of Titus, he consistently and rightly refused. (*The One Book, Analyzed & Outlined*)