

# We Don't Grow The Church

---

by Steve Higginbotham

I don't like to hear people use the expression, "grow the church." You might be right in calling it a personal "pet peeve," or even a scruple, but I believe I have good reason for not using such relatively new verbiage. Allow me to share a few reasons I think we ought to rethink the propriety of using this expression.

1. Nowhere in Scripture can we see this language employed. Weren't they interested in church growth in the first century? Of course they were. But never do you read of Paul talking about how he "grew the church at Ephesus or Corinth. On the contrary, what we read is that Paul planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6) which brings me to my next point.
2. This verbiage takes credit for what we did not do. God is the one who gives the increase. Certainly we "plant" and "water," but growth comes from God. I don't "grow" the church, God does. With respect to the church, we may "plant" and "water," but there's a "regeneration" that is out of my control, and is the work of God (Titus 3:5).
3. It sounds boastful and arrogant. As it should, for we're taking credit for something we didn't do. I'm not saying that those who use this expression are arrogant, I'm suggesting they maybe haven't thought it through. Wouldn't it be better to give that credit to God, where it actually belongs? When my youngest son was only three-years-old, he once asked me why people give "Mother Nature" credit for what God does? I thought it was a great question, especially from a three-year-old. Like my son, I want to ask the question why we would want to take credit for what God does?

Friends, I'm interested in church growth just as much as the next guy, but I think we ought to give greater care to the words we use. I want nothing more than to use my life to bring glory to God (Ephesians 3:21), and I want nothing less than to claim for myself glory that is rightfully God's (Matthew 5:16). A more thoughtful use of our words may help us to fulfill both of those desires. Give it some thought.