

Church Growth

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- [0 : 0 0] I'm going to talk this morning about church growth.! Church growth. Everyone, I would assume, wants their church to grow, right?
- ! I mean, we don't want to just have a little spot for us and our friends. We want the church to grow. We want to reach new people. We want to reach lost people. Okay?
- But there's a lot of thoughts on church growth. People, you know, how a church grows. Should a church grow? And a lot of times when you talk about church growth, people talk about, well, you got to get, you know, a really nice building or you got to get a really good worship team.
- You got to get a really charismatic preacher or you got to have really good childcare. Slick marketing campaign. You know, I don't know.
- Figure out the list, right? You got to have all these different things. And it's a good thing to want the church to grow. We should want the church to grow. But we have to ask the question, how does the church grow biblically?
- [1 : 1 1] Like, what does the Bible say about church growth? As we seek, as a church, been a church for a year, as we seek to say, okay, how do we grow in a healthy way? How do we grow according to God's way?
- How do we grow according to what the scriptures say? We have to ask that question. What do the scriptures say? So I'm going to look at four verses and extrapolate five different things out of these verses that I think are relevant to us as a church.
- Okay, first one's Acts chapter 9, 31. Acts chapter 9, 31. It says, So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up.
- And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied. Okay? So here you see two different things that caused the church to multiply.
- Notice it doesn't say anything about the slick marketing campaign or their new worship pastor or whatever else. It says, Walking in the fear of the Lord and the comfort, some versions say encouragement of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.
- [2 : 2 4] It multiplied. You know, a lot of times we can think of so many different things as far as it comes to church growth. And how often do we ignore just the plain teaching of Scripture? Just what the Scripture just lays out, right?
- Here we see plainly that in Acts chapter 9, the church was growing. It was multiplying. How? They were walking in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit. Okay? Second verse.
- Acts chapter 6, a little earlier. Acts chapter 6, verse 7. It says, The word of God continued to increase. The CSB says spread. So the word of God continued to increase or spread.
- And the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. Okay? So here we see another verse talking about the church growing.
- Disciples multiplying greatly. What was going on there? The word of God was being spread. The word of God was increasing. Or you could say the gospel. Okay?

- [3 : 26] Was being spread all over the place and increase the number of the disciples greatly. Greatly. Okay? Third verse. Ephesians 4, verse 16.
- I'm going to read this one in the NIV. It says, 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.
- As each part does its work. How did it grow? How did it get built up? Well, as each part of the church did its work. Okay? Seeing this?
- Fourth verse. Colossians 2, 19. It says, Holding fast to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together, through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.
- Okay? What did they do? Colossians. They were holding fast to the head. And agree with the growth that is from God. Okay? We want a growth that is from God.
- [4 : 30] You can have artificial growth. Or you can have growth that is from God. All right? Whatever you draw people with, you have to keep them with. Okay?
- You draw them with all the slick, shiny objects, you got to keep them with the slick, shiny objects. You draw them with entertainment, you got to keep them entertained. Okay? What are you drawing with?
- Is God the one drawing them? Do you want that to be on us? That it's something, our cleverness that draws them? Well, then we got to keep being more and more clever.
- Or is it God himself? The church grows with a growth that is from God. Okay? So you see these five things that cause the church to grow in the Bible. Walking in the fear of the Lord, spreading the gospel, each part doing its work, walking in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and holding fast to the head.
- Okay? I want to look at all five of them. Because I think it's important for us to make sure, hey, are we doing what the Bible says to do when it comes to church growth? I'm not interested in some fad. I'm not interested in some slick marketing campaign.
- [5 : 35] What does the Bible say about church growth? I want to do that. We should want to do that. That's important. So the question is, are we? Right? That's a fair question. So number one, walking in the fear of the Lord.
- Acts 9.31 said, walking in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied. The church multiplied. Okay, what is the fear of the Lord? Proverbs 8.13 says, the fear of the Lord is to hate evil.
- It says, I hate pride and arrogance. God says this, right? The fear of the Lord is to hate evil. What is your attitude towards evil, particularly sin?
- The fear of the Lord says, I hate sin. I don't want to get close to sin. I'm not going to play with sin. I'm not going to mess with sin. As a church, we're saying, hey, if we're going to fear the Lord, we have to care about holiness.
- We have to make sure I'm not even getting close to sin. Proverbs 34, I'm sorry, Psalm 34, 11 to 14, says, come, oh children, listen to me and I will teach you the fear of the Lord.
- [6 : 40] All right? I'm listening. How do I learn the fear of the Lord? What man is there who desires life and loves many days that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit.
- Turn away from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it. Okay? So often, when it comes to the fear of the Lord, the way we can be flippant and not fear the Lord is with our lips.

Right? With our tongue. Being careful what we say. All right? And it's easy to complain or it's easy to just kind of, you know, voice our complaints about things or about different people or, you know, and if we're a church that fears the Lord, none of that can be on our lips.

We have to say, no, I want to learn the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord keeps my tongue from evil. I'm not going to, I'm going to be very careful with my words. The Proverbs 18 says, the tongue has the power of life and death.

Okay? Tongue has the power of life and death. Remember, it's both sides too. It's easy to say, oh yeah, man, you got to be careful of that tongue. Watch your tongue, man. You're, you're, that's the power of death.

[7 : 54] Like, yes, you're right. What about the other side? What else is it? It's the power of life. It's the power of life. So the fear of the Lord says, I want to use this amazing tool, not for death, but for life.

I'm going to be careful about my tongue. I'm going to turn my tongue from evil. I'm going to hate evil. Okay? That same word that was used in Acts chapter nine for the fear of the Lord, it's used multiple times in the book of Acts and it's translated in different ways and then in other ways, it just gives you a little more context of what it could mean.

Okay? Acts 2.43 uses that same Greek word for fear and it says, instead of fear, it says, and awe came about, awe came upon every soul.

Do you have an awe of God? Do you, when you think about God, when we worship God, do you think of God as so much greater than anything you've ever seen? Do you, are you awed by him or kind of smitten by him, like taken back by him?

The fear of the Lord says, God, you are so other, you are so greater, you are so magnificent. It says in the book of Acts in Acts chapter two, that awe was upon every soul.

[9 : 05] When the fear of the Lord comes upon us, there's a sense of awe that comes on us. There's a sense of awe. Okay? We also see in the book of Acts the story of Ananias and Sapphira and that same word fear is used there.

It says after, when he confronted Ananias in Acts chapter five, because Ananias was not being totally honest about what he had given to the Lord.

in Acts five, verse five, it says, when Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last and great fear came upon all who heard of it. Okay? So he's lying to God and to other people.

He's making things look better than they were and God put him to death. You think, whoa, that's, that's where, that's where you have a sense of awe and a sense of fear.

It says, great fear came upon all who heard of it. Well, of course. And you realize, you know, I read a tweet this last week that said the sun is what, 93,000 miles, no, million, what was it, million?

[10 : 10] 93 million miles away from us. And yet, if you look at it just too long, which is not very long at all, it'll burn your eyes and we think we can flippantly come into the presence of God, the one who created the sun.

Isn't that a crazy thought? That the sun is 93 million miles away and it'll burn your eyes if you look at it for seconds too long. And the creator of the sun, we so flippantly come to the creator of the sun.

How much more of a consuming fire is he? Okay? He's the one who put Ananias to death and then Sapphira in verse 11 and after she was put to death it said, great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.

That kind of fear is basically, it says, hey, I'm in Christ but I have reverence for God. I have a certain sense of I don't want to sin.

I don't want to get close to sin. I don't want to, I don't want to mess around with just even a hint of unholiness. Like I want to be pure.

[11 : 16] And you see that the church that was here, it grew. In what? Walking in the fear of the Lord. this kind of fear, this kind of awe, this kind of seriousness that says, there's a sense of a lack of flippancy.

And sometimes maybe we can get a little too flippant in our church experience where we forget who God is. Right? There was this kind of flippancy you also saw in Acts chapter 19.

Remember the story of the itinerant Jewish exorcists who undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits? Remember that story? And they said, I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul proclaims.

Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. But the evil spirit answered them, Jesus I know and Paul I recognize. But who are you?

Okay? And then the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. That's a bad day.

[12 : 20] Right? It's like, hey, you know, this can't be too hard. What the heck? I see they're casting out demons. I think I'll try this. Right? No, you don't flippantly deal with things like that.

You don't get flippant about the things of God. Look at what happened. They fled out of the house naked and wounded and this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks.

And then that next phrase has that same word that was used in Acts chapter 9. It says, and fear fell upon all them and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. Also many of those who are now believers came confessing and divulging their practices and a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all.

And they counted the value of them and found it came to 50,000 pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily. You see that again? There's this tying to the sense of fear that came upon the church and then the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

It was like, it caused the spread of the gospel. Okay? Which really goes together with 2 Corinthians chapter 5, 10 to 11.

[13 : 31] He says, we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

Therefore, okay, so look before it to see what it's there for. He says, we must all appear before the judgment of Christ. Therefore, so in light of the fact that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, knowing the fear of the Lord, we do what?

We persuade others. Do you see that? Do you see that tie there? You saw the fear that came upon the church when these seven sons of schema thought, oh, no big deal, I'll just cast out demons.

No. Where's your fear of the Lord? And great fear came upon the church and then it caused the word of the Lord to spread, the gospel spread. In the same way when the fear of judgment, when you're realizing, hey, we're all going to stand before the judgment seat, I better be cognizant of what I'm doing, how I'm conducting myself and know that no one's going to escape judgment.

Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. Knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. Knowing that everyone is going to stand before that judgment seat, I've got to persuade as many people as possible with the gospel.

[14 : 43] Okay? So the fear of the Lord is very much tied to the spread of the gospel. Could it be that perhaps sometimes we don't spread the gospel because we lack a fear of the Lord? Have you ever thought about that?

Have you ever thought that maybe the reason we're not persuading others is because we don't know the fear of the Lord? We're not cognizant of the fact that one day, there is a day coming and it is coming soon and we will all stand before the Lord?

We'll all stand and we'll have to give an account and not just us but all those people outside of these walls who don't know Jesus, who have not trusted Him, who are not covered in the blood, those whose sins will be counted against them unless they turn and trust to Jesus and have their stain removed.

Knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. We persuade others. Okay? So it brings us to that second point, spreading the gospel. It says in Acts 6-7, right, the number of the disciples multiplied greatly after the word of God continued to increase or continued to spread.

Okay? When the word of God spreads, when the gospel spreads, the number of disciples multiplies greatly. You saw this also in Acts 12-24. It says the word of God increased or spread and multiplied.

[16 : 03] Okay? Okay? I'm convinced one of the main reasons why so many churches stay the same size is because people aren't persuaded to preach the gospel.

Because you get comfortable with a group of friends, you get to know each other, our kids get to know each other, we're able to just really gel together well, and it's like, you know, us four no more, it's kind of going pretty well.

I mean, what's that? I'm enjoying life, you're enjoying life. I mean, we don't want to break up a good thing. I mean, I don't want to make it more uncomfortable. I mean, if we had more people, I mean, I kind of like what's going on here. I got my friends where everything's going well, and yet, there's people dying and going to hell.

There's people who don't know the truth. The fear of the Lord should be persuading us and saying, we've got to spread the good news. We've got to be highly intentional. I've got to reorient my life around the gospel.

It can't be just this thing I wait for these opportunities. No, I need to go and make the most of every opportunity. I need to open, open door, and look for places where I can preach the gospel. God save us if we ever, as a church, let up on that.

[17 : 11] And be sure that if we do, that will be the end of any growth that we'll see. Because you grow by reaching people with the gospel.

Okay? In the fear of the Lord, we are persuaded. Colossians 1, 3 to verse 7, 3 through 7, says, We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

Of this you have heard before in the word of truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing. That word increasing is the same word that was used in multiplied, right?

Or spread. So this word of the truth, the gospel, it came to you and it's bearing fruit and increasing. It's being spread, as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God and truth, just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant.

He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf. I love how he just points out this guy Epaphras. Epaphras, from the verses you see, there's not a lot of him, but he seemed like a pretty awesome, awesome guy.

[18 : 23] Right? He's commending Epaphras because he said, you learned this from Epaphras. He's a beloved fellow servant. He's a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf.

If we want to be a church that grows the way God grows churches, if we want to be a church that grows the way that the Bible talks about growing, we need Epaphras. We need faithful ministers of Christ on others' behalf who will be spreading the good news of the gospel.

more seed being sowed, more seed being sowed. And remember, it's never your job to save people. Never. That's a good relief. It's not my job to save anybody.

It's not your job to save anybody. That's God's job. What's our job? Spread the word. Spread the good news. Give people a hearing. People need a hearing. God makes things grow.

We plant, we water, we plant, we water, we plant, we water, God makes things grow. Are you that kind of person? Where is, you know, I know maybe in the beginning when we planted the church, it's like, yes, we got to preach the gospel.

[19 : 27] Where is your drive to preach the gospel now? Is it still there? Maybe some of us need just a fresh feeling of the spirit to say, God, I'm feeling a little empty.

I'm not really motivated to preach the gospel. Okay? Some of us feel that. Marianne, are you feeling that? But what are we going to do about it?

Are we sunk? Is there no hope? We need to get filled with the spirit. We need to get filled with the spirit. You know, I was actually thinking when you guys sang that Issa song, Your Name's My Reward.

Let's see here. 18 years ago, I was doing like an extended fast. Went to Nashville for the Psalm Assembly, the call there. And I was feeling really burnt out.

I'm like, why am I doing this? What's the point of this? And walked into the stadium where they're having the prayer meeting. I got there like two, three hours early.

[20 : 34] And Issa was on the stage. And she was, I think it might have been singing that song. And I walked in and I just wept. And I just wept. And I feel like I just, it was just clear.

I just got filled with the spirit. And I was renewed. I was refreshed. And I was just thinking, actually, when we were singing that song, we were worshiping. I was thinking, I was surprised. It was so tender to me. I started crying just even singing the song.

I was like, that was 18 years ago. And just thinking about it, I'm getting, I'm crying, thinking about it. And I was thinking about how important it is to have a history in God of those moments.

And so many times people think, oh, Christianity should be this, like, one mountaintop to the other. It's like, no, that's not what it is. But there are those meaningful moments that you have that you remember. And, you know, sometimes they're a little bit further apart than you'd like them to be.

But those are so important. And if you haven't had one of those recently, go to him. Go to him. Okay? Get filled up. He is the one who baptizes us with the Holy Spirit.

[21 : 38] That's what John preached. Do you remember? He says, he who's coming, I'm not even worthy to untie his sandals. This guy, he baptizes with the Holy Spirit with fire. That's what he does.

He wants to fill you up. And if you're empty, don't just be satisfied with that. Don't just keep going through the motions. Don't just think, oh, I don't really have a heart for the loss right now, but I'm just doing it.

I'm just showing up and doing this. No. Is his name your reward or not? Is it? Well, then come to him. Come to him in your brokenness.

You don't have to dress yourself up. Put on your religious cosmetics and be something. He loves you for who you are, not who you should be because no one is as they should be. You come to him. And believe that he is who he is.

What ravishes the heart of God? Faith. Without faith, it's impossible to please God, right? Can you possess that which ravishes his heart? Can you possess that which pleases him? Every time, if you have faith.

[22 : 34] Yeah, but I'm empty. So what? I'm broken. So what? I'm burnt out. So what? I'm tired. So what? Do you have faith? When he comes, there was only one question he said.

Will I find faith on earth? Do you have the kind of faith that keeps on pursuing them, that keeps going back, that develops a history in God, that looks back, you know, at the altars that the Israelites put there and say, yeah, I mean, that story I'm telling you 18 years ago, that was an altar.

And so he sang that song and I think, man, I remember that time. Makes me hungry to want to come to him for more, you know, fresh filling. Why? Because this gospel must be spread.

It's like, there's so many things that are important in the world and they get overwhelming, don't they? It's like, it's Father's Day, your kids, that gets overwhelming sometimes. Gets a little heavy. It's like, man, this is a lot of work.

This is a lot of responsibility. Are we doing a good job? You know, are we screwing them up? Are we screwing our kids up? Do you know, I had that conversation too many times, you know, like, I think we're screwing it up.

[23 : 37] What are we doing? Where do you go with that? And what is, what's, like, that's important, but, and as important as that seems in your job and making money and paying the bills and all this kind of stuff, friendships, these things all weigh on you, but there are people who are justly under the wrath of God in our city.

Like, apart from Christ, they will spend eternity away from him where the fire does not go out and the worm never dies, where the pain and suffering never go away. Like, that's true.

And it's just and it's right and they will not believe unless they hear. They gotta hear. Who's gonna tell them? Only the people who have the truth, that's us. That's the way God wants to build his church, is people spreading the gospel.

And if we're in a place where he says, like, yes, I get it, Josh, I know, I know that's what I'm supposed to do, but man, I'm just not there. Go to him. Get filled again. He wants to fill you.

You know, how about a great Father's Day verse? Luke 8, 13, right? If you know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more does your Heavenly Father, Happy Father's Day, give good gifts?

[24 : 51] He doesn't say give good gifts. You'd think he would because he just said, hey, if you know how to give good gifts, you would think he's gonna say, okay, how much more does the Heavenly Father give good gifts?

He doesn't say that. He says, if you know how to give good gifts, how much more does your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit for those who ask? I don't know about you, but I love how specific, he didn't go with the generic good gifts and he said, listen, if you were wondering, if you had this kind of thing, I don't know if he wants to give me the Spirit, he knocks that out of your mind right with that verse and says, yes, I do.

If you know how to give good gifts, how much more do I want to give you the Holy Spirit to those who ask? Some of us need to ask. Some of us may be a little tired, a little burnt out, you're into this whole church plant thing and thinking, I don't have the same gumption I had when we first started.

Okay, go to your father. Go to your father. Ask him. Ask him. All right, that was definitely a sidetrack.

Number three, number three, each part doing its work. Ephesians 4 says that the body grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work.

[26 : 06] You know, I've been a Christian now for 31 years and hands down one of the worst parts about the church that is the most difficult thing to deal with is when people are trying to be someone they're not.

It's the worst. And it's not just, it's not just bad because it doesn't work. It's bad because you feel bad for them. I hate watching someone who's trying to be someone they're not, number one, because they're not and it's very difficult, but then number two, because they're missing then who they really are.

And to know that who they are is who God made them. That God was the one who made them the way they are. And the weirdness and the wonkiness of trying to be someone that you're not, it just, it's not the way God meant it to be.

There's so much freedom and, you know, it's just like the psalmist said, how great is it when brothers dwell together in unity? There's a level of unity. You know, even over at Bellicose, I've been walking with those elders now for, I don't know, I can't remember, almost 10 years, I think, a bunch of them.

And it's like, you know, you go through these different things where it's just like, okay, how are you gifted? How am I gifted? Like, I don't know if that's how you're gifted. I don't know if that's how you're gifted. You have these conversations. You compare yourselves with one another.

[27 : 27] But when people work together where it's like, this is how you're gifted, yep, I agree. This is how you're gifted, yep, I agree. And there's this synergy and this unity. Man, it's so powerful. People have the freedom to not have to be something that they're not.

The church grows and builds itself up as each part does its work. What is your work? Who are you in the body? Do you know your work? You might say, I want this church to grow.

I want it to be healthy growing. Then you gotta know your work. How are you gonna do your work if you don't know your work? What is your part to play? You might say, I don't have a part.

No, no, no, no, no. You have a part. What is your part? And some of us, this is the bad part, some of us might know our part but we're not doing it. If you know your part, you gotta do it.

Be your part. You don't have to be someone else. Don't compare yourself to someone else. You be the part that God called you to be. When you get to those pearly gates and he holds you to account, he's not going to say you weren't like so-and-so.

[28 : 32] He's gonna say, hey, were you the part that I made you to be? Did you do what I had you to do? The church grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work.

How focused are you on that? If you don't know, have you gotten any help on it? Have you asked the Lord? Have you asked other people? But we have to each do our work and when we're doing that, it's a beautiful thing.

It's a beautiful thing. Have you ever, in your experience of church, stopped doing certain things because you realized that's not who I am? It's a really good, it's a good thing.

It's a, it's a, it's like, it's like a relief, isn't it? They're just like, you know what? I'm gonna stop trying to do that. That's not who I am. I'm just gonna be my, myself.

I'm gonna get in my lane and stay in my lane. I'm gonna let the people who are that do what they're gonna do. I don't need to compare. I don't need to say, well, I wish I was this person. I wanna be that, that person. No, I'm just gonna be me.

[29 : 34] The way God called me to be. And then the church builds itself up. Number four, they were walking in the comfort of the Holy Spirit. This goes together with a little bit with what I talked about last week, strengthening yourself in the Lord.

Okay? The church so much all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort, the CSB says, encouragement of the Holy Spirit and multiply.

How often do you get your encouragement from the Holy Spirit? Your comfort from the Holy Spirit? You know, we talk about comfort foods. Yeah, we talk about, I don't know, there's all kinds of things we do to get comfort.

How often do you think of the Holy Spirit as your comforter? You know, John 14, your comforter. He is. He is. How often do we go to the Holy Spirit for comfort?

You know, it's just like what I was talking about with getting filled. There's a comforting that happens when you're filled with the Holy Spirit and we need to go to Him. And that's how the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, that's how it multiplied.

[30 : 47] It seems so simple. It almost seems like, really? The fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit, that's just too, it's too simple.

And yet, how often do we miss the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit? How often do we get flippant when it comes to the fear of the Lord and how often do we go other places for our comfort and encouragement instead of the Holy Spirit?

How often do we get discouraged for so many things when the Holy Spirit is there to encourage us? The Holy Spirit is here to encourage us. Are we taking advantage of that? It's huge.

Lastly, number five, holding fast to the head. Colossians 2.19 said, holding fast to the head from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and elements, grows with the growth that is from God.

John 15.5 said, I'm the vine, you're the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit for apart from me you can do nothing. Are we abiding in the Lord?

[31 : 49] Holding fast to the head like the sailors used to have hold fast on their, tattooed on their knuckles, right? Because they'd have to hold on to the mast. Are we holding on to God like that?

Are we so quick to let go? Are we so quick to lose faith, lose hope, lose motivation? Okay?

Listen. In this world you will have trouble, but take heart. He has overcome the world. We have to hold fast. Hold fast to what?

Hold fast to the head. And so often when we're busy, when we're overwhelmed, when we're tired, what's the first thing that goes? Times of encouragement of the Holy Spirit.

Times of time in the Word of God. Times of going to the head, holding fast to the head. What if we had as a goal to put on display the fruit that comes forth from he who abides in him?

[32 : 54] To be a shining example of this is the fruit that comes from the abiders, the ones who abide in him, who hold fast to the head. Okay?

There's all kinds of challenges that will be coming our way. And as you walk with the Lord, it's a constant up and down with that. Who are the ones who will hold fast to the head?

When you see discouragement, do you come under it? Are you holding fast to the head? When your feelings start to overwhelm you, do you come under your feelings or do you hold fast to the head? Okay? When you look with your eyes, you see, oh, things aren't happening the way I thought they were.

I'm not seeing what I wanted. I'm not experiencing what I wanted. Are you holding fast to the head? What are you holding fast to? Because whatever you're holding fast to is how strong you are. You're holding fast to something that is very shaky.

You're going to be very shaky. You're holding fast to something that can be taken away from you. That's not a very strong hope. You need to put your hope, I need to put my hope, we need to put our hope in something that can never be taken away from us.

[33 : 58] We need to hold fast to the anchor. We need to hold fast to the head. We need to put our hope in the one who never disappoints. Do you know if there's a hope that never disappoints? Let me ask this question.

Don't answer this out loud. Are any of you disappointed? Are any of you disappointed right now in life? Okay? Is there anything particular you're feeling like, yeah, I'm feeling disappointed.

Okay. There is a hope that doesn't disappoint. Says this in Romans 5, right? So if you're disappointed, that's the area where you're not holding fast to the head.

That's the area. Turn from that hope to the head. Turn from that hope and abide in Him. And know that the hope in Him will never disappoint you.

And some of you are thinking, I don't know if I believe that. Exactly. That's what I'm talking about. You've got to address that. Is the Word of God true or not?

[34 : 57] Is there a hope that doesn't disappoint? There is. There is. Faith will go there and will hold fast to it. That's the kind of faith that Jesus requires that holds fast to the head and says, I trust that if I put all my hope in you, I will not be disappointed.

And that all my disappointments in life are really truly when I put my hope in other things. Lord, reveal them. Lord, shake every single one to the core.

Who wants to pray that dangerous prayer with me? Lord, shake all our false hopes to the core so that all we are is holding fast to the head. That's all we got left.

That's all we got left. And when that's all you got left, you've got quite a bit. Right? Right? Right? I believe God wants to grow our church.

I think you believe that God wants to grow our church. But so what? If we're not going to do it God's way, my challenge to you this morning is do we have our lives, our focus, our hearts, our minds set on the things that God has set for us as a church to grow in a healthy way for His glory and our good?

[36 : 11] then we've got to pay attention to these things. We've got to pay attention to these five things. Are you walking in the fear of the Lord? Are you spreading the gospel? Are you doing your work, your part?

Are you walking in the comfort of the Holy Spirit or the encouragement of the Holy Spirit? And are you holding fast to the head, to the hope that never disappoints? Amen? Amen? Amen.