

The Real Reason American Churches Aren't Growing

One question continually being asked is, *How can the Christian church grow?* This issue is particularly relevant as we consider the harsh realities being imposed upon us today.

How does the church find a way to advance in such an antagonistic environment?

In an earlier post, I recounted that, though the church was conceived in the wicked constraints of the Roman Empire, it still found a way to grow exponentially. Reflecting on this, Mark Galli, the editor of *Christian History Magazine*, noted that by AD 350 *"about 56 percent of the population claimed to be Christians."*

Within a short period of time, the followers of Jesus literally overtook this violent, unforgiving empire.

Historians such as Ramsey MacMullen of Yale and Peter Brown of Princeton acknowledge this expansion happened, principally, through healing and deliverance. In a time of intense persecution and evil, numerous conversions were ignited by these compelling signs and wonders.

Many would readily acknowledge this truth. Yet, they are reticent to accept this as a contemporary approach for evangelism and engagement, particularly in America. I certainly comprehend the skepticism and uncertainty. Yet the supernatural not only enabled growth in the tumultuous beginning, it is also facilitating growth right now.

This kind of expansion is currently evident throughout the third world. Many testimonies and demographic reports reveal that healing, deliverance and the gifts of the Spirit are facilitating a great expansion of the church. Luis Lugo points

out that *“Pentecostal beliefs and practices are literally reshaping the face of Christianity throughout the developing world.”*

For the most part, these things obviously are lacking in the American church, which explains a lot.

Africa

Signs and wonders have proven to be a catalyst for a significant number of conversions in Mozambique, Kenya and other parts of Africa. The Pew Research Report acknowledges that, *“The share of the population that is Christian in sub-Saharan Africa climbed from 9 percent in 1910 to 63 percent in 2010.”* Similarly, J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, Ph.D., professor at the Trinity Theological Seminary, Accra, Ghana acknowledges that:

“The ministries of healing and deliverance have thus become some of the most important expressions of Christianity in African movement has defined itself in terms of the recovery of the experiential aspects of the faith by demonstrating the power of the Spirit to infuse life, and the ability of the living presence of Jesus Christ to save from sin and evil ...Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity has proven successful in Africa because of its openness to the supernatural ...”

Latin America

It's not just Africa that's bursting at the seams, but a similar impact is now being felt throughout Latin America. It has been recently reported that over 40 percent of the Guatemalan population closely identifies with Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity. In the same way, Argentina has multitudes filling up soccer stadiums and transforming the ethos of their nation. It would be difficult to find a South American nation that isn't being impacted by the ministry of healing and deliverance. One Catholic detractor exclaims:

“Not only does Pentecostalism claim at least 70 percent of all Latin American Protestants, but it also exerts great influence on many ‘renewed’ mainline Protestant denominations, such as Presbyterians and Methodists, who have had to adopt pneuma-centric practices [i.e. Healing, deliverances, tongues] in order to remain relevant.”

In Brazil, they’re experiencing accelerated growth due to supernatural displays of power. Pastor Marcio Valadao of Lagoinha Baptist Church acknowledged in 2011 that his church was experiencing immense growth due to healing and deliverance. He exclaimed, *“In 1998 there were more or less 5,000 members. Today we have surpassed 35,000.”* Similarly, Paul Strand observes that,

“Christianity is increasing in Brazil. If the trend continues, it is predicted that more than half of all Brazilians (109 million Christians out of 209 million citizens) will be evangelical Christians by 2020. ... Brazil is a land in revival ... It’s a place where belief in miracles and healings are high.”

These factors are even more amazing when considering the fact that prior to the 1970s less than 3 percent of the Brazilian population was evangelical. To go from 2.5 percent to 50 percent of the population in a rigidly Catholic nation in 50 years is unprecedented.

Asia

Signs and wonders aren’t just bringing extraordinary growth in Africa and Latin America; they are also transforming the vast continent of Asia. China only had around 1 million Protestants in 1949. Now there are conservatively *“more than 58 million Protestants in China.”* Professor Yang, a noted religious researcher in China, believes this number will swell to around 160 million by 2025. He says, *“By 2030, China’s total Christian exceed 247 million, placing it above Mexico, Brazil*

and the United States as the largest Christian congregation in the world."

Much of Christianity's growth in China is due to the labors of the "illegal underground house churches, which hold unsupervised services—often in people's homes—in an attempt to evade the prying eyes of the Communist Party." The underground services are often punctuated by healings, prophecy and supernatural expressions. Typically held away from urban centers, researcher Jason Kindopp notes that, "faith healings are particularly common among the rural populations, accounting for up to 90 percent of all conversions to Christianity in rural areas."

Similar to the experience of the early church, Christianity around the world is now being spread through the miraculous. Signs and wonders did not die out in the third century. In fact, where healing and deliverance are being expressed, the church is increasing.

In my opinion, the only things that will awaken the American church and lead to sustainable growth are miracles such as healing and deliverance—which are rarely seen these days in our churches.

Jesus said: "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12).

*In addition to writing and speaking, **J.D. King** serves as the International Director of World Revival Network of Ministries in Kansas City. He enjoys connecting with leaders around the globe to provide resources and encouragement. For more posts like this, you can visit his blog at [. Follow J.D. on Twitter @worldrevival.](#)*

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