



## How did Natural Church Development Get Started?

### Problem: Churches are Losing Relevancy

85% of USA churches are not growing. They have plateaued or are declining.

Churches are losing their impact on society:

- No county in the USA has more people attending church than it did 10 years ago.
- The population of the USA has increased 11.4% while the combined church attendance of all Protestant denominations has declined 9.3%
- In 1945, 60% of Canadians attended church. In 2000, 15% attended church. 85% consider themselves spiritual.

“Church Growth” literature and movements have focused on methods and their results have generally not replicable or transferable.

**Premise:** God causes His natural creation to grow “all by itself” (Mk 4:26-29)

**Question:** How do we get in harmony with God’s will, His methods and His principles so our congregation will grow “all by itself”?

### Basis:

- Empirical research
- Understanding how God’s creation works
- Scriptural study

### Initial Research Study:

- 1,000 churches
- 32 countries
- 4.2 million pieces of data
- Tested for reliability and validity
  - Reliability = the consistency of the results, i.e. you get the same results if you repeated the survey
  - Validity = the relevance of the results i.e. the survey measures what it’s supposed to be measuring

### The Research Today:

- 32,000 churches
- 20,000 in the USA
- 60 countries involved
- Published in 25 languages
- 85% of churches that apply these eight quality principles grow in numbers

### Research results:



- Healthy churches are growing churches
- Apart from unusual marketing or some other atypical factor, unhealthy churches tend not to grow
- Eight essential qualities were discovered:
  - Empowering leadership
  - Gift-oriented ministry
  - Passionate spirituality
  - Functional structures
  - Inspiring worship
  - Holistic small groups
  - Need-oriented evangelism
  - Loving relationships
- Churches that focus on their lowest quality characteristic:
  - Improve overall quality
  - Tend to grow numerically

Bottom line: New people are repulsed by low quality churches.

Key Points of Natural Church Development:

- God wants more disciples
- Focus on growth in quality, not quantity
- Healthy churches “grow all by themselves”
- High quality churches tend to grow and evangelism they do works
- Low quality churches tend not to grow and evangelism they do doesn’t work
- Growth is constrained by your limiting factor
- Quality in churches can be measured quantitatively
- Improving quality in your church’s “minimum factors” often results in quantitative church growth
- Work on what you can control – trust God to give the rest

*Reference; Schwarz, Christian. Natural Church Development*