

the Lord's church was meeting, and I was careful not to do anything that appeared as an endorsement.

A denominational church asked me to speak one Sunday, after our church services had ended. I agreed, since they put no restriction on the message. I preached slightly over an hour, and covered the distinctive nature of the Lord's church and examples of conversion. Needless to say, I was not invited back. Many were offended at the sermon, but a couple mentioned that they had never before studied that topic, and planned to investigate further. Let us stand for Truth, and never compromise with error.

—Lynn Parker
New Braunfels, TX



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Those in need of prayers...

Rick & Sheila Beauchamp—his job hunt, mother, her ears
Lavonne McClish—her foot and many other health problems
Janice Parks—her back, new job, mother, and family
Jerry Smith—grandfather
Waynette Davis, Karla Dobbs, Sharon Harp—health problems
Rick Heimberger, Darrell Conley—health problems
Darrell Broking family—their job hunt

Records you helped make...

Bible Class	13
Sunday AM Worship	13
Sunday PM Worship	5
Wednesday PM Bible Class/Worship	15
Contribution	\$ 311.00
Contribution average (2009)	\$329.86
Chairman of Men's Meetings (July–September)	Rick Beauchamp
Preacher, Lighthouse editor	Dub McClish



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CHURCH GROWTH

There has been much discussion among us in recent years about "church growth" and especially about why the church is not growing as rapidly as it did 30 years ago. Some point to the Jerusalem church in the early years (Acts 2–6) and seek to recreate the amazing numerical growth of that brief span. There was a marvelous numerical growth recorded in the first half of the 19th century as the plea to restore New Testament Christianity swept through our young nation. Again, the church led all religious groups in growth for a few years in the middle part of this century. Even now, there are some areas of our world (e. g., India) where the Gospel is most eagerly received.

There is a principle observable that explains both rapid growth periods and non-growth periods: The fields are not equally ripe for harvesting everywhere at all times. Some places are "in season" while others are "out of season" (2 Tim. 4:2). The circumstances in Jerusalem that led to the exceptional growth in a short time will never be. The same is true of the great reception accorded the pioneer restorers. Also, there were some peculiar circumstances prevailing in the middle part of this century that no longer prevail. While the same Gospel was preached in both Jerusalem and Athens, it did not produce the same results in both cities. It is folly to use Jerusalem's growth as a pattern for now or any other age.

Emphasis on the numerical growth of the church *as an end* is not found in the New Testament. The emphasis is on preaching the Gospel to as many lost souls as possible and letting growth, whether it be large or small (or even none), come therefrom. This is demonstrated both in the wording of the Great Commission and in its execution by the apostles.

Sadly, numerical growth has become the primary goal of some brethren. To them, large numbers equal success for the church. Many now accept large numbers as the sign of God's blessing upon their efforts. Sooner or later, when numerical growth is the end, almost every means of achieving it will be employed. We see it more and more among the brethren. The building of "family life centers," the use of singing groups that are professional entertainers and that mimic mechanical instruments with spiritual songs, the preaching of a no-fault, no-guilt "gospel" and a score of other come-ons for young and old are but obvious symp-

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Worship 1:00 PM
Wednesday
B.C./Worship 7:00 PM

toms of the growth mania. It cannot avoid the rotten harvest of apostasy. Let us plant and water the seed of the kingdom and leave the growth to God (1 Cor. 3:6), rather than trying to force it by worldly procedures.

—Dub McClish
Denton, TX



TRIALS OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH

Abraham is one of the greatest men who ever lived on earth. His life is discussed more completely and more fully than any other character in the Bible except the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He was born in Ur of the Chaldees near the north end of the Persian Gulf. It seems he was born when his father was 130 years old (Gen. 11:26, 32; 12:4; Acts 7:2–4). At the age of 75, he was called to leave his home and to go out to a new land. He was about 80 when he rescued Lot and met Melchizedek. He was 86 when Ishmael was born, 99 when Sodom was destroyed, and 100 when Isaac was born. When Abraham was 137 years old Sarah died. He was 160 when Jacob was born and he died at the age of 175—115 years before Jacob's migration into Egypt.

When God called Abraham, He did not give him a reason for leaving his home—He did make certain promises to Abraham. He promised him that his descendants would inherit the land of Canaan, that they should become a great nation, and that through them all nations of the world would be blessed. This promise (Gen. 12:2–3; 22:18) is the foundation of the Scheme of Redemption. God first called Abraham in Ur (Acts 7:2–4; Gen. 11:31). He called him again when Abraham was in Haran (12:1–4). He called him again in Shechem (12:7) in Bethel (13:14–17), and twice in Hebron (15:5, 18; 17:1–8). This promise was repeated to Isaac (26:3–4) and also to Jacob (28:13–14; 35:11–12; 46:3–4).

Abraham was a believer in one God. He lived in a world of idolatry. His countrymen were idolaters. His father was an idolater (Jos. 24:2). From a youth, he believed in one God. God trusted in Abraham. He selected Abraham to be the founder of a new nation of people who would worship the true God and through whom the Christ would come.

Haran was about 600 miles northwest of Ur and nearly 400 miles northeast of Canaan. This was Abraham's first stopping place. He set out from Ur in search of a land where he could build a free nation. He did not know where he was going; God was leading him (Gen. 12:4–9; Heb. 11:8). Haran was already a well-settled region with roads to Babylon, Syria, Egypt, and other areas, along which caravans and armies constantly marched. After the death of Terah, his father, Abraham, under the call of God, moved on. Shechem was his first stopping place in Canaan. This is the center of the land in a lovely vale between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. Soon he relocated at Bethel, 20 miles south of Shechem and 10 miles north of Jerusalem. This is one of the highest points in Canaan and gives a magnificent view in every direction.

Abraham spent some time in Egypt (Gen. 12:10–20). After returning to Canaan, he magnanimously gave Lot his choice of all the Land. Lot foolishly chose to pitch his tent toward Sodom. Abraham chose Hebron in Palestine (Gen. 13).

Abraham, with 318 men of his own and some help by neighbors, made a midnight surprise attack on four famous Babylonian kings. He defeated their small armies (Gen. 14). One of these kings, "Amraphel," is commonly identified as Hammurabi, the most famous of early Babylonian kings.

Abraham met Melchizedek (14:18–20) who was the king and priest of Salem (Jerusalem). Melchizedek, so far as his priesthood was concerned, was without father or mother, beginning of days or end of time. He was a type of Christ (Psa. 110; Heb. 5–7).

God renewed His promises to Abraham in Genesis chapters 15, 16, and 17.

Abraham is called the "friend of God" (2 Chr. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; Jam. 2:23) and "the father of the faithful" (Gal. 3:9). All Christians are of the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:26–29).

Abraham's faith was tested by:

1. Separation; God called him to leave his kindred and go to a new home (Gen. 12:1–9; Acts 7:1–4).
2. Famine (Gen. 12:1–20).
3. Riches (Gen. 13).
4. Power (Gen. 14).
5. Delay; he waited many years for the birth of Isaac and the fulfillment of the promise which God had made to him.

Through all of these tests, Abraham was faithful to God. God blessed him. He reached the end of the journey looking forward to the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. The trials of Abraham's faith are the very same trials which most Christians have today.

—George W. DeHoff
Deceased

[Editor's Note: The foregoing list of trials is good, but is incomplete. Faithful Abraham's greatest trial was God's command to offer Isaac as a burnt offering, which he also passed with "flying colors" (Gen. 22:1–19). DM].



ATTEND A DENOMINATIONAL SERVICE?

QUESTION: Is it right to attend church services at a denomination with a friend in order to get him to attend services with me?

ANSWER: If you are talking about attending a denominational service with a friend at a time when the Lord's church is not assembling, and provided you do not in anyway participate (such as singing while they play an instrument of music, or giving money to support their work) or fellowship those in error, then go with your friend. However, if you mean attending a denomination on Sunday morning/evening or otherwise when the Lord's church is meeting, that would be wrong (Hebrews 10:25).

The best intentions do not justify violating the Scriptures. Shall we "do evil that good may come" (Romans 3:8)? Certainly not! I have attended denominational services before to investigate their teaching and claims, but never when