

# The Measure of a Church

As our three children have grown, we have measured their physical development by “growth charts” – marks on the wall that show how much they have grown in the last six to twelve months. But how do you measure a church? What should the church look like? And what does maturity look like in the life of a Christian? Let’s look at a few passages from God’s Word:

**1 Thessalonians 1:1-4** *Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you ...*

**2 Thessalonians 1:3-4** <sup>3</sup> *We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing.* <sup>4</sup> *Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.*

**Colossians 1:3-5** <sup>3</sup> *We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you,* <sup>4</sup> *because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints –* <sup>5</sup> *the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel.*

**1 Timothy 1:5** *The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*

**1 Corinthians 13:13** *Now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*

**1 Peter 1:20-22** <sup>20</sup> *He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.* <sup>21</sup> *Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.* <sup>22</sup> *Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.*

**Ephesians 1:15-18** <sup>15</sup> *For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints,* <sup>16</sup> *I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.* <sup>17</sup> *I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.* <sup>18</sup> *I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints . . .*

How do you measure someone’s spiritual maturity? Each of these passages from the New Testament contain the same three words: *faith, hope and love*. I believe the three “measuring sticks” are faith, hope, and love. And how do you evaluate a church? Not by buildings, bodies and bucks ... but by Faith, Hope, and Love. Remember what 1 Thessalonians 1:3 said? *We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

This chart will help you understand the meaning of faith, hope and love:

Faith	Love	Hope
Trusting God’s Word	Reflecting God’s character	Participating in God’s Mission
Our relationship to God and His Word	Our relationship to those in the body of Christ	Our relationship to unbelievers and culture
Key: knowing the Word	Key: selfless giving and sacrifice	Key: vision, impact, and growth of the body
Rooted in the past	Grounded in the present	Directed toward future
Christ’s Work of Redemption	Christ’s Sacrifice of Love	Christ’s Promise of Return
Great Commandment 1	Great Commandment 2	Great Commission

## I. How Can Our Church Cultivate Faith?

**1 Thessalonians 1:3** *Constantly bearing in mind your work of faith....*

**Eph 1:18-19** *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.*

“Believe” is a present-active-participle – it literally means “those who keep on believing”  
God exerts an incomparable power in the lives of those who continue believing Him.  
Those who are strong in faith have an active faith – not passive, not benign – but real and active  
There is a difference between believing in God and believing God.

How do you cultivate faith?

Give attention to it – by calling on God to help you.

Put it into practice – by claiming His promises.

Five ways to Grow in your Knowledge of God’s Word:

Hear – 2 Tim 4:2

Read – Psalm 119:105

Study – 2 Tim 2:15

Apply – Ezra 7:10

Memorize – Psalm 119:9, 11; Josh 1:8

## II. How Can Our Church Develop Love?

Do people feel a part of your church? Is there a developing sense of community?

If you don’t feel a part of this church, what can you do?

Step out in faith and get involved

Begin to build relationships – take the initiative

To those who won’t reach out and get involved, no church will be friendly

One of the “bad habits” some churches have: they are a warm and friendly bunch but once they’ve said “hi” it’s back to their comfort zones and regular friends.

Is there someone at your church you don’t know? Get to know them. Get to know their kids. Spend time. Put a name with a face.

There is an art to relationship building ...

**Ephesians 4:25-32** <sup>25</sup> *Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.* <sup>26</sup> *Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,* <sup>27</sup> *and do not give the devil an opportunity.* <sup>28</sup> *He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.* <sup>29</sup> *Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.* <sup>30</sup> *Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.* <sup>31</sup> *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.* <sup>32</sup> *Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.*

List ten to fifteen principles from this passage that you can teach your church to help them know how to relate to people around them.

## III. How Can Our Church Expand Its Hope?

One specific area of application is the future and hope of your church

Am I leading people to Christ?

Are we inviting people to join us?

Am I serving and investing time according to my gifts and abilities?

Are we pursuing God’s dream for this church?

Key principle to remember when leading a church: It’s not about you!

It’s about “them” – those who don’t know Christ

It’s ultimately about God’s glory

What can I do to serve at my church?

Outreach . . .  
Youth . . .  
Prayer . . .  
Worship . . .  
Children . . .

**2 Corinthians 5:18-20** <sup>18</sup> Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, <sup>19</sup> namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

What does it mean to be a reconciler?  
What does it mean to be an ambassador?  
How does this passage teach that "it's not about me"?

### Thought and Discussion Questions:

1. What are the greatest felt needs of people in your geographic area of influence?
2. How do first-time guests describe your church?
3. When you invite people to a Sunday worship service, what prevents them from coming?
4. When people do come, why do some not come back?
5. What is your church's greatest strength? Greatest weakness? Greatest challenge?
6. What are some things your church does to effectively develop leadership?
7. What type of person is attracted to your church? How can you capitalize on that?
8. Describe how you believe God has shaped you to effectively serve Him.

**S** = Spiritual Gifts – I believe I have the following spiritual gifts ...

**H** = Heart – People who know me well would say I have a "heart" for ...

**A** = Abilities – My abilities / natural talents include ...

**P** = Personality – My personality style is ...

**E** = Experiences – Some of the experiences that have molded me are ...