

LET MY
PEOPLE
GROW

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A Story Of Church Growth

TIM MASSENGALE

Let My People Grow

by Tim Massengale

©1989 Word Aflame Press
Hazelwood, MO 63042-2299
Reprint History: 1995, 1998, 2002, 2006

Cover Design: Shane Long

Cover Art by Art Kirchhoff

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Printed in United States of America.

Printed by



Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Massengale, Tim.

Let my people grow! : a story of church growth / by Tim Massengale.

p. cm.

Bibliography: p.

ISBN 0-932581-41-2 :

1. Church growth. I. Title.

BV652.25.M2 1989
254'.5—dc19

88-31269
CIP

To
my
loving and
understanding
wife,
Linda,
without whose patience
and help
this book would never have
been published

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Foreword

Having had the honor of being Brother Massengale's pastor for a time and then having him as my full-time assistant, I know the heart from which this story came. He is a very enthusiastic, dedicated, and spiritual man. If you are hungry for progress in your local church, I am sure that within the pages of this book you will find many answers that you have been looking for.

It is one thing to *read* a book; it is another thing to pick up the *spirit* of the book. If you will pick up the spirit of this book and put into practice its principles with consistency, your church will grow—and growth is the will of God. The Bible says, “The Lord *added* to the church daily.”

May you read this book and grow!

Vaughn R. Morton, Pastor
Truth Tabernacle
Fresno, California

How It All Began

The late afternoon sun filtered softly through the drawn, coarsely woven drapes, casting a faint lattice pattern on the carpet in the darkened study. An elderly man dressed in gray knelt in prayer beside an aged leather sofa. His gnarled hands clasped a worn, tattered Bible tenderly to his breast. Slowly he rocked his frail shoulders back and forth, moaning softly to himself. His nearly bald head, covered with but a few stray wisps of ivory-yellow hair combed back over the smooth, age-spotted skin, was bowed in deep supplication. Age lay visibly upon him. Deep wrinkles in his neck and face crossed one upon another, like multiple lines on a three-dimensional map, and were accented all the more by his tightly closed eyes and tense, drawn lips.

After a time, he raised his head and sighed, blowing his nose softly on a tear-dampened handkerchief. "Dear Jesus. . .," he whispered as he rose carefully from the floor. He steadied himself upon the sofa's arm.

It was Sunday afternoon, the Lord's Day, and a time exceedingly special to him since Bonnie, his wife of fifty-

one years, had unexpectedly died. Though several years had passed, her memory lived with him continually. For years they had knelt beside this same leather sofa and read their Bibles together. Then, hand in hand, they would pray before taking their Sunday afternoon nap. He still continued this time of devotion faithfully, and every time he prayed beside that sofa, he oddly felt that she knelt there too. At such times his heart yearned to see her again, to take her hand, to hear her sing, to see her playful smile. He often thought, maybe it won't be long now until I too can go home to be with the Lord.

But this afternoon had been strangely different. He shook his head slowly in wonder. The power of God had come so suddenly, so forcefully, almost as if the Lord had been waiting for him. As soon as he had knelt to worship, a tremendous burden had seized him. A feeling knotted deep within his soul, moving him to weep for over an hour in intercession. Even now, with the weight somewhat lifted, the powerful presence of God remained heavy upon him.

It was impossible to deny the impression he felt, and he was no stranger to the voice and impression of God. The Holy Ghost had spoken to him urgently about a young man whom he didn't really know and had seen only once. With the clarity of a vision he had remembered the young man—tall, slender, and well-spoken—who had stood before them that day, his words earnest and imploring. Though almost five years had passed, the old pastor could see him as if it were yesterday.

With youthful zeal, the young minister had come to see the district board. He sought their approval to start a home missions work in a small town where the truth

had never been proclaimed. The old man, a presbyter then, had helped review the young preacher's application. He could still see the sincere look and hear the eager words washed with excitement as the preacher had made his impassioned plea. Yet now, for the life of him, he couldn't recall where the town was. Vaguely he remembered it being somewhere down south.

The old man shook his head again, his voice but a murmur. "Lord, how in the world am I going to find him? I can't even remember his name." Frowning with concentration, he wiped the beads of perspiration from his forehead and face. The voice of God had spoken clearly: the young man needed encouragement. But more than just encouragement, he needed help. He needed help now.

The old man studied the district directory lying open on the desk, his face reflecting his frustration. He had already searched it carefully without result. Name after name he pondered, trying to stimulate his stubborn memory, but more than a few were unfamiliar. It could be one of several dozen. Since the elderly pastor's retirement four years earlier, many new churches had been started, most by men he had never met.

He was not able to travel much now, not since a mild heart attack had taken his strength. His extended convalescence had left him largely out of touch with district matters. This, too, was a source of great sadness.

The elderly man glanced at the old regulator clock ticking softly upon his desk. It was 4:00 P.M. Evening service started in a few hours. "Lord," he prayed aloud again, this time his voice breaking with emotion, "I've done all I can do. It's in Your hands now. But if You'll somehow let me know who he is, I'll . . . I'll do the best