

# GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

Three Proofs of Growth  
*Matthew 10:1–10; Acts 4:32–37*



## LET'S BEGIN HERE

One of the most remarkable eras in the history of the church occurred during the first century. Shortly after Christ had left the earth, His disciples (who became apostles) led congregations into new and exciting vistas of faith. Though young and relatively inexperienced, the believers who comprised the first-century church showed evident marks of maturity . . . the children were now growing into adolescence! As we shall see from this particular account, they were willing to take Jesus' teaching seriously and model those truths in the local church. We hope to glean from these verses three of the more pronounced characteristics of a body of Christians who refused to remain childish in their walk of faith. Ultimately, our goal is to emulate the first-century example in our congregations today.



## LET'S DIG DEEPER

### 1. Reviewing Three Principles from Jesus' Teaching (Matthew 10)

- Regarding unity: there is strength in staying close together (Matthew 10:2–6).
- Regarding authority: there is power in doing God's work (10:1, 7–8).



### GETTING TO THE ROOT

#### *Authority*

The Greek word for "authority" is *exousia*, which means "liberty or power to act."<sup>1</sup> It's the power of one whose will or command must be obeyed, like the power of a police officer who stops hundreds of cars by simply raising a hand. With this *exousia*, the disciples now had power to bring disease, demons, and even death to a screeching halt.

The early church wonderfully displayed authority.

And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. (Acts 4:33)

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## Quotable

*Authority comes  
straight from  
God's throne.  
It doesn't come from  
education or dress  
or eloquence.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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God's grace filled the church and became a bridge of respect and trust between the people and the leaders, who were proclaiming Christ's message with authority and power. The church was made up of what writer Howard Snyder calls kingdom people rather than church people.

Church people think about how to get people into the church; Kingdom people think about how to get the church into the world. Church people worry that the world might change the church; Kingdom people work to see the church change the world.<sup>2</sup>

In order to produce kingdom people today, Christian leaders should view the church as a place for believers to huddle, like players on a football team, to receive biblical instruction and a moment of rest. The real game occurs during the week, as the team members live out their beliefs and proclaim Jesus Christ in the world.

- Regarding generosity: there is freedom in giving without restraint (Matthew 10:8–10).

## 2. Modeling Those Principles in the Early Church

- A. Unity in Action (Acts 4:32)
- B. Authority on Display (4:33)
- C. Generosity Applied and Exemplified (4:34–37)

## 3. Putting Those Principles into Practice Today

- *For there to be unity*: we must maintain a closeness (accountability).
- *In coming to terms with authority*: we must remember who is Lord (obedience).
- *To excel in generosity*: we must hold treasure loosely (unselfishness).



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### LET'S LIVE IT

Unity. Authority. Generosity. Jesus gave these principles of growth to the disciples, who passed them on to the early Christians, who now through Scripture offer them to you. Are you hoping for spiritual growth spurts in your life? Here's some advice: stay close to people, remember who's really Lord, and hold your treasure loosely. Do these things, and you'll be amazed how tall you'll grow in a short period of time.

### ENDNOTES

1. G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, 3d ed. (Edinburgh, Scotland: T. and T. Clark, 1937), 161.
2. Howard A. Snyder, *Liberating the Church* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1983), 11.



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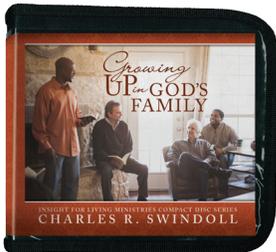
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Three Proofs of Growth

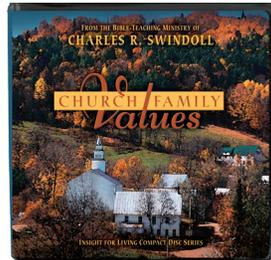
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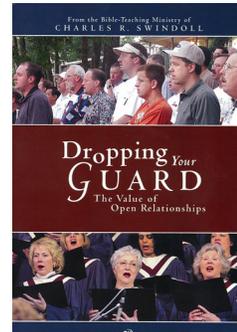
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