

It Matters

“Growth Matters”

Part 4

Intro: Growing up, we always loved going to Grandma’s house. (For a variety of reasons) At her house there was a very important doorway in her kitchen. It generated a lot of attention. WHY? It had all the height markers of all the grandkids. It had a line / date / name. Every time we’d go to grandma’s house we’d run over to the doorframe to get re-measured. (Even if it was only a week). Growth was a big deal! Growth mattered.

When it comes to our relationship with God our spiritual growth matters. Our growth as a church even matters to God. BUT often, this growth can lose its significance in our lives and churches. Today, we’re going to address this issue and discover just why our growth matters so much. For the believer in Jesus, growth isn’t optional. Growth matters!

1. Personal Growth Matters

- God expects growth

1 Peter 2:2 “Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. Cry out for this nourishment,” (NLT)

- God expects us to grow up in Him so we can experience all the fullness of this salvation He gave us through His Son Jesus. He doesn’t want us to settle for a partial or incomplete experience.
- This is our tendency. We settle for a limited experience when God wants us to have a full experience with Him. We start the spiritual journey only to stop somewhere along the way.
- Sometimes we don’t realize there is more to experience / we struggle believing there is more to experience / we’re confused on how to experience more / maybe we’re even afraid or reluctant to experience more.
- Regardless of the reason, God wants us to experience everything His Son Jesus died to give us. God does expect us to grow spiritually, and this growth is connected to Jesus.

Eph. 4:15 “Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.” (NLT)

- Part of this full experience of salvation is having our lives progressively transformed to look like Jesus. Jesus is the model. Let’s not change the model.
- Churches are notorious at creating different models for maturity rather than experiencing Jesus fully in our lives. (List of rules – Legalism – if I can keep a list of rules and behaviors I must be mature.)
- Jesus is the standard not rules. Does my life look more and more like Jesus? The only way we look more and more like Jesus is by letting Jesus have more and more of you.

- Blessing is connected to growth

The reason blessing is connected to growth is because you're being obedient. Obedience = Blessing.

James 1:25 "...if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it." (NLT)

- Do you want God to bless you? Do you even pray asking God to bless you? Do you realize that unless you're trying to walk in obedience that is a fruitless prayer?
- Where did the idea come from where we can live however we want and yet expect the blessing of God upon our lives? It doesn't work this way in the parent / child relationship. (explain)
- If we desire an increase of blessing from the hand of God then we'd better cooperate with the will of God for spiritual growth.

- Those around us need our growth

Our lack of growth negatively impacts those around us. This is why this idea that it's all about Jesus and me is so ridiculous. We are all interconnected. My actions ALWAYS impact others. Therefore, so does my relationship with God. My lack of spiritual growth can have dire consequences. WHY, because those around me need my growth.

- Explain **Law of the Lid** – our lid can hold others back. Our lack of growth can negatively impact others around us.
- If I'm leading something, I hold my entire team back. If I'm part of a team, I'm slowing the team down.

Prov. 4:5 "Get wisdom; develop good judgment. Don't forget my words or turn away from them." (NLT)

Prov. 4:7 "Getting wisdom is the wisest thing you can do! And whatever else you do, develop good judgment." (NLT) Raise your lid!

- Your marriage needs you to grow
- Your kids need you to grow
- Your church needs you to grow

- Joy is the byproduct of growth

Col. 2:7 "Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness." (NLT)

The byproduct of growth is joy. (thankfulness) Growing to maturity is a marvelous thing. No one grows to maturity and then concludes it's an awful experience. Joy and spiritual maturity are connected.

- Remember what it was like learning something new? It was hard, frustrating, you failed a lot. There probably wasn't a lot of joy. BUT, what happened as your skills and confidence increased? It became more pleasant...maybe even fun.
 - I bought my boat 15 years ago – explain the process of learning.
- It works this way in your relationship with God. Sometimes the process of growth isn't the most pleasant experience, but the result will always be joy.

➤ Growth just lets you enjoy life more!

- Transformation is the goal of growth

Rom. 12:2 “Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.,...” (NLT)

But let’s try to define what we mean by this. Spiritual growth is transformational. We will be changed in every area of our lives. But once again, this is too broad for me to understand. Let me give you 3 words that will help us understand this better. As we grow, we should be able to observe growth in 3 key areas. 3 areas God wants to transform.

➤ Character

We all need growth in our character. Growth in humility / patience / mercy / compassion / controlling our anger / our speech / our thought life / forgiveness / growth in loving people / integrity /etc....Are we growing in our character letting Jesus change us? Do we look like Jesus in character?

➤ Competence

Am I becoming more competent as a result of Jesus changing my life? Am I becoming a more competent husband / father / a more competent servant of Jesus? Am I increasing my skill set for serving / for leading / (Law of the lid issue)

➤ Consistency

This simply means I do the above two things more often. I become more and more consistent in character and competency as a result of growth. I am a more consistent husband / father / lover of people / follower of Jesus.

As you can see, our personal growth matters greatly. BUT, growth doesn’t stop here. Because collectively we make up what Jesus called the church, the growth of His church matters as well.

2. Corporate Growth Matters

Corporate growth is a bit different than personal growth. Personal growth is about God progressively transforming a person to look and live like Jesus. Growth for a church has to do with mission and influence. The mission and influence of a church needs to be moving forward. It’s not static. It is fluid following Jesus. Churches are supposed to grow.

- God expects His church to grow

Matt. 28:19 “Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations,...” (NLT)

If the church is going to obey this mandate from Jesus, growth will be the result. If the church is committed to making something that currently did not exist, (a disciple) then growth is the natural outcome. “Go make” more followers. More followers results in more influence in this world.

➤ This doesn’t mean churches should obsess over numerical growth. Wrong focus. The focus should always be Jesus. Churches have made big mistakes here -

➤ This doesn’t mean churches should ignore numerical or physical growth. Some churches have concluded this doesn’t apply to them. Not true.

- This does mean that every church should have a built-in expectation that God wants to use them to create more followers and expand His influence in their geographic area.
- We embrace this expectation here. God expects Foothills to grow. We have a history of growth. We are simply trying to cooperate with Him as He grows this church into the future.

- The church is protected when it grows

A church that doesn't grow makes itself very vulnerable. WHY? Because growth is messy, uncomfortable, stressful, unpredictable, and requires the church to work together to make it happen well. Growth has a way of harnessing people's energy around a common need. I have seen this for 28 years at Foothills (explain). Without growth and forward movement, bad things happen in a church. When churches don't embrace their mission you end up with mayhem.

Gal. 5:7-9 "You were running the race so well. Who has held you back from following the truth? ⁸ It certainly isn't God, for he is the one who called you to freedom. ⁹ This false teaching is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough!" (NLT)

What has taken you off track? Why are you getting sidelined by other issues? When churches stop running the race and moving forward, they focus on other issues.

- Complacency and Indifference

More people sitting than serving.

- Divisiveness

Inactivity is the environment for divisiveness. Instead of eyes all looking forward, we begin to look internal and complain about non-essential.

- Alternative courses

Once our eyes are off the mission Jesus gave us, we create an alternative direction. Legalism is certainly one of the most common. (Explain) Following rules instead of Jesus.

- The world needs the church to grow

Matt. 12:21 "And his name will be the hope of all the world." (NLT)

This world is a dark, broken, and often a fearful place to live. Just look at what is taking place in our world. How is a world to find hope unless the church embraces its role in this world? Just as Jesus did not come to judge this world but to save it; this now becomes the churches' role. We now become the dispensers of hope in a hopeless world. As a church grows, it grows in its ability to provide hope to hurting people.

- Molalla needs Foothills to grow. As wonderful as the journey has been, God is calling us to grow in our influence / grow in our ability to meet needs / grow in our ability to provide hope to those who have none. What has already been done in the past 28 years is not enough. We will hinder this town if we do not grow.

- Faith is being exercised when a church grows

Heb. 11:6 “And it is impossible to please God without faith...” (NLT) For a church to embrace growth, it will require an exercise in faith. What we’re trying to accomplish right now requires faith. Yet, it is this faith that pleases Him. WHY?

James 2:17 “So you see, faith by itself isn’t enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.” (NLT) Faith can’t simply be an intellectual thing. It must be acted upon. Faith requires actions!

- Churches that value safety rather than mission are no longer living by faith. Growth will always require risk. Faith requires risk. Churches that no longer risk no longer need Jesus.
- It is faith that compels us to put ourselves in places where we cannot succeed without Jesus. We cannot be successful with Him. We’re right where He wants us!
- Once again, this has been and will always be our journey as a church. If you’re wondering when this uncomfortable faith journey will be over, the answer is never! Whatever we have accomplished just prepares us for the next adventure.

- Each person is responsible for the church’s growth

Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (NLT)

Every follower of Jesus is responsible for the growth of their church by simply embracing their role as a witness. What does it mean to be a witness? You simply share your personal experiences. That’s it! You don’t have to have all the answers.

- How has Jesus made a difference in your life / your marriage / your joy / going through hard times / crisis / given you hope / meaning / Just be a witness of the reality of Jesus in you.
- When we allow Jesus to grow us personally and grow our church, natural conversations will come up. You don’t have to force anything. You’ll have people simply say; “Can I ask you a question?” Now is your opportunity!
- Churches don’t grow because of programs or personalities. Real, genuine growth happens when people simply share about the reality of Jesus in them. This becomes contagious.
- What a great opportunity we all have as summer ends and we enter another Fall season. Time to grow! Now is the time for rest, but the time for growing is coming.

Growth is something that should be expected, pursued, and celebrated. Growth is God’s desire for your life personally and it is His desire for His church. Yes, growth matters.

- Are you cooperating with God and His desire to grow your relationship with Him? Are you growing into a full experience of your salvation? Can you run to the doorframe and see the line moved?
- Are you allowing God to use you to help grow His church and expand His influence? A church doesn't grow because of the Pastor. It grows because Jesus is working through His people. Growing people = Growing Churches.

Prayer: