

Last week we talked about Mission and Vision, To recap Mission is what we are here for, Vision is how do we get there.

Our Mission

Grace Church exists to turn...

Non Christians into Converts,

Converts into Disciples,

Disciples into Mature Fruitful Leaders

who reach others for Christ!

Also last week I introduced 4 words that I feel could be a long term vision for our church.

4 Words

LOVE... GROW... SERVE... REACH

These 4 words are all action verbs. They are what we will become know for. What we strive to do. What we will use to evaluate how we are accomplishing the mission.

How are we 4 Words? That might be too easy.

How am I ...

We talked about love and the fact that with out love, everything else that we do is meaningless.

Today I want us to talk about Growth.

When you here the word grow what do you think of?

Church Growth?

Numerical Growth?

Financial Growth?

Personal Growth?

Spiritual Growth?

Physical Growth?

Natural World, growth is a necessity, If something is not growing it is dead.

Every one of us completely regenerates our own skin every 7 days. A cut heals itself and disappears in a week or two. Every single cell in our skeleton is replaced every 7-10 years.

If a plant stops growing or producing fruit loses it's usefulness, and dies. (Fig Tree - Matthew 21:18-19) The same is true for a church, or a believer.

Growth is a Given

We can be mature and not growing. (ie I have a mature body, but that does not mean I am growing)

We can also grow in unhealthy ways. (ie. We can look like we are growing but be very unhealthy in that pursuit)

The challenge is for us to learn to grow in a healthy way at this church.

We cannot grow as a church, numerically and financially, if we are not committed to growing spiritually and personally!

We can attract a crowd, but we will not grow.

Growth is painful, it is hard, it requires effort and sacrifice. It means the death of self and the surrender to Christ.

Physical Growth

Luke 2:52 - And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

Church Growth

Ephesians 4:15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

Numerical Growth

2 Corinthians 10:15b-16a - Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our sphere of activity among you will greatly expand, so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you

Personal Growth

1 Pet 2:2 - Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,

Colossians 1:10 - so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,

James 1:4 - Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Spiritual Growth

2 Thess 1:3 - We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing.

2 Peter 1:5-8 - For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ

2 Pet. 3:17-18 - But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

God wants us to grow! But how? How do we grow in a proper and healthy manner?

What Christian growth is.

It is learning more of what God wants and doing it for the purpose of making you more like Him.

What are the evidences of growth?

- **Grow in love**

"and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you;" (1 Thess. 3:12)

"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:35).

- **Grow in faith**

"We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater;" (2 Thess. 1:3).

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him (HEB 11:6)

- **Grow in the knowledge of God**

so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God (Col. 1:10)

- **Grow in the fruit of the Spirit**

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control;" (Gal 5:22-23).

"You will know them by their fruit." (Matt. 7:20).

What are the means that God uses to help you grow?

1. **He uses His word:**

1. **1 Pet 2:2 - Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,**
2. **You are growing every day: through the good and the bad.**

2. **He uses trouble and experience.**

1. **"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces**

endurance. 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." (James 1:2-4).

3. He uses the private devotional life.
 1. In His presence you mature, your soul is affected, holiness becomes more of a part of you.
 2. Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. (Mark 1:35)
 3. Bible Challenge? - 1 chapter a day
4. He uses public worship and service.
 1. In worship your heart is lifted to Him, and you discover there one of the purposes for your creation is to truly praise and worship God.
 2. In service you learn humility, compassion, and patience. These virtues help keep unstained your fellowship with God.
 3. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. Heb 10:25
5. He uses the fellowship of believers.
 1. Needs are met by others (1 Cor. 12). More next week on this!
 2. What friendships and fellowships do to you
 1. They sharpen you. Proverb 27:17 - As iron sharpens iron so one person sharpens another.
 2. They Strengthen you. 1 Thess. 5:11 - Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Invitation:

The Christian Life begins with a Birth. You cannot Grow until you have been born

When we receive Christ we are born again. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, 13 who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:12-13).

- Nicodemus and the new birth (John 3:3)

- Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

- This is what separates the gospel from religion.

- Religion is man's effort to reach up to God; but God reaches out to us.

Rom 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

- Salvation is God coming down to man and making him a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).

- Not religion but relationship.

- But after birth comes growth.

- If there is no growth after being born, then there is no life.

- This is what it means to be "in Christ." It means to be saved, regenerated, and growing!

Maybe you are here today and you have been going to church for awhile. But you don't feel like you are growing. If that is you I want to pray for you as well.

I will commit to growing in my walk this week.

I will help someone grow in their faith this week.

I will help Grace become known as a place of growth by inviting the unchurched to attend.