

PLAN TO GROW

Int.

1. Aim: To give some ideas about how we can help the church to grow stronger and larger.
2. Text - **II Pet. 3:18**
 - a. Grow - To make an Increase, expand, develop to maturity
 - b. Grace - favor of God
 - c. Knowledge - the doctrine of Christ - what He has taught
3. III. Picture "Let's plan to Grow"
 - a. This boy was not a pessimist - very optimistic
 - b. He expected growth to come
 - c. Notice these three things:
 - i. He had planted the tree
 - ii. He was working to help achieve that growth --- watering - staked to hold it
 - iii. He was already prepared for when that growth came -- swing was up and in place.
4. That is an example, a lesson for us to learn about:
 - a. Growing Individually
 - b. Growing Congregationally

Discussion

I. INDIVIDUAL GROWTH - we should expect to grow

A. **Heb. 5:12-14**

1. There comes a time in our life that we should be able to teach others.
2. In order to do that we must grow - increase, expand, mature
3. The Mark of growing to spiritual maturity is to be able to take the Word of God and apply it to our daily lives.

B. III. - 25 years or one year repeated.

25 years or 1 year

The story is told of two women who were applying for the same job; that of teaching first grade. One of the two women had very limited experience while the other had been teaching several years. After a series of tests were administered and an interview was conducted with each the superintendent hired the younger woman.

The older woman became very angry and stormed into the superintendents office demanding that she be hired. She said, "I will have you know I have been teaching twenty-five years and yet you hired this young woman." After listening patiently for a while the superintendent replied, "Madam you do not have twenty-five years teaching experience you have one year of teaching experience multiplied twenty-five times.

C. Application to us spiritually

1. It is possible to grow old in the Lord but not grow up in the Lord
2. Heb. 5:11-12
 - a. When you ought to be going to graduate school you need to return to kindergarten.
 - b. New converts are not the only spiritual babes we have in the church.
3. If we placed people in classes in the congregation according to their growth spiritually there could be some in the nursery class who have been Christians for a number of years.

D. Are You Growing?

E. Plan to Grow individually

1. Work to help achieve that growth
 - a. Study the Word - I I Tim. 2:15 - read the Bible daily - study - meditate
 - b. Practice the Word - live it Jn. 14:15
 - c. Attend services - Heb. 10:25
2. Be prepared for that growth to come
 - a. Get ready and aim to teach
 - b. Plan to be a leader in the church - Men do not become elders/deacons without planning - goal of younger men
 - c. Bible class teachers - plan to teach - prepare yourself for teaching - collect teaching materials - keep them organized

F. Eph. 4:15 - May grow up - When we grow individually then we can expect

II. CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH - we should expect the church to Grow

A. God Thinks Big

1. The church started with 3,000 - Acts 2
2. God talked about "all nations" should become Christians and be a part of the church.
3. The whole world is what God wants.
4. There are only a few churches today that have as many as 3,000.
5. When we think like God we will think Big - larger.
6. I II. Think Big - two men ice fishing - one has a small circle - the other one has a big hole the size of a whale

- B. There are only 2 other religions that begin to compete with Christianity - in size - Mohammedanism and Buddhism
1. Mohammedanism has grown rapidly for two reasons:
 - a. It is spread by force
 - b. It allows the gratification of the lusts of the flesh and promises such for paradise.
 2. Buddhism promises an escape from the harsh realities of life.
 - a. They encourage asceticism [deny comforts] and meditation.
 - b. They promise the poor peoples of the world that they will be released from their burdens.
 - c. Therefore it is an appealing religion.
- C. Christianity has grown without these things of Mohammedanism and Buddhism
1. Jesus forbade that the church be spread by force - Jn.18:36
 2. He does not allow us to indulge in fleshly lusts but prohibits these - Gal. 5:19-21
 3. Christians do not escape the problems of this life by seclusion but we are to overcome the world by our faith. - I Jn. 5:4
- D. The Early Church grew very fast
1. They started with 3,000 - Acts 2:41
 2. They doubled in a short while with 5,000 men - Acts 4:4
 3. Believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women - Acts 5:14
 4. When persecution came the disciples were scattered and they went every where preaching the word - Acts 8:1,4

5. The word of God grew and multiplied - Acts 12:24
6. The gospel went into Asia Minor [Acts 13] then into Europe [Acts 16]
7. "...Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." Rom. 10:18
8. About 30 years after the church was established Paul declared that the gospel had been preached to every creature which is under heaven - Col. 1:23

E. Ill of Little boy - We can learn from this : **We plan to grow**

1. Need to Plant the gospel
 - a. Teach the lost - Gospel is the power of God to salvation - Rm. 1:16
 - b. Find prospects - think souls - what do you see in a crowd of people?
 - c. We sow the seed and God will give the increase
2. Water and staked - I Cor. 3:6
 - a. After conversion the new Christian must be taught and nourished
 - b. All Christians need encouragement and help in living faithfully
 - c. We live in a sinful world with the Devil doing his best to destroy us -1 Pet.5:8
 - d. Personal teaching - Bible Classes - meetings - VBS
 - e. Fellowship - help bear burdens of life - Gal. 6:1-2
 - f. Unity of congregation helps growth - Ps. 133:1
3. Swing
 - a. He was optimistic - preparing for growth
 - b. We must expect and desire growth of the congregation

- (1) Set goals - attendance - baptisms - Bible Class
- (2) A goal is something you plan, with God's help, to accomplish.
- (3) It must be realistic and understood before it can become a reality.
- (4) Then Work to reach those goals!

c. The value of Goals

- (1) They are an incentive - to do better, reach higher, produce more - GROW
- (2) They are a monitor - to give us something with which we can compare where we have been and where we are now.
- (3) Goals are a challenge - this helps us to do our very best to accomplish more and do better.

d. Set Spiritual goals - to grow - mature in the faith

- e. III John 2 "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."

F. We need to have that same kind of zeal and dedication in the church today as they did in the first century- if so the church will grow.

1. We must become converted to the concept that we were saved to save others.
2. We are under a debt to all men until they hear the good news - Rom. 1:14

Conclusion

1. Growth does not come by accident - We must plan to grow
2. Here are 8 things that are essential to growing a strong church:
 - (1) **Strong Bible preaching and teaching!** - God's word must be taught plainly, forcefully uncompromising, and yet kindly. Paul said "I commend you unto God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up." - Acts 20:32
 - (2) **Exemplary leadership!** - Men who make themselves "examples to the flock and who are careful in tending it - I Pet. 5:2-3 To grow the church must have quality leadership - men who know how to lead it and will do so!
 - (3) **Christian living on the part of every member!** Unimpeachable conduct must be clearly evidenced in the lives of Christians so other can see Christ living in them. - Mt. 5:16
 - (4) **Congregational warmth and love!** - The fellowship of the Lord's church should be so sweet and precious that the whole community takes notice, and observes "See how they love each other!" Without this a congregation will never be what God would have it be. Jn. 13:34-35
 - (5) **Compassionate hearts!** The Church of Christ needs to be known as the most tender hearted people in all the world.. ready and willing to help all, and especially those of the household of faith - Gal. 6:9-10
 - (6) **Evangelistic fervor!** - The emphasis of the early church was soul-winning! The church will grow when we cease not to "teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ" every day, wherever we have opportunity. Acts 5:42
 - (7) **An "I want to serve" attitude permeating the congregation.** People serving the Lord because they love Him, and they want to serve, and not out of a spirit of drudgery.

- (8) An atmosphere of happiness, friendliness, cordiality, and hospitality! No stranger should ever come into the midst of the Lord's church without being graciously greeted and welcomed by a happy, friendly membership! We must reach out to others, and not just "visit" with friends only.

3. Plan to Grow

- a. Plant the seed
- b. Water and stake
- c. Prepare for growth

4. I Cor. 3:6-9 "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. 7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. 8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. 9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building."

5. I sa. 55:11 - word will not return void - "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."