

Christian Maturity

Challenges in a Growing Church

Intro Verse:-Hebrews 6:1-2

Main Verse:-Mathew 16:18

“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my **church**, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”

Scripture to Meditate:- Acts 6:1-7 (The Choosing of Seven)

Introduction – Challenges in a Growing Church

Ephesians 4:11-16

“11 Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. 12 Their responsibility is to **equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church**, the body of Christ. 13 This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

14 Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won’t be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. 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. 16 He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love..” (NLT)

- **Growth Progression**

- **3-15-45-80-150-250-450-800-1200-1500-3000-7500-12000-.....**

- **Churches have Traits**

- **1. Catalytic Innovators**
- **2. Vibrant faith in God**
- **3. Visionary/vision casters**
- **4. Empowering leadership**
- **5. Passion for people**
- **6. Personal and relational health**
- **7. Passion for faith-sharing**
- **8. Inspiring preaching or worship**

Important Qualities Needed for a Church to Grow

- **A Passion for Jesus**

First Love- Rev.2:4 “But I have this complaint against you. You don’t love me or each other as you did at first”

Simple Love or Love with Passion for Jesus

- **A passion for Evangelism**

Mathew 28:18-20 “18Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in^[a] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Evangelism Concern/Desire or Passion for Evangelism

- **A passion for Each Other**

John 15:17 “This is my command: Love each other.”

1 Corinthians 12:25 “so that there should be no **division** in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.”

Simply talk and acknowledge people or genuinely enjoying each other

Vision of a Growing Church (Example)

(NewSpring Church, Anderson, SC)

- **Engage** -- "To engage the non-Christian, the un-churched, and those who are looking for something more from life." Ephesians 3:10
- **Enlarge** -- "To enlarge the Kingdom of God." Matthew 28:19. They aren't afraid to count the numbers -- numbers represent souls.
- **Endure** -- "We acknowledge that the Christian life is full of challenges; therefore, it is our passion to help people endure in their walk with Christ." Hebrews 10:24-25. They believes that a church is most effective when the people minister to each other.
- **Enable** -- "To assist others in discovering their spiritual gift in order to enable them to become who God has called them to be." I Corinthians 12:27. They truly believes in empowering the people for ministry. They get good people involved and get out of the way.

1. With Growth - Greater the Problems

- When a Church grow it will face new problems.
- With more people there will be more personality clash, ego clash etc.
- When a Church is small the problem is less or are taken care quickly.
- In Small church the problems are visible easily than a big church.
- What to do?
 1. **Expect problems! Realize that *everyone* is imperfect.**
 2. **Realize there may be more to the picture.**
 3. **Realize you may be wrong.**
 4. **Agree to disagree—courteously.**
 5. **If you are sure you are right about a concern, respond with love.**
 6. **Look for the good in people. Focus on the positive.**
 7. **Look at insults, disagreements and problems as opportunities to grow in the Lord.**
 8. **Forgive others.**
 9. **Be part of the solution.**
 10. **If you leave your church, find another one.**
 11. **Don't give up on Jesus.**

2. With Growth - Greater the Honor Issue

- When church is small every one comes forward to make things happen.
- With growth comes danger of entitlement, the idea that one has earned the right to be above and beyond some tasks.
- Tend to think other will do it.
- Sometimes people are not happy that they can no longer do things.
- Sometimes more talented people come forward.
- What to do?
 - Jesus - Though He was God, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death on the cross.
 - We should feel comfortable to serve God at any level.
- Gal. 6:9 “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up”

3. With Growth - More Difficult It is To Maintain Unity

- When small you know all people.
- You talk more and a sense of unity is there.
- With Growth it becomes difficult to keep track with all people.
- What to do?
 - Delegate Responsibilities
 - Keep people focused on a common objective
 - Vision had to be cast and recast continually, in every department
- Eph. 4:3 “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”
- Rom. 15:5 “May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus”
- John 17:23 “I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

4. With Growth -Greater the Responsibility

- Growth raises the stakes.
- There's more people, more money, and more scrutiny from the community.
- What to do?
 - People have to grow up in their thinking, their planning, their communication skills and in their leadership.
- Church growth makes your personal growth mandatory and not optional.
- Acts 6:3 “Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them.”

5. With Growth - More Blameless You Need to Be

- Can't go everywhere as earlier.
- More places you are recognized than earlier.
- Earlier actions just reflected on few people but now more people.
- What to do?
 - Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10v23 that "everything is permissible but not everything is beneficial."
 - As our influence increase, there is a need to focus on what is beneficial rather than emphasizing what is permissible.
- 1 Thes. 3:13 “May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.”
- 2 Peter 3:14 “So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.”

6. With Growth - Easier It Is to Exist for Your Members

- When the church is small people are hugely motivated to compel people to come in.
- As the church grows there is a danger that a measure of success dulls us to the true focus of the church – reaching those not yet part of it.
- What to do?
 - Continually challenge one another about personal evangelism.
 - Larger the church get, the more disciplined we needed to be about focusing outward.
 - Don't be satisfied with little success you got.
- Rom 12:11 “Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.”

7. With Growth - Easier It Is to Minister Out of Routine Rather than Revelation

- Good is the ultimate enemy of great. The temptation to fall back on formulas that worked in the past is enormous.
- But to do so is to forsake the very thing that instigated your success – innovation born of faith and risk.
- The beginning of the end for every growth organization is the moment they stop doing what got them to where they are.
- When there is only few people there is not much to lose.
- Now, with more the temptation is to stop risking and to start protecting. To do so is to stop climbing.
- We must, at all costs, determine to create the future rather than simply repeat the past.
- Is. 40:31 “But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint”

8. With Growth -More You Must Focus on the 'Why' and the 'Who'

- Church growth arouses the ego if one does not stay **Christ-centered**.
- Like the Old Testament Israelites who came to believe that the Promised Land was all their own doing, we can easily become caught up in our own success and begin paying lip service to the power of God.
- The church does business but it is not a business; it must comply with corporate regulations but it is not a corporation.
- The church is the Bride of Christ and exists to manifest God's glory on earth.
- Remembering this keeps us in our rightful place and God in His.
- Heb.12:2 “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

9. With Growth - More You Have to Watch Your Attitude

- Opportunities for offence and for misunderstanding are amplified in a growing church.
- So the larger we get, the more we have to give attention to our attitudes.
- Oliver Wendell Holmes observed that "what lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us".
- It doesn't matter whether in your role you're leading 5 people or 50 people, you are only as helpful to the organization as your attitude.
- Phil 2:5-"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus"
- 1 Peter 4:1 -" Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin."

10. With Growth - More Our Vision Needs to Expand

- A man's dreams are an index to his greatness and so it is with churches.
- We had to realize that it was not our current state that made us great but rather the as-yet-unrealized projects that God was birthing in our spirits.
- Too often churches grow to a certain size and then start maintaining rather than imagining. Growth doesn't mean we stop imagining, instead it means we could imagine at a whole new level.
- Ananias Vision for Saul (Acts 9)
- Peter Vision for Cornelius- Gentiles (Acts 10)
- Paul Vision for Macedonia (Acts 16)

Conclusion-Challenges in Growth

- There may be other Challenges, but I have found these to be quite common
- What we must Understand?
 - a. Understand that God has a plan to make you grow as a church.
 - b. Also Understand that Enemy has a plan to destroy you as a church.
 - c. Understand that You will either grow or become stagnant or slowly die.
- What you can do?
 - a. Pray for Growth in your Church
 - b. Work for Growth in your Church
 - c. Overcome Challenges against Growth in your Church
 - d. Participate in Growth in your Church