

Vision Sunday. God makes things Grow.

As you know I have the privilege of being a dad. Here are some pictures of my boys when they were born. But look at them now.. Joseph just celebrated his 2nd birthday and Zachary is 4 next week!

Can you tell me what both of them have done since that first picture?

They have Grown!

I want my boys to grow strong and healthy.

It is the same as a plant or a tree. If we plant something we want it to grow so that it will produce flowers or fruit.

Things grow. This is how God has designed living things.

As the elders have met and prayed we believe God is speaking to us about growth.

This was confirmed when two of us independently had the same passage to bring to the church today.

So today's message is "God makes things grow".

Why don't you turn with me to 1 Corinthians 3:1-15

[The Church and Its Leaders](#)

1 Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. 2 I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. 3 You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans? 4 For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere human beings?

5 What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. 6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. 7 So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labour. 9 For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.

10 By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. 14 If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. 15 If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

Healthy things grow! Children, Plants, Trees, People, and Churches.

Steve Tibbert in his book "Good to Grow" Which I highly recommend says:

"I believe the following is an essential truth: The church exists to grow. The great commission and the record of the New Testament church experience leads me to a deep conviction that normal church life includes gospel breakthrough. Such knowledge fuels my belief that mission is at the heart of all the church does and is."

Now we'll look at the different ways growth happens, but firstly I want to ask the question:

Why is it so important that ABC grows?

1. It says so in the bible!
As Christians we believe that the bible is the source of all authority from God and it is where we find out just how God works.
In 1 Cor 3 we see "God causes growth" He wants it, he has designed it that way and he requires it!
2. So many people don't know Jesus!
If we are introducing people to Jesus, and they are being rescued from a life apart from him then the church will grow!
We are here for those don't know Jesus, Jesus came to earth for those who didn't know him. It is what the church is for!

John Pipers famous quote "Missions exist because Worship doesn't" is so true. God desires worshippers, and as so many people don't know and worship God that's what we are called to do.
3. A growing church shows it is healthy.
If we are growing it shows God is at work and that we truly are a healthy church.
Without growth we are unhealthy.
With the danger of repeating myself... Healthy things grow!

Friends, could you imagine what a really healthy, growing ABC would look like?

PAINT PICTURE

Can you imagine a church where **everyone is accepted no matter what they believe or practice.**

Can you imagine a church that **is at the heart of the community, serving, influencing and seeing change taking place.**

Can you imagine a church where there are **no shortages in any area of service within the church.**

Can you imagine a church that is **so sold out for the message of Jesus that prayer meetings are dynamic, spirit lead powerhouses of what God is doing.**

Can you imagine a church where **the Praise of Jesus is so dynamic, heartfelt and honouring of the king.**

Can you imagine a church where **people are truly in community, in and out of each other's lives, supporting and encouraging one another.**

Can you imagine a church where **people come in and say truly God is in their midst.**

Can you imagine a church where **visitors come in week after week and feel welcome**

Can you imagine a church where **people are added to the family of God on a weekly basis**

Can you imagine a church where **people come to again and again because God is at work.**

This is the church we see in the New Testament, this is the Church that Jesus is building.

This is the church that ABC can be as a truly healthy growing church.

So what type of growth are we looking for?

ALL TYPES!!

1. Personal Growth – growing in maturity, Faith, closer to God, in relationship with God
2. Corporate – growing in togetherness, and unity, and community
3. Numerical – growing in numbers.

If we are not growing in all these areas we are not truly healthy.

Let's look at these individually.

1. Personal growth. This is where each of us grow closer to God.
We can see from the passage that this is Milk v's Solids.
1 Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. 2 I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.

Are we in the same place we were a year ago?

2. Corporate growth. This is where we grow as a community/church.
We can see from the passage that we are co-workers
9. For we are co-workers in God's service
3. Numerical growth. God wants his church and his Kingdom to grow in size!
We see numerical growth again and again in the New Testament. Numbers are important to God. Father God wants more sons and daughters! The church growing in size was a norm.
Churches that do not grow numerically are not functioning as designed.

Now if we are growing personally, then we will grow together corporately, and if we are growing in both of these areas we will grow numerically.

If we are not growing numerically then I would suggest that we are not growing enough either personally or corporately.

Personal growth causes us to be more like Jesus, and get his heart for things, particularly his heart for those who don't know him, so we do something about it. Corporate growth means we do this together rather than just on our own.

Over the past 10 years ABC has not grown in numbers apart from last year. We have had many new people join us, but at the same time as many people move on to new adventures. We are in an exciting time as a church. This last year we have seen families, couples, individuals, and students joining us. Both those who already know Jesus and those becoming Christians through ABC.

It is exciting!! I believe the main reason this has happened, is because we have prayed more together!

So God wants ABC to grow.

But what are challenges are there to growth and what challenges will growth bring?

Challenges to Growth:

At our elders day last week Dad had a picture of a pot bound plant. This plant looked weak, and unhealthy, and as if it was going to die. Having replanted into open soil the plant has come back from the brink and is now thriving, growing and producing buds and flowers!!

At the same time I had a picture of a Bonsai tree. A little tree that is kept in a small pot and pruned to keep it miniature.

The challenge to us is DO WE RESTRICT GROWTH?

Do we keep ourselves small?

I like it that I can know everyone
I don't like it when the building is too full
I like to sit in "my spot" each week
I'm happy just the way it is
Big churches are just too impersonal
I don't want the challenges growth brings

So what are the challenges growth brings?

Yesterday, Em and I went shopping... we went shopping for new shoes for Joseph, Zachary had new shoes only last week.

As children grow they need bigger clothes and shoes, as plants grow they need bigger pots.

As the church grows: We will need more space, a bigger meeting venue.

We won't necessarily know everyone.

(Do we put this ahead of people not knowing Jesus?)

We need to spend more money... as my kids grow, they are not getting cheaper!

There is something we need to remember in all of these challenges!! Something of massive importance to how we view church and what God is doing!!

Jesus said... "I will build MY church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it"

Friends! This is not your church! It is not my church! IT IS JESUS' CHURCH.

And we get to be part of him building it! We get to chip in to what he wants!! This is so cool! We get to take part in Gods agenda!!

So Growth is a biblical imperative, it is God's plan for us as individuals and as a church. But how do we see that happen at ABC?

Here are some things we get to do in being a part of Jesus building his church. That's the thing I love about all this! These are not things we have to do, or even should do, if we did it with those feelings, that is just dead religion. These are things we get to do as co-workers with each other and with Jesus.

1. PRAISE – It's all about Jesus. In all of this we must make sure he gets all the glory. As people are added to his Kingdom, we don't take the credit, he does!!
2. PLANTING – As we see in the passage, some plant, some water, and we also know that some plough. Friends a major part of the church growing is PEOPLE. God has chosen to use us, He has given us PERMISSION to get involved and PARTICIPATE
We all have different gifts and abilities, from teas and coffee's to Kid's work, to music, to preaching. The church is a body made up of many parts!
I also want to encourage you that you do have something to bring, **some of you believe that God cannot and will not use you.** This is a lie from the enemy it is simply not true. The thing that makes us any good is not ourselves but the fact that God lives in us!!
3. PREACHING – The word of God, heard, acted on and lived out and does not just hearers of the word.
4. POWER – We need the power of God.
A people full of God
A people expectant of God to move

A church where people come and say “truly God is in their midst!”

5. PURPOSE – Where are we going. Earlier I painted a picture of what ABC could be like when we grow. That is the church that Jesus wants to build.
6. PRAYER – To see growth we need to pray. Personal, corporate and numerical. As I said earlier, the reason we have seen growth this last year is because we have prayed. This is a major foundation of a growing church. ABC – A growing, community of Prayer

Now some of this stuff sound like hard work. The truth is, it is!

But how cool that we get to do it in the first place, how amazing is it that Jesus should chose to use us in building his Church! What an adventure!!

Friends, Lets not be Bonsai Church, but lets be part of building an OAK of a church. Let’s take ABC out of it Pot and plant out and let those roots grow deep into God and all his plans and purposes.

GOD HAS ALREADY STARTED!!

Please let me encourage us to grow into all that God has for us to be!!

Dave Rogers 11/09/2011