**Developing a Culture of Sustained Growth**

**in an Established Church**



**January 22, 2019**

**A Practical Case For Making Disciples**

**Developing A Culture of Sustained Growth In An Established Church**

***“Jesus set up the church the way He wanted. Now He wants it the way He set it up.”* Craig Etheridge**

**How did Jesus set up the church?**

* **He spent three years in ministry preaching the kingdom of God.**
* **He spent three years ministering to the masses and touching needs of every conceivable kind.**
* **He spent three years cultivating a hand full of men that would pick up where he left off.**
* **He commissioned these men to spend their lives making other disciples.**
* **He commanded these men to watch and pray and wait on His timing.**
* **He unleashed the Holy Spirit and the church was born (after three years of preaching, disciple-making, touching needs and prayer).**
* **The disciples ministered to new believers in just the same manner that Jesus ministered to them.**
* **The church exploded and grew exponentially!**

**A key component to the success of the early church was its absolute \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_to make disciples of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_new believers.**

**If you want to see real church growth, then making disciples will be essential!**

**What is growth?**

* **Saved by the power of God**
* **Cleansed by the blood of Jesus**
* **Filled with the Holy Spirit**
* **Surrendered to the lordship of Christ**
* **Walking in daily obedience to the will of God**
* **Being transformed daily by the power of God**
* **Becoming more and more like Jesus**

**What is church growth?**

* **A believer’s fellowship with a growing number of members who…**
* **are filled with the Holy Spirit**
* **are surrendered to the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_of Christ**
* **are walking in daily obedience to the will of God**
* **are being transformed daily by the power of God**
* **A growing number of members becoming more and more** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Growth versus Increase**

* **Growth speaks of one’s overall development towards Christ-likeness.**
* **Church growth occurs when leadership develops a culture that provides \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_and resources for members to develop Christ-likeness, and the leadership \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ members to pursue those opportunities.**
* **Increase speaks of a church gaining in numbers and resources, but it is not making disciples and developing towards Christ-likeness.**
* **I would argue that most churches focus on increase and not growth!**
* **The result is a continuous revolving door where gains are almost always offset by losses.**

**Do you really want growth?**

**It starts with you!**

* **You must be saved by the power of God**
* **You must be Cleansed by the blood of Jesus**
* **You must be filled with the Holy Spirit**
* **You must be surrendered to the lordship of Christ**
* **You must be walking in daily obedience to the will of God**
* **You must be being transformed daily by the power of God**
* **You must be becoming more and more like Jesus**

**If you as the pastor, or church leader are not willing to walk in holiness and Christ-likeness, then do not be surprised when the congregation you lead follows your \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ rather than your \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!**

**We as pastors also have our comfort zones.**

* **We lead our congregations to embrace ministries we have a passion for,**
* **and we declare it to be a vision from God…**
* **when in truth, it is nothing more than a personal agenda!**
* **Not all agendas are bad, but do not confuse your \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with God’s\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!**

**As you lead your congregation towards sustainable growth it is paramount that you lead according to God’s design and not your personal agenda.**

**How to tell the difference between God’s design and your personal agenda:**

* **Before God leads you to influence your congregation toward any change He will first perform a work in your own heart and life.**
* **God will mold you before He calls you to lead others.**

**God’s design versus personal agenda:**

* **If you have not prayed it through, then it is merely your agenda.**
* **If it does not affect \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in your life first, then it is merely your agenda.**
* **If it does not push you out of your\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, then it is merely your agenda.**
* **If we are not careful we will simply lead the church to embrace ministries that we are already passionate about. Therefore, we cannot confuse personal passion with God’s design!**
* **God’s design will lead you (the leader) through a time of introspection and spiritual challenges before he uses you to lead others down a path that is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to them.**

**Anytime God gives His vision it will be one that even the leadership cannot accomplish without His power. Therefore, before leadership can articulate a vision from God, they will have to work through it themselves and personally embrace a challenge that will drive them to their knees!**

**“consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, 29 so that no man may boast before God.” I Corinthians 1:26-29 This means you pastor!**

**Leadership:**

**“It’s all about leadership.” John Maxwell**

**Is it really? Here is a thought to consider:**

**If it is all about leadership, then exactly how did Jesus \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Judas?**

**Is it really all about leadership?**

* **As long as we understand what leadership is, this statement is correct!**
* **At its very essence, leadership is discernment and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**
  + **If you are perpetually having to do it yourself, then you are not leading, you are merely managing.**
  + **A manager gets it done. A leader develops other leaders who can get it done.**
* **A leader must be able to discern the purpose, mission and vision of the church.**
* **A leader must be able to influence others to embrace the purpose, mission and vision of the church.**
* **A leader must endeavor to develop other leaders and delegate (not relegate) responsibilities.**
  + **When a leader relegates he hands off responsibility but holds on to all the authority and influence. He then micro-manages in order to make sure everything is done a particular way-his way.**
* **When a leader delegates he equips and then empowers other individuals by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_responsibility and authority and influence.** 
  + **This means the others leaders have the right and responsibility to make \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_decisions. As long as their decisions align with the purpose, mission and vision of the church they are free to fly.**
* **When this happens, the senior leader is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. He is merely influencing others toward a particular direction.**

**“A leader influences people to do what they do not want to do now, so that they will be able to do what they need to do later.” Tom Landry**

**A word about delegation!**

**Who should lead the charge?**

* **Prayer conference: “If the pastor does not lead in prayer, then the congregation will not walk in prayer.”**
* **Evangelism conference: “If the pastor does not lead in evangelism, then the congregation will not walk in evangelism.”**
* **Missions conference: “If the pastor does not lead in missions, then the congregation will not walk in missions.”**
* **Discipleship conference: “If the pastor does not lead in discipleship, then the congregation will not make disciples.”**
* **Small group conference: “If the pastor does not lead in small groups, then the congregation will not embrace small groups.”**
* **Children’s ministry conference: “If the pastor is not the greatest champion of the children’s ministry, then the congregation will not support children’s ministry.”**
* **Leadership training conference: “If the pastor does not lead in developing leaders, then the congregation will not have any developed leaders.”**
* **Worship conference: “If the pastor does not lead in worship, then the congregation will not walk in worship.”**
* **Synopsis: This kind of thinking makes for useless/exhausted pastors and useless/enabled members!**

**What happens when the senior pastor assumes full leadership responsibilities for all the ministries of a church?**

**Answer: A frustrated life and untimely death**

**You can’t do it all, so \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ even try!**

**Our leadership responsibility is to equip, empower and then unleash the membership. It is never about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to control.**

**I recommend Any Stanley’s “Playing God” series.**

**The traditional wisdom in the SBC is this; Whenever a ministry need arises, hire someone from the outside to manage it.**

**If our churches develop an effective Disciple-making culture, then God will provide an \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of leaders from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the congregation.**

**“An effective leader will never effectively lead everyone under his watch. But, he will develop a culture where anyone who wants to grow has a pathway to grow.” Craig Etheridge**

**Nevertheless, If we want to effectively lead our churches into growth we must develop others who can assume leadership and take on ministry responsibilities… In other words, we must\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!**

**Why?** **Because for a church to experience sustained growth there are too many variables for just one person to manage**

**One must define what type of growth**

**Spiritual growth**

* + **Corporate**
  + **Individual**

**Numerical growth**

* + **Membership**
  + **Attendance**

**Interdependent Systems growth**

* + **Worship**
  + **Evangelism**
  + **Small Group**
  + **Ministry**
  + **Discipleship**
  + **Assimilation**
  + **Stewardship**
  + **Leadership**
  + **Communication**
  + **Strategic**

**Organizational growth**

* + **Ministries**
  + **Committees**
  + **Leadership/Staff**

**Structural growth**

* + **Facilities**
  + **Parking**

**Some factors that affect sustained growth**

**Factors you cannot control**

* **Members pass away**
* **Members move on**
* **Demographic changes**
* **Cultural changes**
* **Economic changes**
* **Moral changes**
* **Natural disasters**

**Factors you can manage**

* **Spiritual growth**
* **Numerical growth**
* **Systems growth**
* **Organizational growth**
* **Structural growth**

**To have real and sustained growth, all \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ areas must be developed and maintained.**

**Neither aggressive evangelism, nor any other singular strategy can guarantee growth.**

**Church growth is difficult to achieve and sustain because so many \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ are involved.**

**Most Common Approaches To Church Growth:**

**1. Focus on filling, but ignore the holes**

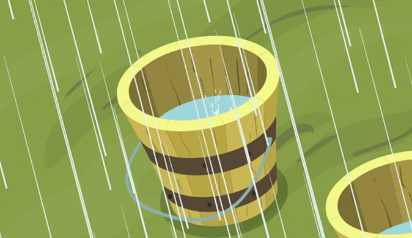
* **As long as the increase exceeds the hemorrhaging we believe we have a healthy church.**
* **We expel much energy getting new people.**
* **The challenge?**
* **We have no real strategy to develop the ones who God brings.**

**2. Biological growth**

* **Church grows as members have kids**
* **They are saved and baptized into membership**
* **The Challenge?**
* **Spiritual inbreeding creates a church culture that becomes increasingly foreign to the outside community**

**3. Transfer growth**

* **You assimilate people from other churches**
* **These are confessing believers that either come from other churches in the area, or they move in from another community**
* **The Challenge?**
* **These people usually come with their own agendas and may not respect your culture**

**4. Conversion growth**

* **People are saved and baptized into fellowship**
* **They may or may not have any connections within the church**
* **The Challenge?**
* **New believers often bring all their sinful baggage with them and members may avoid them**

**5. You need to plug the holes!**

**Neither Biological, transfer nor conversion growth will offer sustained growth unless the organizational issues within the church are addressed and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_as growth challenges arise**

**What happens when you ignore certain growth areas?**

**1. When you ignore Spiritual growth:**



**You will have new believers who whine when they don’t get their way**



**You will have older spiritually immature believers who whine when they don’t get their way**

**2. When you ignore numerical growth:**

**An empty auditorium will kill any momentum**



**An empty auditorium will tell visitors that something is wrong with the church**

**3. When you ignore systems growth:**

**Leaders are frustrated**



**Members are frustrated**



**Organization descends into chaos**

**4. When you ignore organizational growth:**

**Ministries become over congested**



**Leaders become overworked**

**5. When you ignore facility growth:**

**Facilities fall into disrepair**



**Facilities become inadequate**

**Making disciples is an essential function of the church. But it is not the only function. If a church equips its members for ministry, but ignores the other growth areas it will not have any sustained growth.**

**A word of caution!**

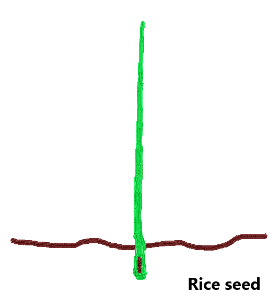
**There is danger in developing a Disciple-making DNA in an established church that has never had disciple-making as part of its DNA:**

**A Parable of a rice plant**

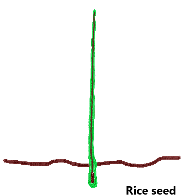
**Illustrating growth with a rice plant**

**1. A seed must be planted before it can grow.**

**A disciple-making church starts with you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in a small number of people.**

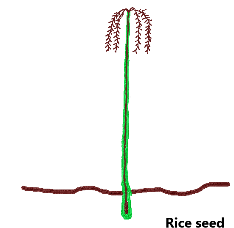
**2. When rice grows it first produces a husk. This husk will not produce any fruit, but it serves the essential function of protecting the chute. The chute represents people who have influence, but may not be very spiritual.**

**Do not look for people who hold positions or influence. Look for people who are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_for God.**



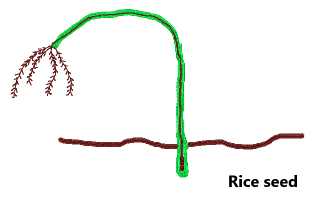
**3. The husk will grow to full length quickly. Then over time the chute will grow from the seed all the way to the top of the husk. During this time the chute is totally hidden.**

**As you develop a disciple-making culture, the average attender will be completely \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of what you are doing.**



**4. Eventually the chute will “head out” and rice seeds will develop.**

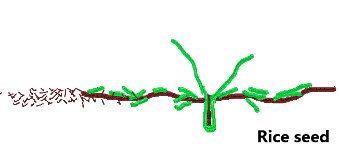
**Once a Disciple-making culture is developed, it will start bearing \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_fruit.**

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**5. The weight of the seeds become more than the husk can support.**

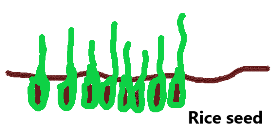
**New fruit will bring great stress on the existing ministry structures and the existing church \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

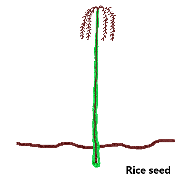
**6. Ultimately, the husk will shatter and the seeds will disperse on the ground.**

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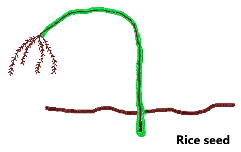
**The real crisis moment will occur when new members are plentiful enough to exert real \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_within the church.**

**7. Once the rice hits the ground the process of growth and reproduction starts over.**

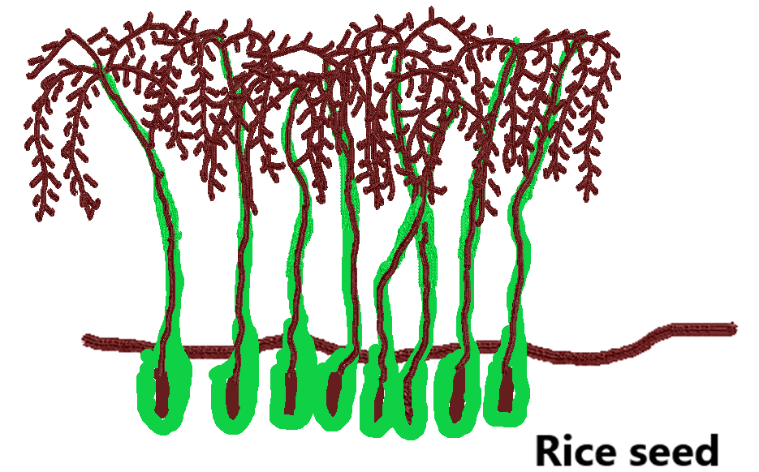
**Hopefully, with the new growth the excitement will \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the criticism.**

**8. It is impossible to grow and stay the same. As God brings real growth, the church will start to change.**

**Despite any growth and transformation, there will probably be a fight to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ things as they were.**

**9. Every church wants to grow, but the pressure exerted by new growth may be more than existing members can bear.**

**existing members of a church may resist so much that any new \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ will be thwarted.**

**10. Often when new growth is successful, many of the existing members will leave because growth affects culture, and when the culture changes, existing members may seek another church with their preferred environment.**

**Developing a culture of real growth will bring much tension and crises, but the joy and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of seeing God’s kingdom expanded outweighs the stress by far!**

**Remember this: The majority of church members who were there when you first became the pastor liked the church \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. That is why they were there in the first place!**

**Virtually every church member will tell you they want to grow. But in truth, they are probably thinking about corporate \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and not personal or corporate spiritual growth**

**A church can experience increase and no change. But, if a church starts growing it will \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_! And, when it starts to change, members who liked the church the way it was may become your greatest \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

**Always remember, it’s the Lord’s church and it must be lead to operate on His terms!**

**If you really want sustainable growth, then first be sure to count the costs!**

**However, it is worth the cost if the result is achieving sustainable growth!**