



## Part 3 – GROWING



“The church we see is **GROWING**: attractive to seekers, welcoming to guests, reaching out to the ostracised and the hurting, has multiple arms extending into our communities, and then challenges people to respond to the gospel such that confessions of salvation, baptisms and changed lives are the norm.”

### 1. IT'S GOD'S PLAN FOR THE CHURCH TO GROW

- \* PREMISE: EVERYTHING WE DO should be growing.
- *When we say 'everything,' what's included? What does growing look like?*
- \* God is a God of FRUITFULNESS, INCREASE, HARVEST.
- \* Matthew 16:18, Colossians 1:6
- *"If God's in it, it will grow." Discuss!*

### 2. HEALTHY THINGS GROW

- \* 1 Corinthians 3:6, Colossians 2:19
- \* OUR JOB is to make sure we're HEALTHY ... Or better stated, CO-OPERATE with Him as He MAKES US healthy.
- \* FLIP: UNHEALTHY things WITHER and DIE.
- \* If there's STRIFE, no FAITH or VISION or LEADERSHIP, too much RELIGIOSITY, INWARD-FOCUS ... If it lacks key ingredients, it will become stunted, plateau, even die.
- \* If we can cultivate an environment laden with LOVE, GRACE, FAITH, VISION, INTEGRITY, HOLY SPIRIT SENSITIVITY, then we'll be healthy.
- *How does God make us healthy? What does healthy look like? What does unhealthy look like? Have you ever been in an unhealthy church? If so, what made it unhealthy and what were the results?*
- *What characteristics do we need to build, protect, cultivate in order for us, as a church, to be considered healthy? What are the hallmarks of a healthy church?*

### 3. GROWTH TAKES PLACE IN SEVERAL DIRECTIONS

- Growing DEEPER in CHARACTER → Foundations, culture, character.
  - Growing STRONGER in RESOURCES → Leadership, team, gifts.
  - Growing LARGER in SIZE → Multiplication, great commission in action, gospel seed.
  - Growing WIDER in REACH → Building bridges, leveraging influence, stewarding those resources to bless, serve and, ultimately, save.
- *How are we doing with each of those? Where are we actually growing? Where do we still need to grow?*
- DEEPER in character (1 Peter 2:2, 2 Thessalonians 1:3)  
Signs of growth & maturity
    - Growing BOLDER → Faith, passion, obedience

- Growing SOFTER → Compassion,, love, mercy, grace
  - Growing WISER → Strategy, discernment, foresight
  - Growing TOGETHER → Teamwork, unity, purpose
- *What qualifies as deeper roots? What character are we looking for? Anything else you'd add to our list of four here? Which of those do we particularly need to grow deeper in?*

- STRONGER in resources (Ephesians 4:11-16)  
→ *What qualifies as stronger resources? What do we need + how do we get them?*  
HOW?
    - PRAY for them → Identify the need + ask the Lord
    - TRAIN them → Develop the resources / gifts you do have
    - RELEASE them → If gifted people aren't utilised, they'll go where they are
- *What qualifies as stronger resources? What do we need and how do we get them? Any resources we're lacking that we should be asking the Lord for right now?*

- LARGER in size (Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:47)
    - \* As a church, if we're healthy, we'll be reaching out, constantly.
    - \* As an individual Christian, if you're healthy, you'll be reaching out constantly.
    - \* 'Each one, reach one, teach one.' → *Who is God calling you to?*
- *Is outreach a consequence of health? Why? How does it work?*  
→ *Does it matter how 'big' the church is? What are the advantages of bigger over smaller, and vice-versa? If, ultimately, bigger means more people are being reached, served, disciple, how do you get bigger?*

- WIDER in reach (1 Corinthians 9:19-22)
    - \* Who can we BLESS with the RESOURCES we have? What BRIDGES can we build? What ARMS can we extend? If there's a NEED, how can we be a SEED?
- *How might we, as a church, be a resource hub for our area? What does the church in our region need that we might be able to give?*  
→ *Have you ever been part of a church that has built effective bridges into its local community? What bridges would you like to see us build? What needs are there in Bidford or your town/village that we might be able to meet?*

### FINAL Q → Is there a SEQUENCE / order?

- \* We're strongly motivated to LARGER & WIDER, but they're ROOTS, not FRUITS.
  - \* It's not going to be our MIGHT or POWER. We can't FORCE growth or MAKE IT grow.
  - \* Our job is to concentrate on HEALTH and the GROWTH will come.
- *Can you circumvent the sequence: deeper → stronger → larger → wider? How does one feed into the next? Can you still grow larger and wider when you're (probably quite rightly) focussing on deeper and stronger?*  
→ *Do you agree that there are seasons of growth? Have you seen them in our church? What season are we in right now? Is that the right one or are we stuck?*