

Let's Make Westside Grow!

I Corinthians 3:5-11

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** What type of growth does this (or any) church need that pleases God?

A. Numerical growth: **Acts 6:7**: “Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.”

B. Spiritual growth: Rev. 2 & 3; **2 Pet. 3:17-18**: “You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; *18* but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

2. My greatest desire is for Westside to grow! In both ways!

A. I have a great desire to see every seat in this auditorium filled! Bursting at the seams; seriously considering building a new building.

B. However, my desire is not numbers for the sake of numbers (i.e., not notches on a six gun); nor is my desire to see a new building built (My experience that this can be a very dangerous time for a congregation.).

C. So, we must be careful physical growth does not come at the sacrifice of spiritual growth.

D. First and foremost, my greatest desire is that everyone here goes to heaven!

3. My desire for growth is based on God's desire:

I Tim. 2:3-4: “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, *4* who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

Souls are precious! **Matt. 16:26**: “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

A. I pray for it every day! **I Tim. 2:4**

B. I think about it all the time!

C. Judgment is coming! **2 Thess. 1:7-9**: “and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, *8* in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. *9* These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,”; **Matt. 7:13-14**

D. Our adult Bible class we've just started today is designed to help in this regard.

E. I've also prepared several tracts that will hopefully help in our effort to reach the lost.

4. Alone I cannot make Westside grow; it will require a mutual effort by all of us.

5. **3** In this lesson I want to look at some *Traits of a Growing Church*; and hopefully we can cultivate these traits here at Westside and translate them into real growth.

II. DISCUSSION:

1. **4** Emphasis on faithfulness to Christ, not numerical results:

A. We are encouraged to be faithful seed sowers and let God give the results (**I Cor. 3:1-9**).

B. Because spiritual strength is not measured by numbers and quotas (**I Cor. 3:6-9**: “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. *7* So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. *8* Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each

one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. 9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.”; cf. 1 Chron. 21:1-4, 7, **14**: “So the LORD sent a plague upon Israel, and seventy thousand men of Israel fell. 15 And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it. As he was destroying, the Lord looked and relented of the disaster, and said to the angel who was destroying, ‘It is enough; now restrain your hand.’”; **Gideon**: Judges 7: 22,000→10,000→300; congregation in Michigan; i.e., West Metro).

C. Watering down medicine makes it more palatable, but renders it ineffective to cure the disease.

- (1) Teaching that really converts is “cut to the heart” preaching is what is needed: **Acts 2:37**: “Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’”
- (2) Why were these people “cut to the heart”? They murdered their own Savior (Acts 2:23); they were on the receiving end of Holy Spirit inspired preaching: **Jn. 16:8**: “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”
- (3) That is the message we must communicate to the LOST! Mk. 9:42-48; Matt. 5:3-4
- (4) If we seek to preach a message that is first palatable; when we seek to “ease” people into the kingdom; we’ve done them the greatest disservice imaginable! Matt. 7:13-14

2. **5** Emphasis on the power of the gospel to save:

A. Entertainment, food, fun and frolic will attract great numbers of people.

- (1) Those so attracted are attracted by the carnal and not the spiritual (Rom. 1:16; 10:17).
- (2) Churches using these tactics appear to have grown, but it is a false growth.
- (3) When “hard teaching” comes (e.g., Matt. 19:9), as it always inevitably does, many will fall away (Lk. 8:13-14; Seed that fell on the rock, and seed on thorny soil.).
- (4) Whatever is used as an “attractant” must be continued or “converts” will not stay (**Jn. 6:26-27**: “Jesus answered them and said, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. 27 Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.’”; **Jn. 6:66**: “From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.” Acts 3:1-8, **11**: “Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed.”; 2 Thess. 2:13-14).

B. Teaching the gospel must always be our first priority (seed produces after its kind, Lk. 8:11-15; Rom. 10:17; **2 Tim. 4:1-4**).

- (1) We must not measure success in human, material (numerical) terms (1 Cor. 3:6-9).
- (2) Whether numbers converted are high, low, or non-existent, doesn’t mean God’s Word has not had an effect (**Isa. 55:11**: “So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”).

3. **6** Each member takes responsibility and commitment to help the church grow:

A. Every member here has something to contribute to the work here at Westside: **Eph. 4:11-16**; **1 Cor. 12:12-29**).

- B. Viewing the congregation as something apart from you as a member, something that should be dedicated to serving your needs, is the wrong view! **Mk. 9:35:** *"If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."*
- C. God uses ordinary people! You don't have to be extraordinary to help this church grow! **1 Cor. 1:26-31**
- D. We need a keen sense of our great need for one another: Gal. 6:2
 - (1) We are God's family, we are brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - (2) Family members depend on one another.
 - (3) As we think about this church growing:
 - (a) We can't go out and make it happen all by ourselves.
 - (b) We need to help one another and encourage one another in the work (e.g., rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem in the days of Nehemiah and Ezra; Neh. 4:6).

4. **7** More interest in working for the Lord than working to promote self:

- A. Our work here is not about me, it's not about you, it's not about any of the members, it's not about anyone except God!
- B. We just need to pitch in and do the work that needs doing and not worry about who gets the credit:

Jas. 3:16-18: *"For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. 17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. 18 Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."*
- C. We are one and we glorify God as one:

Rom. 15:5-6: *"Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, 6 that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."*
- D. No matter how much we might do, it is still God working through us:

1 Cor. 4:7: *"For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?"*

5. **8** Prepare yourself to help the church grow:

- A. Prepare yourself to teach others:

Col. 4:5-6: *"Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one."*

1 Pet. 3:15: *"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;*

2 Tim. 2:15: *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."*
- B. Current adult Bible class is designed to aid all of us in preparing ourselves for this great work.
- C. Results of preparation and work:
 - (1) Principle of multiplication: **2 Tim. 2:2:** *"And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."*

- (2) How many baptized believers are at Westside? 23 What if every baptized believer made it their goal to seek to convert one soul (per year)?

| Year | Number |
|------|--------|
| 1 | 46 |
| 2 | 92 |
| 3 | 184 |
| 4 | 368 |
| 5 | 736 |

- (3) Rely on more experienced teachers (Acts 18:26): I'm ready anytime, anywhere to help!
- (4) Ground new converts (**Matt. 28:19-20**: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*).

6. **9** Cultivate a deep love for the souls of others:

Mk. 12:28-31: *"Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, 'Which is the first commandment of all?' 29 Jesus answered him, 'The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. 30 And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. 31 And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."*

A. This passage tells us we have a great responsibility toward our "neighbor."

- (1) "Watchman principle": Ezek. 33:7-9
- (2) What greater need does our "neighbor" have than to hear the gospel?!
- (3) Let all of us take ownership of the Great Commission! Mk. 16:15-16 I can't share the gospel with everyone, but I can share it with someone.

B. I want to encourage every member at Westside to constantly seek prospects

- (1) Remember, our duty is to sow the seed (God will give the increase): I Cor. 3:5-9: **v. 9**: *"For we are God's fellow workers..."*
- (2) Don't be hasty to prejudge people as "good," or "likely" prospects: **I Cor. 1:26**: *"For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called."*

C. I urge you to develop your own personal list (i.e., sphere of influence); then look for opportunities to share the gospel with them.

- (1) In some respects, evangelizing the lost is a "numbers game." The more people we share the gospel with the more likely we are to find someone genuinely interested.
- (2) **Keep the thought in mind that you may be someone's only chance to hear the gospel** (relate my story).

7. **10** Prayer:

A. Besides actually sharing the gospel with a specific individual, prayer is needed, much prayer.

B. Prayer may be the most important thing for all of us to do!

Jas. 5:16-18: *“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. 17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.”*

C. I'm requesting that every member of Westside include in their personal and public prayers a petition to God:

- (1) That doors of opportunity might be opened for all of us to share the gospel with others (Acts 14:27).
- (2) That we all might be diligent and courageous enough to share the gospel with others.
- (3) That God might guide us in finding those with “*noble and good heart*” who would believe and obey the gospel (Lk. 8:15).

9. **II** Each member sets a good example:

A. We are the “*salt of the earth*” and “*light of the world*” (Matt. 5:12-16).

B. Anyone of us can singlehandedly destroy the good influence of this church with just a moment of ungodly behavior (or indifference!).

III. CONCLUSION: **12**

1. We can grow if we all pitch in and do the work (Eph. 4:16).
2. God gives the increase, not man (1 Cor. 3:6-7), but we have to sow the seed (1 Cor. 3:9).
3. Numerical growth is carnal without spiritual growth.
4. Let's work such that what was said of the church in Thessalonica can be said of Westside: **I Thess. 1:7-8:** *“For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.”*

Adapted from an original outline (*Common Traits of Growing Churches*) by Joe Price.