

Embracing Growth **“Allowing Your Church To Grow”** (Part 2)

Intro: Today we’re going to finish our mini-series on embracing growth by focusing on “Allowing Your Church to Grow”. Last week was on allowing your Pastor to grow. If you were not here last week, getting the CD or listening online is going to be crucial! There will be things today that won’t make sense unless you listen to it.

- Just as stagnation for a Pastor is a death sentence, stagnation for a church is as well. 80% of all churches in America are plateaued or declining. But numerical growth is only part of the issue. Churches are in decline because there’s no continual spiritual growth as well. I believe spiritual growth produces numerical growth.
- Churches that don’t grow eventually resemble a root-bound plant. (Explain) a plant that is root bound will literally suffocate itself. Churches do the same thing without growth.
 - Poor water retention; the water is not properly absorbed. Church: Poor spiritual truth retention
 - Impenetrable top soil. Church: Without growth, people hearts get hard!

I want to give you 4 ways God is calling Foothills to grow during May and June!

I. Grow By Finding Your Security In Jesus Not Your Pastor

- Most churches are insecure because of constant pastoral changes. (Explain)
- We don’t have to be insecure because 1st, I’m not going anywhere. 40 more years!
Secondly, as followers of Christ, we find our security in Jesus not people.
 - A. Choose to grow past separation anxiety
 1. If you are a parent, you all have experienced separation anxiety with your children. Remember the first time you left them? (Grandma’s house / friends house / Nursery?) You kids didn’t always like it did they?
 2. Sometimes even mom and dad struggle with separation anxiety. How many times did you call the first time you left your kids?
 3. Sometimes as believers we can act just like this in our churches. We experience separation anxiety when the Pastor leaves for awhile. There’s whining / complaining / people stop coming / stop giving / And yes...we’ve had some of this at Foothills over the years.
 4. For 12 years at Foothills, attendance drops when I leave. It’s time to grow past this. Insecurity is Immaturity!
 - Pastors can struggle with separation anxiety as well just like a parent. (Explain: Never taking time off / calling the church on vacation / checking email on vacation /)
 5. We grow past separation anxiety by focusing on Jesus rather than your pastor.

Rom. 8:38-39 “And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about

tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (NLT)

6. See the security that God wants us to experience in our relationship with Him. Because of this relational security we have in Christ whatever the pastor does, we choose to grow out of our separation anxiety by trusting Jesus and continue coming.

B. Learn to experience security in Christ

Col. 1:16-17 “For through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can’t see... Everything was created through him and for him. He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together. Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body.” (NLT)

1. I realize that I provide a certain level of safety and security by being here. We can’t deny this reality. Me being here for another 40 years let’s you know what to expect for a very long time.
2. BUT, I can only give you a certain amount of security. I could have an accident / plane crash / disease / lose my eyesight / something could happen to me. You need more security than what I can provide.
3. Look back at Col. 1:16-17. How much security do these scriptures give us? How much security do we have trusting God? Since God created everything and holds everything together, do you think He can hold Foothills together too?
4. Security comes from who do you trust. I’m glad you trust me as your pastor, but there is a greater trust that comes from maturity where you now trust God more than me.
5. I realize that for many people coming to Foothills it begins by trusting the pastor, but God wants to grow us up past this perspective. Some of you are still stuck here. If you’re honest, you’re spiritual security is still more in me than in God.
6. By me stepping away for 8 weeks, it gives the church the opportunity to put their trust in God. He will take care of Foothills while I’m away. He will hold Foothills together. He will even hold you together. Now that’s security!

II. Grow By Embracing The Vision As Your Own Not Just Your Pastor’s

Prov. 29:18 “Where there is no vision, the people perish...” (KJV)

- Foothills is a church that began with a vision from God from day one. Foothills was never a reaction to something. It was a call from God to follow Him. We are motivated, driven, and consumed by this vision. BUT, I believe there is an entirely deeper level where God wants us to embrace it. He wants us to grow in the vision He gave us. How?

A. Choose to grow by owning the vision not just supporting it

1. The people of Foothills have been amazing at supporting the vision for the past 12 years. You’ve followed it, funded it, served it, and we have seen God do amazing things.

2. Often, I have heard comments that basically say; “Pastor, we support your vision...We believe in the vision God gave you.” For all this I am so thankful. BUT, God wants to take us farther. He wants us to grow past just support to ownership.
- Difference between owning and renting. When you rent, you are very supportive of the house / apartment you live in but it’s still the owner’s responsibility. If the dishwasher stops working, you make a phone call...you don’t fix it.
 3. It’s easy to come to Foothills and simply become a “renter” of the vision. It’s not your vision, it’s Pastor Dale’s vision. You like living here. You enjoy the benefits. You may even pay your spiritual rent. BUT, you don’t own it. If something’s not working right...it’s not your problem. (Better call the office!)
 4. When you own something, it becomes yours. It’s your personal property. You are responsible for its maintenance and upkeep. God wants Foothills to move past renting to owning.
 5. Where we move past saying; “Pastor Dale, we support your vision.” To; “This vision is now MY vision. The transformation of a community is what God has called me to be a part of. This vision is MY personal responsibility.
 6. Can you imagine what this would unleash at Foothills?
- B. Choose to grow by possessing the vision not just owning it
1. Now that you’re willing to own the vision, you have to take possession of it. There’s a difference between possessing and owning. Owning something is great...but now you have to possess it.
 2. Here several weeks ago I went in to the Men’s Where House and got fitted and bought a new suit. Apparently, my wife is tired of the one that I have that is 12 years old. Occasionally my job still requires these restrictive garments.
 3. The suit is paid for. It’s mine. BUT I still haven’t possessed it yet. I own it but don’t possess it. Full possession takes place not only when I pick it up but when I wear it and my wife is very happy.
 4. You may say you own the vision of Foothills, but until you pick it up and wear it on your life you really don’t possess it yet. You may say that the vision is yours, but does it affect your life. Have you changed your life in order to follow it?
 5. Ownership implies responsibility but possession implies life change. You have now allowed your ownership of the vision to change your life. You now begin to rearrange your life to follow / and wear the vision. It’s part of your life. It’s part of who you are. In some ways...it possess you!
- *Phil. 2:2 “Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.” (NLT)*
 - God wants us to grow to new levels of maturity of working together with one mind and purpose. This happens as you not just support the pastor’s vision, but when we all own and possess it for ourselves!

- May and June will give Foothills a great opportunity for this. Can we grow during this time? Will you invite people? Will you feel responsible for the growth of Foothills while I'm gone? (6 Week Marriage and Family series with Jim Velez)

III. Grow By Learning From Others Not Just Your Pastor

A. Embrace God's strategy for your growth

Eph. 4:11-12 "Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ." (NLT)

1. God's strategy for growth is to gift a variety of people with the ability to equip His people and help the church grow up. God doesn't use just one person, He uses many.
 2. I realize that I am the main "equipper" here at Foothills. This is the role God has called me to and you don't have to worry about that changing. BUT, God is wanting us to grow past an overdependence on my equipping ability alone.
 3. To resist God's strategy is to miss out on major areas where God wants us to grow. I simply don't have all the perspective you need. There are other people that God has out there in His Kingdom that He wants to use in your life.
- Unless you embrace this you will be missing out / limiting yourself /
 - This was one of the things I loved about Bible college / seminary – explain Variety!
4. I understand that you trust me to teach you from the word of God. BUT, now you have to trust me as I allow other people to speak to you occasionally. Trust me that I'm only going to allow people that I trust.

B. Embrace God's strategy for the growth of Foothills

Prov. 11:14 Where there is no guidance the people fall, But in abundance of counselors there is victory." (NASB)

Prov. 15:22 "Without consultation, plans are frustrated, But with many counselors they succeed." (NASB)

- Notice that God's strategy is that we do not grow in isolation but through others.
 1. God is going to help you move forward spiritually as you listen to other people equip you in the word of God; but this is also God's strategy for Foothills corporate growth.
 2. I don't have every perspective for the growth of Foothills. God has taught other people perspectives that we need to embrace as a church that fits the vision He has called us to.
 3. A great example was last week's prayer conference with Pastor Dee Duke. Here God has taught this man and His church some essential lessons about prayer that I am convinced God wants Foothills to embrace.
 4. If we don't embrace learning from other people like this we are limited our maturity

and our effectiveness for the Kingdom of God!

5. While I am gone in May and June you have a great opportunity to learn from other people. Saturday nights will Pastor Dave and other pastors from our community. Sunday morning will be Pastor Sam and Jim Velez.

IV. Grow By Following Jesus Not Just Your Pastor.

A. Following Jesus is what creates unity in the church

I Cor. 1:11-13 "For some members of Chloe's household have told me about your quarrels, my dear brothers and sisters. Some of you are saying, "I am a follower of Paul." Others are saying, "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Peter," or "I follow only Christ." Has Christ been divided into factions? Was I, Paul, crucified for you? Were any of you baptized in the name of Paul? Of course not!" (NLT)

- The church at Corinth was all divided because they were following personalities instead of Jesus. In the church today, we can be guilty of the same thing. There's a lot of Christian superstars out there to follow. Sometimes I hear believers quote their favorite personality instead of Jesus. (John McCarther / David Jeremiah / Rick Warren / Joel Olsteen / Charles Stanely / and then they all argue with each other.
 1. The greatest source of unity in the church is NOT your pastor or personality, it is Jesus. When we all have our eyes on Him, there is a unity in the church that is indescribable and supernatural.
 2. When churches don't experience unity it reveals one simply fact...their eyes are not on Jesus but on a person.
 3. God wants to bless Foothills with even more unity than we already have but we have to grow in following Jesus more than following your pastor.
 4. My role as your Pastor is to help you follow Jesus. ..to be an example for you so that you can follow Jesus yourself. BUT...sometimes people stop with me. Sometimes people don't make the jump from me to Jesus and there is an overdependence that develops on a person.
 5. God is asking us to grow past this...an overdependence on your pastor for your spiritual journey with Christ. To choose to look past me and see Jesus Himself.

HOW?

B. Growing in our ability to listen helps us follow

John 10:27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." (NASB)

1. I realize that it may start by listening to me, but eventually you have to develop those spiritual ears for yourself and learn to discern the voice of Jesus for yourself.
2. How do I learn to listen to Jesus' voice? The only way I know is to grow in your commitment to pray. The more time you spend with Him the more you will hear His voice. The less time you spend, the less you hear.
3. How do I know where God is taking my life and where He is taking this church? I spend time in prayer...a lot of time! Not token "Lord lead me" prayers...but

hours!

4. Easter is next week. Let's embrace a prayer experiment? I want to ask you to make a prayer commitment for 14 days. 7 days leading up to Easter and 7 days after.

- Please take out your insert on our 14 day prayer commitment.

14 Day Prayer Commitment

- Pray that God would make Himself more real to you
- Pray that God would reveal Himself to 5 of your friends who do not know Him
- Pray that these 5 people would attend at Easter and after Easter is over

Will you make this commitment for 14 days? Will you choose to grow in this area?
Write the word "PRAY" on your blue card if you will.

Let's not be yet another church that suffocates itself because it got root bound and refused to grow. Let's be different. Let's be a church that embraces growth and a church that God uses to transform a community!