

Series Title: **'Missio Dei: Go. Gather. Grow. Will you?'**

Message Title: **'Grow: Will You?'**

Scripture Source: **2 Peter 3:17-18, Acts 2:42-47**

Date: Sunday, May 22, 2016

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Becoming is not the End of the Journey

When a person becomes a follower of Jesus a journey has begun. A 'start' has commenced. And this sacred 'start' is massively important...a person like you and me comes to recognise the need for forgiveness of sins and believes that salvation from the penalty and power of sin is discovered and experienced only in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. John 1:12 becomes the starting point of a whole new life. 2 Corinthians 5:17 *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"* When any of us places our hope for a restored relationship with God in the sacrificial death of Jesus and his triumphant resurrection, the promise of God becomes profoundly personal to us. *"...the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin."* 1 John 1:7

Have you begun your spiritual journey with God, on his terms of amazing grace? You can, today.

If you have questions, let's talk after service. For followers of Jesus there is a recurring call in the Bible to be committed to ongoing spiritual growth and maturity. The third word in our Missio Dei series captures this God-given responsibility to each and every Christian: Grow.

Grow: A Requirement, Not an Option: 2 Peter 3:17-18

The Apostle Peter in a letter to Christians in the first century is fully aware of the challenges and distractions they face every day. He knows that all sorts of false teachings are getting air time. He is mindful that staying true to Jesus is a daily choice made in the face of a variety of temptations and deceptive teachings and philosophies. Illustrate and apply to our times:

Any teaching that minimizes the centrality of the uniqueness of Jesus and his perfect life, sacrificial death and triumphant resurrection must be called for what it is: false teaching, regardless of how cleverly or warmly it is presented and regardless of how sincere and loving the presenter is.

Peter yearns for their spiritual stability. 3:17. And, to this end he issues yet again a challenge to assume full responsibility to grow strong and wise in their faith relationship with Jesus.

"But grow (in the face of everything going on around you) in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Grow: "to increase by natural development...by assimilation of nutriment; increase in size or substance...to become mature, to become fully grown...to flourish"

In what areas are followers of Jesus to grow? "It could mean to grow in knowledge about Christ... and growing in personal acquaintance with Jesus Christ. It is through personal encounter with Jesus as Saviour and Lord that the Christian life begins. It is through constant contact with Him that both these capacities that Christian character develops." (M. Green) See also 2 Peter 1:5-9. It is the Christ follower's responsibility to choose ongoing growth...in becoming more like Jesus in character and conduct.

That's the purpose of growth, to become more like Jesus. Romans 8:28-29. See the Message rendering: *"God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him."* Romans 8:29

We are to assume full responsibility to actively cooperate with God's Spirit in this growing to be like Jesus journey. Galatians 5: 13,14,16. The Spirit of Christ guides and energises us to be and do as Jesus models for us. Have you assumed full responsibility for your growth in knowledge, and increasing likeness to Jesus. This is your primary responsibility; the church assists you in your journey. And the assistance of the church is crucial.

How Do Christians Grow? Acts 2:42-47

To grow strong and wise in faith, hope and love, to become more like Jesus in character and behaviour, especially the behaviour of servanthood, we must be actively engaged in the life of a healthy, honest and Jesus centered community of faith. Specific environments and exercises are necessary for ongoing and life changing growth and life maturity...publicly and privately. Acts 2: 42-47 reveals these settings and engagements.

Table: relationship with God and others – Acts 2:42,44,46: Connecting (large and small settings)

Text: engagement and application of God's nourishing word – Acts 2:42: Learning (large and small settings)

Towel: serving others in Jesus' name – Acts 2:44,45: Serving

As these believers assumed full responsibility to grow and mature, with the assistance of other Christians, the power and grace of God was manifested in ways that generated heartfelt worship, compassionate service and the influx of new people. Acts 2:47

Gut Check

Are you placing yourself in environments and settings where your soul and mind can be nourished with God's grace and truth? Are you participating in the lives of others, learning, relating and serving with others? If not, why not? You and I can't grow more like Jesus in chronic isolation.

Why do you hesitate? Take full responsibility to figure out why you stay on the sidelines, then deal with the reasons and get connected.

Are you taking full responsibility for your spiritual growth...or do you expect the church to take responsibility for you? Don't confuse these two critical words: assume and assist. You assume responsibility for your growth and the church assists you along the way...and you assist others.

That's at the heart of 'missio dei...the sending or mission of God.' As you and I mature and become more like Jesus we will be involving in going and gathering...because we will be increasingly persuaded that people are loved passionately by God and that God works through people to bring people to Him.

And 'missio dei' will not merely be something we do, it will be who we are, as individuals and as a church and that will bring great joy to the heart of our great and gracious God.