

1: Prayer Guide for your Church and Pastor!

Our Church was in a school and moved, but the district asked our youth leader to start a church in another town to the west while we moved to the east, so there is a good 20 minutes between us, it cut us in half just as we were transitioning, and then the District asked if our fantastic pastor would become part of the districts leadership and.

The Importance of Discipleship and Growth [http: Krejcir](http://Krejcir) Growing in Christ is the key to growing a church. This is all about being a good and effective witness of who Christ is and what He has called your church to be and do. Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Following up, teaching, and mentoring new as well as seasoned Christians are the keys to spiritual growth and the replication of the witness. When a church forsakes discipleship, its people will not grow and thus will not reach out. Many will give up on Christianity while others become confused, calloused, or complacent. Alternatively, they will be swept away by false doctrines and cults because they do not know the difference. When we forsake discipleship, we end up just living for and unto ourselves. We miss out on opportunities, learning experiences, growth, and will exchange an eternity of rewards for a limited time of fun. This will turn into anger and bitterness later on in our lives. Why should we grow in Christ? Because, He lived and died on our behalf, willingly giving up His life by paying the penalty for our sin. He allows us not only to escape the fires of hell, but also gives us eternal life. Growth will be our response to who Christ is and what He did for us. This is what will either be repulsive or attractive to others as we "fish" for Him. But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. It means we are not only willing to trust Him to provide for our salvation, but we trust Him for the future. We are to trust Him even when we do not know, like, or understand when or where He is leading, or when it is unpopular. As we grow in Christ, we have to keep our eyes on Him. In doing so, we will be of better use to Him and become increasingly unsatisfied with anything less than His call and character. God does not ask us to seek converts. He simply asks us to disciple. Discipleship is modeling and teaching Christians the precepts of the Bible, mainly prayer, doctrine, and Christian living, which means having an attitude and heart that worships Christ. Yes, we are still to evangelize, but that is not our main mission and call. When we evangelize, we must realize that it is the role of the Holy Spirit to bring people into an intimate relationship with God. This is an act of divine intervention and grace. He uses us as the tools, but He is the means. We are the display case of His life and work! We are to care, and share with others His love and character. We are to obey and reach out, but we cannot lead people anywhere. He is the One who leads! Our goal is to worship and model our worship to others-not just our service in the church, but the lifestyle of a heart surrendered and poured out to His. However, with that said, when we are real and authentic in our Christian living, then we are actually doing effective evangelizing and bringing others to Christ even more powerfully and frequently. How does our focus on Him and not evangelism help us be evangelistic? Because, when the focus is on evangelism, it tends to be on gathering numbers for numbers sake, and this mindset is pretentious and ineffective. It will model Christ-like character to the community, encouraging others to surrender themselves to Jesus Christ. However, this is only the beginning. When we are worshiping Christ with our hearts and minds, we are focused on Him and motivated to be His witnesses. How To Grow in Faith Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Second Chronicles tells us, if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked waysâ€¦ Do you see the condition? The "if" needs to become a "do;" we are to carry out what He has accepted in us, so the rest of the passage becomes fulfilled in us. To grow means we are to turn from sin, seek Him, be praying, act with humility, seek His righteousness, and practice maturity. We are not to wander from Him or allow our desires to be selfish and sinful. We are to focus on His precepts and allow ourselves to be filled up with Christ. When we call upon our Lord, that call will echo over all those around us. We grow as

we look to and trust in Him, and as we pursue our lives in Christ. That means careful pursuit and continual growth, not a simple look-over, but an in-depth and committed life. Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith. Growing is surrendering our will to His. Surrender is the process through which we grow toward Him and His will, and away from our will. Surrender is making Christ the Lord of all of our lives so that worship, discipleship, and growth can happen. For this to truly happen, we must rid ourselves of false presumptions, perceptions, reckless ideas, faulty thinking, and other such things that are barriers to our growth, so we can make room for Him. Thus, we gain a deeper intimacy with our Lord as our Commander and Friend, as our God and our King, as the provider of Grace, as our Love, and as our reason for being. In His purposes, we find real contentment, joy, and fulfillment. This can be summed up in the adage, "we cannot be doing the work of God unless we are the people of God. I have been in pastoral ministry as a profession since , and was in lay-ministry for several years prior to that. I can tell you absolutely that the one thing that keeps most people from accepting Christ as their Savior and being born again is that they do not want to admit their need; they do not want to be convicted. They do not want to admit that there is something basically wrong with them. They still cling to the idea that there is some good thing about them that God should accept, and if they do more good than bad, He will have to let them into heaven. I do not think anything has been more destructive in the whole realm of theology and what is preached in so many churches than the idea that we are O. No repentance is necessary. Come one, come all! But, the Bible says we cannot come to Him; He comes to us. Christ will save us if only we will acknowledge our need and accept Him as our Lord and Savior; yet, so few will. It is the same with Christians who lack the motivation to witness; they do not want to admit that others have a need. It is not an official Christian policy by any imagination; rather, it is a rationalization we make because of our fears, complacency, or indecision. We are not able to do so. People desperately need a Savior! So, carefully consider any barriers in your thinking that blocks you from this core truth and reality of life: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. What is the barrier that holds you back from giving this proclamation of love to others? We all need to find and remove it. But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. He calls us to wake up and do something with our faith, not to just sit in a pew and complain, or lay on a couch as life drifts by. A call is pronounced. An action must take place to secure that His precepts will cause an impact. We cannot just hear; we have to obey. Obedience is not in words, but in deeds that demonstrate our words through practice and action. This is not about our salvation; it is about our worth and our impact. Our salvation by faith alone may secure us, but what is the impact if we do nothing with it? Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed-not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence-continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Life is tough; it is full of setbacks and hurts that seem to cripple us. Did you know all it takes to tie down a horse is a simple leather strap? Did you know a horse could easily break it, like we could break a kite string? A horse does not try to do that because he does not think he is able to do so. You are able to cross any barrier to grow in deeper worship and faith in Christ, because He is there with His healing power. When we ignore Him, we just end up stagnate in life, continuing to hurt. Yes, we will struggle and hurt and we will need times to recover. However, we must make the determination to recover, not to remain disabled, preventing our abiding in Him. Obedience will override our feelings so that we will remain steadfast and secure. We are all called to put our faith into practice. We can now take the relationships, mentoring, and learning, and carry them out in daily life. This is often expressed in service projects and missions, but that is only a small, although necessary aspect of service. Service is how we daily live our lives, modeling His character to those around us. When we are in ministry, we need to realize, it is not what we do, but whom we can equip.

2: Ten ways to grow your church in

Our Growing Church St. Mark has been in a season of growth over the past decade and we are excited to celebrate the growth as we look forward to continuing to invest in our ministry and facilities in coming years.

This morning, and the next several Sunday mornings, I am going to talk about church growth. How many of you would like to see this church grow to bigger and greater heights? I believe with all of my heart that this church is going to blossom like it has never blossomed before. It is not going to blossom because of me; it is going to blossom because of God and because of all of us. If we all work together, with God on our side, there is no telling what we can accomplish. From my ministry experience, and after reading some of the best church growth books on the market, I have concluded that church growth does not just happen. It is a well-thought out strategy. If we want our church to grow, I feel that we must do three things: Work hard for it! By the time of Acts 4: All in all, the Jerusalem congregation, according to the estimates of various scholars, had a membership of between 50, and , members. How did the early church grow so rapidly? Who added people to the church? It was God who ultimately helped the Church to grow! He is the one who makes things grow! So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. If we want our church to grow, then we must rely upon God for growth and not our own human strength. We need to spend hours in prayer asking God to help us grow. What is a church vision? A church vision is an attempt to articulate, as clearly and vividly as possible, the reason why we exist as a Church. When people walk into our doors, we would like for them to know who we are, why we are here, and what we can do for them. Our commission is to help prepare you for your eternal home in heaven by leading you to Jesus, equipping you for a meaningful ministry in the church, assisting you to spiritual maturity, and encouraging you to share your faith with others. The three components of this vision statement are: Why should we have a vision statement? The vision statement will reveal to others who we are, why we are here, and what we plan to offer them. The vision statement will help us stay focused on our mission as a church. Satan tries to sidetrack churches so that they are not being effective. This vision statement will help us stay busy and focused on: How can we fulfill our vision statement? Once we are all striving to fulfill the same mission, we will grow rapidly. To experience church growth, we must rely on God, and we must have a church vision and work hard to fulfill it. So far in our series on church growth, I have pointed out to experience church growth, we must rely upon God and we must have a church vision and work hard to fulfill it. This morning, we will continue in this series by examining point number three. We must all work together to accomplish the will of God. If it ever wakes up, it will be unstoppable. I believe that our church is a sleeping giant. If we can ever awaken and unleash the massive talent, resources, creativity, and energy lying dormant in our church, we will explode with growth, not only numerically but also in personal growth as well. Brethren, if we all start serving and using our talents and abilities in this church, there is no telling what we can accomplish for the Lord. There is a conservative church in Saddleback, California who grew from one family to over 10, in worship attendance in just fifteen years. Most people live their entire lives, year after year, with no idea of why they are here. For most people, the purpose of life is the pursuit of happiness. Everyone wants to be happy. So some people spend their lives looking for happiness. Some look for happiness by acquiring possessions. In fact Jesus once said in Lk. God has a purpose for each and every one of us and when we discover that purpose, true happiness begins! One purpose in our lives is to serve the Lord, and when we serve the Lord and His people at this church, then we will be fulfilling one of our responsibilities as Christians, and this will bring us true happiness. Listen to statement that Paul made to the church of the Thessalonians. The motivating factor that prompted the Christians at Thessalonica to serve the Lord and His Church “ was love. If we love the church, the church that Jesus purchased with His blood, then we will serve the church. One reason why we should participate in some of the churches ministries, like the visitation, evangelism, food, education, and other ministry areas is because we love the church. One time my sister called me on the phone and asked me to help her move from one apartment to another. Family will help family because of love and commitment. The church should be no different. When the church needs us to serve in different ministry areas, instead of making excuses on why we

cannot do it, we should do it because the church is our family and we love our family. Family will help family because of love. How many of us would refuse to help our biological families? If we truly love the Lord and His Church that love will compel us to be involved. If the church is going to operate and function properly, we must all be doing our part. The organization I used to work for SuperShuttle, an airport ground transportation company that serves DFW airport, is one company that has many parts. Management team who makes sure the job is getting done. Scheduling Department who makes sure that the drivers make into work on time. Reservation Department who schedules passenger pickups. Sales Department who generates business. Maintenance Department who keeps the vans in good condition. Personal Department who hires personal. Drivers Training Department who trains the drivers. The only way for the company to function properly is for every department to be doing its job. If one department is not operating properly, the whole company suffers. In the same way, if all parts of the church are not functioning properly then the whole church suffers. The number one reason why many churches are not functioning properly is because of a lack of commitment on the part of some members. The simple truth is that in many churches only a small number of people are doing the majority of the work. A Gallup survey discovered that only 10 percent of American church members are active in any kind of personal ministry in the church and that 50 percent of all church members have no interest in serving in any capacity. The reason why many churches are not functioning properly is because 10 percent of the people are trying to do percent of the work, and there is no way that can work. Dressed as a rag doll, Melody Schick, 24, sat with a teddy bear cradled in her left arm and staring into space from a revolving platform. Only her eyes moved. Then, five hours and 43 boring minutes later she rose slowly and tried to smile. Miss Schick was seeking to beat the world record for sitting still! The previous record was 5 hours and 32 minutes. The record attempt took place at a Dallas shopping center as hundreds of shoppers watched. There are surely some saints in the church who could complete for that record. They have been sitting still -- metaphorically if not literally -- for years. They never become involved in the work of the local church. They criticize the church frequently, but they never participate in the program. I do not want our church to be the kind of church that is sitting still. We must be a purpose driven church. We are a church on the move and we need every person doing his or her part. Every member of this church body must be putting his or her talents and abilities to work if we are going to function properly. One day a man spoke with the Lord about heaven and hell. Everyone was famished, desperate and starving. Each held a spoon that reached the pot, but each spoon had a handle so much longer than their own arm that it could not be used to get the stew into their own mouths. The suffering was terrible. They entered another room, identical to the first -- the pot of stew, the group of people, the same long-handled spoons. But there everyone was happy and well nourished. Brethren, if we are going to be successful as a body of Christ, we must all learn how to feed each other. We must all be serving one another.

3: 6 Tools to Grow Your Church – The Living Church

How to Grow Your Church Church growth is essential to sustainability for the congregation because it will ensure the needed revenue source to make necessary staff, property and utility payments for the congregation's infrastructure.

What are indicators of decline? This update to an earlier report [PDF] is based on a 70 percent return rate from a balanced sample in The new document is a gold mine of data for those who want to grow their churches. Hadaway notes dozens of factors that affect growth and decline. I have picked six that I think are essential for churches to practice or, at least, to consider carefully. One extraordinary factor may grow a church, but growing churches usually attend to several factors. The factors I chose are not geographically specific, nor do they depend on the leadership of the rector, which is always a substantial factor. Throughout, I assume a robust proclamation of a Nicene Christian faith ought to be part of a growing church. A kingdom road map. Put another way, churches need to be purpose-driven, with a hat off and full bow to Rick Warren. There is no substitute for a real and articulated mission that connects directly to proclaiming Christ and his resurrection. The priest and the leadership of the parish have somewhere to go and something to say. They say it, do it, and go. That mission is irreducibly spiritual. A church with a God-inspired mission does not involve warm gooey fellowship with candles and endless inclusion of every idea. Paul also was grateful for the focused gifts of the Church in Philippi to the poor of Jerusalem. Hadaway tracks that churches with clear purposes are likely to grow. Money is a good acid test. The vestry of a church with a clear road map to mission will not argue about how to spend an undesignated bequest. It will immediately apply the money to the front edge of its mission. Give a parish a clear goal to create a difference in a neighborhood for young people, as one of our new Hispanic parishes is doing in the Diocese of Dallas. The leaders found a way with almost no money to create an after-school boxing program. Their teens are now winning competitions and staying free of the gangs that beleaguer that part of town. Hadaway says that 35 percent of growing churches agree to the statement: The children go up front. The mission goes up front: An all-adult cast in the sanctuary is a sign of decline. Of course, adults are more reverent and reliable, and they are usually better readers. Hadaway documents that when children are involved and visible in worship parishes have more children and are more likely to grow. They showed up, though, to carry the cross and serve and play rock-paper-scissors during the sermon. They are now on the vestries of parishes, and one young woman is a priest. Sunday school still works. Parishes that field Sunday schools grow. Yes, Sunday schools were 19th-century outreach programs to teach poor factory children how to read. Still, an excellent Sunday school remains a good way to grow a church. Ancient rabbis, medieval monks, early modern Jesuits and reformers, and early Methodists all focused on the education of children. They all taught content and biblical narrative. In comparison, an Episcopal Sunday school is often flaccid and inadequately biblical or theologically detailed. Sunday schools need content and lots and lots of exposure to the big narratives of the Scriptures. To be familiar with and articulate about both Testaments requires more than lectionary-based curricula. Children need the Creeds to shape their worldview and should learn about basic Christian faith practices like how to forgive, pray, and tithe. Only in this way will they learn how to live as Christians in a complex world that is increasingly ignorant of basic Christian concepts. If we do not teach them the words of Christ, the world will not. Sunday school is part of the larger process of catechesis in a post-Christian world. Hadaway has the numbers to prove it: A culture of learning for adults. Hadaway says congregations that offer extensive adult learning are the statistical winners. Lifelong learning as a focus is essential if we want to move adults to growth as followers of Christ. A hurting world does not need worshipers with a thin Christian veneer covering their otherwise worldly habits and thoughts. Some priests are snobs about prepackaged curricula. I used to be such a snob and wrote my own. Still, many churches do very well with videos and discussion groups or programs like Disciple, Education for Ministry, and Alpha. What are the best programs to offer? Ones that feed both members and seekers: Twice a year at least, in endless loop, there needs to be a short course on basic Christian belief. It is important to have both level courses and, eventually, level courses. The numbers are clear: A successful planter who used to be in business commented on the indifference of churches to new people, in contrast to the

focus that any business lavishes on potential customers. New and growing churches have specific ways to reach, welcome, and follow up with visitors. It is not just that visitors are handed bulletins with a smile, it is 1 that they are invited to coffee hour, and 2 that at the coffee hour, parishioners are trained and scheduled to greet them, answer questions, and 3 invite them to future events or classes. Then, 4 there should be at least three to five further follow-up contacts in the first week, a phone call, a welcome note, and email. If we do not welcome them, the angels go elsewhere Heb. Hadaway connects growth to social media savvy, especially in order to reach younger generations. Facebook and digital newsletters are critical, as are mailed paper notices for special events. Facebook and Twitter may not be sufficient, but they better the odds that the gospel will be seen and noticed. Add a service, stir up the sound. A strong predictor of growth for a church is to have more than one service on Sunday morning. Adding a service is the single easiest way to grow a church, as one can add a different musical idiom, style of worship, or time slot without disturbing the faithful who are already attending. It has to be done with forethought, excellence, and a willingness to experiment within the framework of the Book of Common Prayer. Regions vary, but nationally, families with children often prefer services before 10 a. Most Hispanic services seem fullest after 11 a. In some places, Saturday or Sunday evening services work. Off-Sunday morning hours attract more unchurched people. Try a new service for a season. If it works, add it to the schedule. If not, try a different time or kind of service. Willingness to try but fail is essential to growth. Regarding services, I end with a final recommendation: If the very thought of drums makes you cringe, try a string bass or something else that keeps a beat. When you add a new service, use drums and music with choruses and rhythm. We do not need to ditch all hymns, but can we sing them with strong rhythm and beat? The next time you sit next to a loud stereo in traffic, consider the implications for an effective 21st-century proclamation of the gospel. Both polyphony and hymns were booed and banned when they were the new musical cutting edge in their generations. I am done beating that drum. If you want your church to grow, this is a six-pack of growing church characteristics backed up by data. Define how you do kingdom work and focus on it. Buy the drums, put the kids up front often. Teach children and adults as if their lives depend on it, and welcome people and worship God in multiple ways. And, yes, use Facebook. Victoria Heard is canon of church planting and congregational development for the Diocese of Dallas.

4: Five Keys To Spiritual Growth - Prayer

Our goal is to get everyone into a group, but only doing group can lead can feed into a self-centred agenda in the same way sitting in the back row and not engaging the mission is a bit of a selfish approach to church for a long term Christian.

A Bible Study in Ephesians 4 by Rev. You may download this resource at no cost, for personal use or for use in a Christian ministry, as long as you are not publishing it for sale. All I ask is that you give credit where credit is due. For all other uses, please contact me at mark markdroberts. If you would like to read my original PFR address in its entirety, without the pictures or the daily blog breaks, you can download a PDF version here. This was a special privilege because I have such high regard for PFR and its ministries. But it was also a challenging opportunity because many signs at are our General Assembly are foreboding. San Jose, California, with the convention center in the foreground, the location of the General Assembly. Such matters still have to be approved by the whole church through its governing bodies [presbyteries], and the presbyteries have a history of upholding biblical truth in the wake of non-biblical General Assembly actions. My message to the PFR breakfast, was, on the one hand, a word of encouragement related to the General Assembly. Many at the breakfast were voting members of the Assembly, and may be called upon to speak up for biblical truth in the next few days. They need our prayers! On the other hand, my message was meant to challenge us with respect to our larger mission. Nothing that happens at the General Assembly will change our basic calling as Christians, though it might complicate the ways we Presbyterians act out that calling. In my next few posts I will share with you the text of my message at the PFR breakfast. But the main themes and most details are the same. But I believe the main points in this series talk, which are not my own, but come from Ephesians 4, will speak to you no matter your denominational affiliation. We all need to grapple afresh with the challenging and inspiring insights found in the fourth chapter of one of my favorite books of the Bible. We may be in for a rocky road ahead, which is not to say the past thirty years have been smooth ones. But, just to be clear, I am not worried about the health and future of the church of Jesus Christ. Though the church might take a battering, in the end, the gates of Hell will not prevail against it. Thanks be to God! Part 1 Part 1 of series: Preface First of all, I want to thank you for coming out this morning. Now you know why the PFR folk invite speakers from Texas. For you this breakfast began at 6: For me it felt like 8: I know some of you are familiar with this wonderful ministry. We share a common vision of multi-layered renewal, and a passion for helping the people of God live as ministers of Jesus Christ. Throughout the past twenty years, PFR has been an outstanding source of wisdom and encouragement for me and thousands of others like me. I am grateful for this ministry and for all that PFR is doing to bring renewal to our churches and to our denomination. When I consider some of those you have had address you in recent years, Tom Gillespie, Richard Mouw, and my mentor, Lloyd Ogilvie, I am humbled by the opportunity you have given me. I hope to live up to your trust in asking me to speak this morning. This is a bit of a tricky assignment, actually. But I learned that if I kept moving, always with one child in immediate proximity, I could keep both kids in view. So, today, I have two purposes in view. On the one hand, I want to offer a close-up word of encouragement relative to this General Assembly, especially for those who are delegates. On the other hand, I want to speak to the larger issues of our life and mission as a church. No matter what happens in these next few days, all of the basics of our life in Christ will be unchanged. Though the actions of this Assembly might make our work easier, or might make it harder, our calling to the mission of Jesus Christ will remain the same. So I hope also to offer some words of encouragement as we go out into the world as the people of God, sent to make disciples of all nations. Introduction to Ephesians 4 In our short time this morning, I want to do a Bible study. I plan to focus our attention on the first half of Ephesians 4, pointing to some of the highlights in this watershed passage. Before I get to Ephesians 4, however, let me give a brief overview of its context in this letter. By bringing everything together under the headship of Christ, God will mend this broken world. Out of his great love for us, God has lavished his grace upon us, adopting us as his children, so that we might "live for the praise of his glory" 1: Our whole life becomes a means to glorify the Lord as we participate in his mission through the power of the

Holy Spirit. Ephesians 2 begins with the bad news of our condition outside of Christ: But God, who is rich in mercy, love, and grace, has made us alive in Christ. We do not earn our salvation with good works. But, when we are saved by grace, we are also newly created in Christ for a life of good works. The second half of Ephesians 2 reveals that the saving work of Christ touches more than individuals. It also brings reconciliation among people, represented in the breaking down of the wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles. Human divisions will be mended as God brings all things together in Christ. Through the church, God makes known his renewal strategy. The church is the means by which God announces his mission to the cosmos and demonstrates the ultimate success of this mission. Our wholeness and unity as formerly broken and scattered people will tell the world that the Gospel is true. If you want to know if the Gospel is true, Ephesians tells us, just look at the church. That, my friends, can be a scary thought! If the church is to exhibit the truth of the Gospel, then we will have to live out this truth in our daily life in the world. The final three chapters of Ephesians focus on the practical implications of the theological vision found in the first three chapters. Thus Ephesians 4 begins: Paul, writing from a prison, urges us to walk the talk, to take our calling, spelled out in Ephesians , and embody it. We must also live it, each and every day. Part 2 Part 2 of series: Now, on to Part 2. Where Should We Begin? The answer of Ephesians 4 begins in a most surprising way. The verb translated here as "making every effort" conveys a sense of urgency, of eagerness. Exhaustion has a way of depleting our zeal. Now I realize that some would say we have no more unity to preserve, that our theological divisions run so deep as to destroy our denominational unity. There are times when persistent sin or theological error can break our spiritual connectionalism and lead to necessary separation. But, even in such sad situations, may we still yearn for restoration, for genuine unity that reflects the Gospel. Pastors as Teachers My limited time this morning requires me to skip some marvelous material in verses of Ephesians 4. The gifts [Christ] gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. Notice that, in this passage, gifts are not abilities for ministry, but the people who provide leadership in the church, including pastor-teachers. The Greek original links these two roles essentially, by the way. Here is a reminder for those of us who are pastors that teaching is essential to our leadership. We are not just community organizers, counselors, dialogue-starters, and program directors. Too often in our day, churches expect pastors to do a myriad of other things besides teaching, thus diluting pastoral effectiveness and, ultimately, impoverishing churches. Even preachers can sometimes minimize the importance of teaching. Lay leaders, be sure your pastors are your "pastor-teachers. They are "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" 4: And according to Ephesians 4: Scripture is abundantly clear, in this passage most of all, that every single Christian is a minister of Christ. Pastors are not the only ministers. Rather, they are given the special task of training ministers, the people of God, for their ministry. During that worship service, Dr. Ogilvie began in his sonorous voice: After all, we knew the ministers of the church. The ministers were those men who sat up front in the black robes. We were ministers of Jesus Christ! How was this possible? I did as Dr. Ogilvie said, even though it was pretty awkward to tell my dad that he was a minister of Jesus Christ. But I will never, ever forget the surprise of that moment, the first time I ever thought that I, a mere lay person, was a minister. What a delight it was to hear of how a manager began to treat her employees differently because of Christ, or how a father started to teach the Bible to his children, rather than delegating their discipleship to the Sunday School. Part 3 Part 3 of series: The second part examined the call to seek unity, the role of pastors as teachers, and the calling of all Christians to be ministers of Christ.

5: The Growing Church: A Bible Study in Ephesians 4

A regular question I get is "How do you grow a small church?" "How do I grow small church numbers?" In our current life situation, we are planting a church in the city in which we live. We are currently a small church, made up primarily of immigrants from other countries.

OK, so enough about not having all the answers. You have a set of strengths or gifts and so do all the key leaders and everyone else in your organization. God has given your church a specific calling, a sweet spot. Question is, have you really tapped into it? Figure out your sweet spot. Get in your zone. Then go and do your thing like no one else! Once you get in this zone, you can say NO to the softball league you loathe, NO to the fruitcake baking ministry you are average at, and YES to whatever is it the good Lord has created you to do. Develop a shared vision that everyone can own and go after it! You are not personally inviting people. Seriously, you are one of the key leaders in your church. If you are not living, breathing and dare I sayâ€¦ I try to invite someone to my church every single day. Every day I am looking for the hurting, the messed over, and the broken. I believe this- if the ones I invite will just come check it out, their lives could be drastically changed forever! Do you believe the same about your church? What will it take to get you there and get you inviting people?? I carry invite cards everywhere I go- in my car, in my borderline girly man bag satchel, everywhere. I always have a story to retell about how scared I was to invite this guy or how nervous I was to talk to that couple. Yeah, that would be silly! A better example would be the parable of the talents Matthew. Simply put, the faithful servants were given more! Why would God send a HUGE influx of new people if you are hoarding everything to yourself as a leader and not empowering able and called people, other than yourself to minister, lead, guide and develop others? Just think on that for a moment. Marinate on it evenâ€¦ then go get ready to grow! Develop the right people, get the right vision, get it inside of you and go for it! The buzz of your cool or not so cool band will wear off after awhile. People need a place to belong and they need to know what is a good Next Step for their life as a follower of Christ. New believers need clear Next Steps. People that have gifts to use need clear Next Steps to know how to use those gifts. Those that are leaders need to know how to be empowered and released to lead others. However, they do need to be simple and intuitive. If someone has to jump through 18 hoops to get in a small group, they are probably going to give up after hoop number 5 or 6. Make it clear, make it simple. Everyone has a place in the body of Christ! For some, it may be as simple as picking up a Bible. For others, it may be restoring a broken relationship. If ALL people are not always taking some type of Next Step in their faith life, it is highly unlikely that they will continue to be a sold out, kingdom building, church growing, follower of Christ! Love to hear you thoughts in the comments below!

6: Why Isn't My Church Growing?

*Part 5 of series: The Growing Church: A Bible Study in Ephesians 4 [Permalink for this post](#) / [Permalink for this series](#)
This is the fifth and final part of my address to the Presbyterians for Renewal breakfast at the General Assembly of the PCUSA.*

And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. First of all, how do you know that the ministry is not growing? What are you using for measurement? A true, Bible-believing, obeying church is of God. It is His measuring that counts, not ours. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Congregational numbers do not always indicate growth. Some of the churches with the largest audiences do not preach the whole truth from the Word of God. The preacher there knows if he did, fewer people would come. He knows if he preached what the Bible says about adultery, homosexuality, lying, drinking, temptations of this world, separation from ungodliness of this world, and put the spotlight on sin, people would be angered and not come back. So, the preacher does not preach on those things. He has sold the truth of God for popularity. People come to hear only his positive messages. They can leave feeling good; rather than convicted of their sin and disobedience. Yes, the number may increase, but few hear or do what God wants them to do. The watered down messages only produce weakened Christians. Many churches rarely see people come forward to be saved, see a person scripturally baptized, or see many burdened enough to serve the Lord. No, a populated church does not always mean it is a growing church. There are so-called churches that are powerless; as II Timothy 3 reminds us: Acts 2 described a successful church. Its numbers did increase daily, but other important aspects showed they were truly growing: They purposed to all work together for what they could do for the Lord, because of their gratefulness toward Him, in what He had done for them. There was no storming out, because the preaching addressed their sin. They were excited and wanted to work for God. Repentance, baptisms and praying were on every heart. Money and the things of this world had lost their importance. The things of God had become more valuable to them, and the church did increase. It grew as a result of their doing right! The Acts 2 early church did not have the finished Word of God with them at the time. God did allow them to do things that are not for our church age in order to increase their faith I Cor. We today do have the completed Word of God and will not see all the types of miracles the early church did. We can, however, still see similar growth; if we follow their example in their attitude toward Christ. The Word of God is preached in its entirety. More time is spent praying and reading the Bible, than is spent watching television and other entertainment. More would have a burden for the unsaved of this world and work harder to reach them, not just expect others to do it for them. Excuses of being too old, too shy, or too unknowledgeable will hinder growth rather than encourage it. Excuses can rob the church of power and keep it from reaching others. More would obey what is preached to them, and what they have been shown to do from the Bible. Each saved person is one of the tools God has saved to serve Him. However, God is the same as He was in biblical days. He still desires and expects us to obey His commands. If you were one of those led to the Lord by another, where would you be spiritually if that person did not put in the time to give you the saving message? If you are one of those, you should see the importance of one-on-one soul winning. Nowhere in the Bible is it mentioned that leading people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ is the work of a pastor alone. We are all to pitch in and work. It is the work of God we should be zealous about to perform. If we all were of one mind to do the work of God He has left us to do, our church and Christianity would grow daily.

7: Growing Young | Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church

So far in our series on church growth, I have pointed out to experience church growth, we must rely upon God and we must have a church vision and work hard to fulfill it. This morning, we will continue in this series by examining point number three.

The author was a well-known church leadership writer. There was nothing especially new in this particular post, so I moved on. Or so I thought. So why did his post bug me so much? The assumption of pettiness. But yes, it does exist. Plus, because of blogging at NewSmallChurch. I know you want to help churches and pastors. And we want your help. You know who is reading your blog? Tools that promote health and growth. Tools that encourage and inspire us. But do you know what one of the main obstacles to church growth and health is? Discouraged and demoralized pastors who keep feeling beaten up for things they may not be doing wrong! Yes, you get comments thanking you for your insights in these posts. And the push-back you get is only from those who still care enough to read the posts and speak up about it. Who knows how many discouraged pastors skip right past such blog posts when they see yet another title about what they must be doing wrong? Every year thousands of pastors get so discouraged they stop looking for help. For many of them, the discouragement gets so deep they give up and leave the ministry for good. We hear it from our church members, our denominational officials and mostly, from ourselves. And we want to correct our mistakes. Then give us something positive, encouraging and uplifting. No one can ever get too much of that. My fellow Small Church pastors. It may not be growing. It may not have grown for a long time. There are hundreds of thousands of churches like yours and mine. In small towns, big cities, slums, community centers, school auditoriums, coffee houses, wayside chapels, living rooms and more who are contributing greatly to the growth of the kingdom of God. Lift your head high. Keep loving your people, reaching the community and worshiping Jesus. You and your ministry matter. So what do you think? Are you ready for your Small Church to be bold, brave, faithful and strong despite the assumptions of others? We want to hear from you. Enter your comment right below this post and get in on the conversation.

8: 8 Big Lessons in Progressive Church Growth from a Little Bible Story | How To Grow My Church

Our Purpose Our purpose at Grow Church is to transform lives through the message of Jesus Christ. We believe that happens when people Know God, Find Freedom, Discover Purpose, and Make a Difference.

The Catholic sex scandals. Current politicians using biblical passages to justify all sorts of cruelty and corruption. There is always someone who brings up the Crusades. Until progressive churches overcome their fear of inviting people to church and open their eyes to God-given opportunities, they will continue to believe that it is all of these outside factors that are causing the problem. Opportunities to grow our church abound “we just might not be seeing them Years ago when I was in college I was working four jobs to survive, and I pored over the weekly coupon mailers every week. At one point I came across an unbelievable deal. The local pharmacy “yes, pharmacy “was having a special on bags of pasta. With the coupon, they were five for a dollar for 1-pound bags. No limit, mix and match. I did the math. I thought of the food bank that my local church supported. But the fact that I could purchase so much for so little motivated me. I remember feeling a little conspicuous as I wheeled a grocery cart with a mountain of pasta piled precariously higher than the edge of the cart through the store. As I got into line, the people behind me were twittering. There were muffled whispers. Finally one man could contain it no longer. I told him about the sale. All of a sudden, the man pulled out his wallet and handed me a five dollar bill. Just take a minute and think about this situation. Notice what an opportunity this was. Can you see ways that I could have turned this into an invitation to church? Turned this into a larger gift for the food pantry? Gotten people more involved after this moment? What could you have done differently? How often do you find yourself in situations like these? In the eighth chapter of the book of Acts there is a strange and wonderful story about the disciple Philip and an unnamed Ethiopian Man Acts 8: It describes a seemingly random encounter between the two on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. Of course, because these two strangers run into each other on the road it has all the trappings of a random encounter. But we as the readers know from the beginning that this is not in fact random at all, because an angel actually told Philip to go to that spot v. God put Philip in that situation for a reason. Philip hears him reading. If this seems strange, it is. He is reading out loud because at that time people read aloud. Philip is walking nearby and recognizes the passage. He strikes up a conversation with the Ethiopian man who eventually invites him to ride in his chariot while they continue discussing the scripture and the Good News. One thing leads to another and “BOOM “instant baptism! The Ethiopian man joins the church. Philip and the Ethiopian Man were complex people with complex backgrounds that made a series of conscious decisions in a very specific location that led to that. It warrants taking a closer look at the steps that were taken as we increase our understanding of biblical precedents “and thus viable models for progressive Christians “for inviting people to church. Yet, that is not always who God sends us. Often times, new visitors are quite different from what we imagine we want or need in our church. At the same time, they may be just perfect for what God has in mind. The Ethiopian man is unnamed, but we know a lot about him. He is from Ethiopia, which at that time was a much, much larger section of Africa than the current nation of the same name, so he is a foreigner travelling far from home and may not have spoken Aramaic or Greek as a first language. He is the Treasurer for the Queen, which means that he is a powerful political figure. It also means that he knows a lot about fiscal responsibility and taxes. He is reading, which means that he is educated. He has a copy of the scroll of Isaiah, which means that he is rich. He is returning from worshiping in Jerusalem, which means that he practices Judaism. Finally, the passage tells us that he is a Eunuch, which is an enormous revelation. In modern English, we understand eunuch to mean a man who has been surgically altered a now almost unheard-of practice either to protect a youthful singing voice or as a form of birth control to allow consequence-free work in harems. However, at that time the term eunuch had three distinct meanings under Roman law. It could mean a man who was surgically altered for exactly the reasons listed above. It could also mean what we would now call a monk, a man who lived a celibate lifestyle for religious reasons “usually in a religious community. Finally, it could mean a man who from birth had eschewed relationships with the opposite sex “what we would now call a gay man. We see reference to these three distinct categories when

Jesus is cautioning the Pharisees against divorcing their wives. Eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others or men who have been surgically altered. Eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven or men living a celibate lifestyle for religious reasons. So when the Ethiopian man from Acts 8 is described as a eunuch, we learn one more critical piece of information about him. While he practiced Judaism, he was not a member of a religious order. He had a day job and served as head of the treasury for the Queen of Ethiopia. As a result, we know that he did not work in a harem. The prohibition against surgically-altered eunuchs entering the temple Deut 23:18 That means that the Ethiopian man from the book of Acts 8 was in fact an openly gay man. It is one of his key definers in this story. On the other hand, Philip is Christian. He is a converted Christian who was baptized as an adult. We do not know what Philip did before he was a disciple. We know that Christians at that time were a religious minority. The national religion of Rome was Emperor Worship. Rome occupied with armed soldiers the nation-state of Israel, and Jerusalem was its capital. As a disciple, Philip was constantly travelling, and would have been functionally poor and homeless relying on the kindness and generosity of strangers for his daily survival. Strangers you encounter have more in common with you than you think. It is very tempting to take stories out of context in the Bible. In this case, it is impossible to do so. In fact, we are very fortunate to have a lot of detail as to what both of them were doing in the weeks and months preceding this encounter, and that history is critical to understanding the significance of this encounter in both their lives. At the end of Acts 7 we are introduced to Saul, when he presides over the trial and execution of Stephen. At the beginning of Acts 8, Saul who later converts and becomes Paul goes on a rampage and starts persecuting Christians. With the power and privilege of being a Roman citizen Acts 8:1-3 Because of this sudden new development, the Christian apostles flee Jerusalem and scatter to get away from Saul and literally save their own lives Acts 8:1-3 Philip is one of these who scatter, and he runs north into Samaria, where he goes about trying to convert people and plant churches. It cannot be discounted how incredibly traumatizing this entire experience in Jerusalem must have been. We are in a time now where we see a similarly deadly mixing of church of state: Many progressive churches are up in arms protesting, writing letters, lobbying, and challenging the politicians who are responsible. Many progressive Christians are devastated, paralyzed with despair. It is not a far stretch to imagine the additional impact of knowing our very lives were in danger and we had to flee our homes to save our own lives. While in Jerusalem, he also would have seen the state of the temple which also served as the national treasury for Israel. He would have seen the state of the people starving and destitute as they were being taxed mercilessly. What he saw must have appalled him. He must have wondered what in the world had become of his religion that was supposed to be the shining light on the hill. These are the kinds of experiences that lead people to a spiritual crisis of faith. While in Samaria, Philip came across a man named Simon. Simon was a very interesting character, because he was a magician apparently he could do amazing sleights of hand and tricks that had the entire city under his thrall. When Philip comes to town proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ, all the men and women who used to be beguiled by Simon suddenly convert and become baptized. Simon jumps on the bandwagon. The disciples may have been talking about who they would leave in charge of the church when they went on their way. But whatever Simon witnessed, it had an effect on him. He wanted a piece of the action. All of his followers are gone. The city is no longer wrapped around his little finger.

9: The Importance of Discipleship and Growth

Since the small church is a partner in the work of evangelism, improve your hospitality system.. Help your members be proud to invite people to your small church and into your network of relationships and service, knowing that their guests will receive a good welcome and find a healthy place to grow spiritually.

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