

# GROWING — Empowered To Grow

Wouldn't it be great to go outside next to the daffodils, raise my arms, and grow? And then sleep all winter? Wouldn't it be great if all my growth just happened while we did nothing?

However, it doesn't work like that in our lives. Burying our feet won't bring growth.

- How do we stop jeopardizing the relationships we value the most?
- How do we stop the scroll and leave our addictions behind?
- How do we stop saying stupid things?

A few weeks ago, Pastor Perry opened up the vision for us to become oaks of righteousness. He opened up for us the need for leaders and followers to meditate on God's word and not turn to the left or to the right?

Today, we want to talk about granular growth: Where do we start our process of growing?

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## Empowered to Grow

### Acts 1:1-9

In my former book, *Theophilus*, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of

God. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

The New International Version. (2011). (Ac 1:1–9). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

We are in Holy Week. We are taking the time to remember Jesus' life, death, crucifixion, and resurrection. His life, death, and resurrection by themselves was not enough.

Jesus himself let us know the need for something more.

All throughout scripture, God's intention was always for more than just forgiveness. He wanted to dwell with us. His presence among us was the original design of humanity.

We are not forgiven just to be taken up to Heaven. We will dwell with him in the New Earth & Heavens, but there's more to his forgiveness right now

We are forgiven to restore the lost access to his presence and relationship with him.

His promise is, and always has been to be with his people.

- Jeremiah 31
- Ezekiel 37
- Zechariah 8

## An Anemic Gospel

Sometimes, we fall short with being reminded that forgiveness is part of the path to restoration of being in God's presence.

The forgiveness opens wide the door for a relationship to be restored to him. If we miss this key point, we miss a massive point of the gospel.

### Acts 2:1-13

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

The New International Version. (2011). (Ac 2:1–13). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

There is something in this passage that clearly shows a lot more power in the gospel than what we're experiencing today.



We clearly have underdeveloped theology and an unclear picture of the gospel and the gift of the Holy Spirit that contributes to our stunted growth.

## Developing Our Theology

One of the underdeveloped parts that we miss is God's presence with people. It's not just individual, but it's more than one. We see this most clearly when we look at the Israelites: God's presence with a community.

But in our current culture, do we think about God's presence with just us?

Another part is the empowerment of his Spirit.

Luke wrote both Acts & Luke and recorded two supernatural moments where the Spirit is poured out to give life to something new.

The same Spirit that gave Christ life is the same Spirit that gave life to the church.

### **Luke 1:35**

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God

The New International Version. (2011). (Lk 1:35). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

### **Acts 1:8**

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

The New International Version. (2011). (Ac 1:8). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.



Understanding this is critical to receiving the means of grace that God wants to give us so that we can be empowered to grow.

We see even more parallels when God "births" the Israelite community through the waters of the Exodus. The moment this happens, the Nations are seeing the presence of God birthing this community.

In the same way, on the day of Pentecost, the Nations were present to see God birthing this new church community.

We can't expect to plant our feet beside the daffodils and expect ourselves to grow, but we can plant ourselves with other believers and expect opportunities to grow. 🌸

### **Acts 2:38 - 41**

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

The New International Version. (2011). (Ac 2:38–41). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

3000 filled with the gift of the Holy Spirit sounds amazing!

### **Acts 2:42 - 47**

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many

wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

The New International Version. (2011). (Ac 2:42–47). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Lest we forget the point of the Spirit, we must remember that having the gift of the Spirit is not for the purpose of making us perfect in this moment, but to empower us to live in community with grace, patience, and love.

The Spirit empowers us to bring the Kingdom of God here on earth.

We have three things:

- God's Word
- God's Spirit
- God's People

If we neglect any of those, we get weird or get dead.

Theology is best done in community because we can misunderstand things and get things wrong. But if his Spirit works in community and through his word, we need that to work out our theology. We also have the benefit of church history to learn from.

## **Don't Be Weird!**

Take all three, his word, Spirit, and people, and grow into these amazing oaks of righteousness that rebuild and restore the people and places around us.

Together, we can be the image bearers that God has called us to be!

## Walking it Out

"Lord, empower me to be obedient to you today. Help me to be with your people, your Word, and your Spirit. Grow me into more of your image; grow me into an oak of righteousness."

If you don't know how to get started with any of these three, please reach out to us and let us know! Ask your community group leader to help you with these.