

## Preparing for Growth, Part 2

### The People! The Place!

#### *Slide Notations*

**Numbers Matter!** They matter to us! They matter to God! And the numbers that matter to God are the numbers that should matter most to us!

**John 4.1-38** "Jesus was directed to go out of His way to keep a divine appointment with a Samaritan woman (*these people* were generally despised by the Jews). Without hesitation, Jesus began a conversation with her, using their shared experience as the opening point to deliver the gospel to her. His disciples walked up on the scene and wondered what He was doing. They were shocked to see Him talking with a woman like her... They didn't have the grit to say what they were thinking... so they changed the subject... to dinner... "let's eat!" Using the opportunity for their growth He began talking to them at their point of confusion saying, 'I have food that you know nothing about!' "Has someone ruined *our dinner plans with Him* by giving Him something to eat?" He took the moment a step further saying... "My sustenance is to do the will of the One who sent Me... and to finish it! Don't say to Me, there is time to spend before the focused labor of the harvest! I say to you, 'Lift up your eyes and look on the fields for they are ripe, right now! And the one who works will receive pay and gather eternal fruit... and the reaper and the sower will rejoice together! This is where the word comes true that one sows and another reaps! I sent you to reap where you did not sow and you are partners with the sowers in this work!"

**Txt Q's** Will you look where I am looking? **v35** Do you see what I am seeing? **v35** Do you see Me watching you? **v36** Do you realize I am here to work with you? **v36** Can you see I am giving you the harvest as a gift? **v37,38**

**Prepared for Growth?** Most congregations – consider themselves to be friendly... Consider themselves open to the idea of welcoming new people... But most are so in love with each other, so *inclined* to their groups, that no one else can break in...

Is it a small thing that you eat your fill then step on what's left... that you drink clean water then foul the rest with your feet? I will judge you because you thrust with your side, shoulder and horns for what's best – and the weak and needy are deprived and scattered... *but I will save them!* **Ezek 34.18-22**

***Our God really cares about the weak and needy, the deprived and scattered sheep... and He really wants us to care too!***

**Txt Warning!** 3 Hindrances to the harvest!

Preoccupation! **Jo 8,27,31-33**

Penalties? Father's "judgment" **Ez 34** Exclusion from the adventure! A lost opportunity to touch a life! "Oh, they don't want to be bothered... we don't want them to feel pressured..."

**Warning!** People visit a church to be touched by someone/something! They will try "God" three times! If they enter and find no warmth... If they sit and hear nothing that helps them with their life... If they fail to "feel" something real, they will not try again for 10 years!

Prejudice! **v9,27**

Stereotyping: "Wicked" Samaritans!" Fear! What to say? How to start?

Allegiance to tradition rather than Spirit! **v10,27**

"We've never/how can this be God?"

**Prepared for Growth?** How willing are we... To obey and go the distance? To be inconvenienced? Overcome our fears? Maintain our focus? To go outside the norm for the "near-Christian" harvest? To finance the effort?

**Churches are supposed to grow!** Not "just" numerically... but... As long as there are unsaved people in the community where we are set... God expects growth... And He's watching the tree for height, breadth, strength, fruitfulness!

***We must look where He is looking, see what He is seeing and sow for "greater community!"***

**Growth Costs!** Willingness to plow, water, fertilize, prune! Willingness to train, trust, partner, hire new workmen! Willingness to change/evolve! Condition of growth! Result of growth!

**Growth Costs!** Responding to, planning for, the future! We must think/solve problems today like church is twice the size... Build today for next 10 years... Risk the fear of failure for the benefits of success! *Which one should govern our decision making process?*

**Growth Costs!** Sometimes people you walked w/a long time/way, walk away... Sometimes you end up with people you didn't expect in places you never thought you'd go... *But it's not your adventure! You signed on with Him!*

**To stop growth...** We only have to care about traditions more than truth! Be more concerned w/ order than the reality of life! Do the same old thing, no new thing or just plain nothing! Care more about "BFN's" than "BFF's!" [Best Friends Now, Best Friends Future]

### **Prepared for Growth?**

If not... God calls the under shepherd to deal w/the sheep... If not... move the willing shepherd to a new flock... If not... bypass the sheep and shepherd altogether and find another "pen" down the street...

### **Pt 3: Rebuilding our place in the world! Or, "When the room is not enough!"**

"I will gather My sheep from all places where they are and bring them again to their folds where they will be fruitful and increase. And I will set shepherds over them which will feed them, and they will not fear, be broken down, or be alone any more." **Jeremiah 23.3,4**

### **Place Questions!**

**The last time you went to dinner...** Did the place smell? Good? Clean? Were the place settings dirty? What about your "server?" What about the food? What about the atmosphere? *Did something ruin the experience for you? What?*

**The last time you chose a hotel...** Flea bag to save a few bucks? Love the sights, smells? Newest, affordable, national? Fresh paint, clean smell, nicely decorated/appointed? *Did something ruin the experience?*

**The last time you went out for a night of entertainment...** Was it well lit? Exciting? Could you hear properly? Was it safe? Did you actually have fun? *Did something ruin the experience?*

**The last time you went to another church...** What did it look, smell, feel like? *Did anything ruin the experience for you?*

**The last time you came to church here...** How did you feel? What did you see? Well lit? Safe? Smells? Could you hear? *Did anything ruin your experience?*

***What don't we understand about the picky nature of people? They are "us!" "We" are them!***

**Not suggesting...** "Field of dreams..." All we need is a fun and exciting décor and we'll grow... That facilities/atmosphere can do what God has reserved as His own work...

**Directly saying...** Our plant should not be a hindrance to the gospel! This is not an outpost society! If it "doesn't work," won't stay! Too many other choices! If our plant suggests that the level of our care is shoddy... people won't stay! Our Dad, who distributes the sheep of His pasture, is not going to place them w/people who can't care for the "pens" to hold them! *"If we can't handle the lesser things of life, who is foolish enough to give us what is of great value?"* New sheep need care and enculturation... God will first pick clean, safe, modernized pens! *The Great Shepherd is not interested in placing new, precious lambs in deplorable, restrictive, conditions!*

**What can we do?** Honest survey of surroundings! Help to survey surroundings! Help to fix what's broken! Help to keep it updated! Help to keep it clean/fresh! Mindset to repeat the whole process regularly!

**Once ready...** Our pens give us the opportunity to serve and train the sheep in a conducive atmosphere!  
Buildings should be age and situation appropriate! Regularly maintained and upgraded!

**We must think like Walt! The people coming here are seeing us for the first time... And they should think that everything is brand new just for them!**