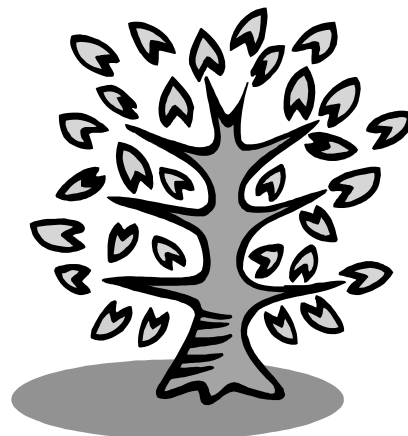


How to grow our church

Principles of Growing Churches for All

No. 4: Growing as Disciples

Parents invest lots of time nurturing their children so that they grow and mature. For Christians, the issue is more about church health than church growth! If our churches are healthy, they will grow in the way God wants them to grow. A healthy church is one where its members are all growing in their relationship with God as disciples.



Throughout the gospels Jesus' followers are called disciples, a word meaning 'a pupil or apprentice.' Growing as disciples of Christ involves 'learning from him how to live my life as He would lead my life if He were me.' (Dallas Willard in *The Divine Conspiracy*). This will include my job, family, neighbours and leisure time.

But how do we grow as disciples? It doesn't happen instantly or automatically, as Jesus calls us to be life-long learners. Also sermons and Bible studies are not enough on their own, as discipleship is about the whole of our life. If we going to be serious about growing, we do need to be accountable to other Christians, for example by being part of a small group that is committed to enable its members to grow.

Rick Warren comments: 'It takes a variety of spiritual experiences with God to produce spiritual maturity' (*The Purpose-Driven Church*). The following questions that he poses will help us to consider how effectively we are growing as disciples, both individually and as a church:

- Are people learning the content and meaning of the Bible?
- Are people seeing themselves, life, and other people more clearly from God's perspective?
- Are people's values becoming aligned with God's values?
- Are people becoming more skilled in serving God?
- Are people becoming more like Christ?

*From a new series, 'Principles of Growing Churches for All',
Written by the Rev Paul Hardingham, a vicar in Ipswich.*

**Calvary shows how far men will go in sin,
and how far God will go for man's salvation.**

H C Trumbull