

Create Breathing Space

Growth takes times. In order to grow we need to create the right conditions but, more importantly, we need to allow time and space for things to breathe.

To go long, as in a long distance race, we need to keep breathing.

In leadership, we are people with vision. We want to get there as soon as possible. However, we often forget that we also need time to breathe. We need to create breathing space.

Growing Leaders - Growing a Team - Growing Culture

Growing Leaders

Growing leaders is very important, but, all too often, we can want to see the growth more than the person wants to see it. It isn't that they don't want the growth, or the ministry that comes with it, but often they don't want it enough to make the necessary sacrifices, and often underestimate the growth that is required in their lives.

There are many areas a person has to grow in; in gifting, in character, in spirituality, in teamwork and so on. Often a person will prioritise the first, gifting, and neglect the other more important areas.

Ephesians 4:11 contains the 5 fold gifting to the church that most of us are familiar with. Many people are now teaching, correctly, that these are gifts to the church, not to do all the ministry but to equip others.

EPHESIANS 4:11-16

11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

The KJV uses the phrase, for the *perfecting* of the saints. The word actually implies to keep making small adjustments until they work together properly. The aim is to help people to *become mature*.

The aim is not...

- simply training somebody to improve their gifting.
- a one off equipping course.
- simply helping somebody in their individual gifting.

The aim is to...

- keep, incrementally, improving in all areas.
- help people integrate into a team.
- help somebody to become a spiritual responsible, contributing adult.
- do it through relationship. Speaking truth in love.

The only way we can do this is through times of teaching, training, equipping, giving opportunity, giving feedback, times of reflection... and times to relax and grow.

If we try and force growth, people will show signs of improvement in areas they think we want to see but often neglect the more important areas.

What spaces do we have in our churches where people can safely grow?

- Equipping
- Opportunity
- Feedback
- Breathe/Reflection

People will grow at different rates. Allow them the space to do that. Keep calling out the potential but don't rush to get there.

Growing a Team

Growing teams is vital in order to grow a church. A good leader knows that he or she needs a good team around them. However, if we rush to create teams, the wrong people in the wrong places can cause relational and structural damage to our churches.

In chapter 5 of his letter to his mentoree, Timothy, Paul tells Timothy not to appoint people to position too quickly.

1 TIMOTHY 5:22

22 Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.

When we appoint a person quickly, who hasn't been properly tested, the whole church shares in their faults.

When we create teams we are trying to increase our effectiveness. We can delegate tasks, we can delegate responsibility, but if we really want to grow as an organisation, we have to delegate authority. This is what the laying on of hands represented. Paul makes it clear to Timothy that we shouldn't rush, but should breathe, before we do so.

In Acts 6, the disciples find themselves in a place where they have to appoint team new members to the leadership team to facilitate the growing church. The work is growing and they need to delegate authority.

ACTS 6:3

3 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;

It can seem like a quick selection process took place. However, the word *seek out*, in the Greek, means to inspect. We see a process took place; the people were aligned to the mission and vision of the church and they came with character references. Even then, we read in verse 6 that there was a further time of prayer before they had hands laid upon them.

When appointing a team it is important to create breathing space. This does not slow down growth, but ensures good decisions are made which will facilitate long term health.

Growing Culture

The culture of the church are the values that you have that you *actually live out*. The culture of the church is incredible important to long term growth.

The culture is vital, but it takes time to grow. We all have culture, either intentionally, or by default. We have to work on it intentionally. If you don't decide you will have everybody else's culture. People come from a church that is dying, to your church, because it was dying, and yet want you to do the things the same as their previous church.

If we allow a destructive culture to enter, or to stay, in the church then it will eventually become the predominant culture and will cause damage. The culture that we tolerate is pervasive.

REVELATION 2:20

20 Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols

It is incredibly important to cultivate a healthy culture. However, we can't impose it. We need to allow breathing space so that it can grow,

- Model it
- Pray into it
- Teach into it
- When dealing with tension take a step back first
- Create boundaries
- Open doors for people, but don't try and force them through.