

## How Do We Grow? Vision Lesson #04

*Engaging lost and broken people  
to lead them to Jesus Christ  
in order to find hope, healing, and redemption.*

### Text:

See below.

### Leader Notes:

Last week's lesson ended with a request for group participants to look at the list of people they come in contact with regularly and determine who might be a person who is searching for something different in their life. We used Andy Stanley's "3 Nots" as a list of possible ways to listen for individuals who might find themselves in a position where they need some encouragement or they may be looking for a relationship with Christ—even if that is not how they might articulate it at the moment.

Spend some time visiting with your group about how their follow up and ongoing relationship building process is going. By way of reminder, here are the specific questions we laid out last week:

- Who on your list can you begin to develop a relationship with in order to one day hopefully help them know Jesus better?
- What specific things can you do to develop that relationship? (Hint: What do you do to develop a relationship with anyone?)
- What are some ways you can be looking for people who perhaps are not currently on your list, but you may come in contact with this upcoming week?

After a time of sharing about these relationships, encourage your group members to continue developing those relationships with others.

When you are a follower of Jesus, you understand the importance of a life of faith. If this life of faith is important to you, shouldn't it also be important for others? While we develop a relationship with many people, I hope our desire is not just friendship, but friendship that is blessed by and encourages growth in spiritual maturity.

The question needs to be asked, however: how do we grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ?

This week will be a little different, because there is no one text we will use for the lesson. Instead, we are going to allow the entire group do two things (one in the group, the second during this week):

1. Share the story of their faith journey.

You can do this in a couple of ways. You may want to ask some specific group members to come prepared to talk about their life of faith. Most individuals who are a regular part of your group will not find this difficult. The second way you can do this is to just open up the conversation to your entire group. This may be awkward for a moment, but I believe that the sharing that happens during

this time can be some of the most insightful and encouraging conversations we have. (We do not share our stories often enough, by the way.)

Here are the questions you can use to “prime the pump,” so to speak.

- How did you come to know Jesus and begin to follow him?
- What caused you to make a specific commitment to him—the commitment to believe in him and the commitment to be baptized?
- What challenges did you find in trying to follow Jesus?
- What specific practices (in theological terms, we might call them “spiritual disciplines”) did you use to help you grow in your faith?
- If someone who had no idea who Jesus was asked you: “How do I grow in my relationship with Jesus?” what answer(s) would you give them?

The second thing your group will do, but will do it during this week, is answer the last question above, but alter it slightly and add an additional question:

- When we look at the Bible, what are some of the ways we are told we can grow in our relationship with Jesus?
- When we look at scripture, what are some specific practices that we see healthy, growing disciples doing?

Have your group spend time this week allowing Scripture to answer this question. This is not to say our answers are wrong or should even be dismissed, but because we are people who are directed by the God’s word, we need to spend time looking at it for answers to these questions.

#### NOTE:

Let me give you the rationale behind these steps, as opposed to just giving you a Biblical text to study. (By the way, during next week’s lesson we will explore some specific practices from scripture that help us and demonstrate how we grow in our relationship with Christ.) We value growing in our relationship with Jesus. It is a part of discipling and we understand current followers of Jesus are supposed to do this, as well as new followers (or “babes in Christ” as we might sometimes call them).

However, I am not sure we do a good job of providing complete answers to the “how do we grow” question. Our typical answer (at South Plains and beyond) is 1. Go to Sunday morning worship, 2. Go to Bible Class, 3. Be a part of a small group. All of these are good and important things, yet we can all probably point to times in our lives we did those things, yet did not grow at all.

Jesus, when he called his disciples, told them to follow him. The word “follow” in essence means, “walk in the same steps.” The disciples—as was the custom of all teachers/students of the day—were undertaking an apprenticeship that involved being with Jesus 24/7. They did not show up to “school” Monday-Friday with their books and assignments, waiting for another lecture to take notes so they could complete a worksheet Jesus gave them. No, they got to line up people and help feed them. They stood there and watched Jesus cry when his friend died. They probably got to help restrain the slobbering demonic in the tombs, as well as sat

with him after he was healed, visiting about how much his life had changed in just a matter of moments. Learning in a classroom-like setting is important, but it is incomplete, and truth be known, those moments are typically not the moments we point to when we describe the times we grew the most.

Here is another important aspect about having people share their faith stories. If I am a new or “thinking about becoming a new” follower of Jesus, the stories I hear from real people as they describe their journey impacts me more than the stories I read in scripture. That does not mean scripture is unimportant in the process, it simply means that for new believers, seeing it lived out in human form makes a better application than the one they will make as they read the story.

### **Suggested Group Meeting Agenda:**

Begin your group lesson with a time of review from the previous week, as described above. Have the individuals of your group talk about the relationship opportunities they have seen throughout their week and tell of how they engaged the people with whom they came in contact.

After this time of review, ask your group to share the story of their own faith, again, as described above.

This time of sharing is the teaching time; so do not be afraid to allow it to stand on its own. When people hear others share their story, God is working in these stories to influence them.

Assign the “To Do For Next Week” section to your group.

Close in prayer that God will specific allow us to learn how to know him better.

### **To Do For Next Week:**

This week, you are going to answer the following questions:

- When we look at the Bible, what are some of the ways we are told we can grow in our relationship with Jesus?
- When we look at scripture, what are some specific practices that we see healthy, growing disciples doing?

We all know that it is important to grow in our relationship with Jesus, but too often, we never really think about how we do that or the results our life might show if we are really growing.

Start with the gospel you looked at in lessons 1 and 2. What sort of things does Jesus say about growing in a relationship with him, or knowing him better. Then move beyond that, to other books of the New Testament. Think about things you have heard in the past about “Here’s what a Christian does...” or maybe even look through some other Bible studies you have done.

Come back next week prepared to share all the ways you have discovered about growing in Christ and what it looks like for an individual to be practicing the things he or she has learned.