



Growing Up - In Outreach

1 Corinthians 3:5-9

- 1. We are Servants of the gospel (verse 5).**
- 2. We plant and water (verse 6).**
- 3. God causes the growth (verse 7).**

Over the past few weeks, I have been addressing some ways in which we, as a church, are growing up. First, of course, is the fact that now we own a building and can have a place to use any day and any night of the week. My hope is that God would use this building greatly to the glory of God! Second, is the fact that we have several men who are waiting in the wings to be confirmed as leadership at Rock Valley Bible Church. This is a way in which we are growing up. Third, we are going to leave something to the next generation of people who come to Rock Valley Bible Church after us. Two weeks ago, I challenged you to think about the sort of legacy that we will leave. May God grant that our labors will outlive us and that others would be blessed through what we have done for Christ. Fourth, we ought to be growing up into Christ. I challenged you last week, in light of Christmas, to think about your growth in adoration of the Son! We ought never to stop growing in our love and adoration and affection for Jesus Christ. This week is our fifth week in this series. I want to address the issue of outreach. My challenge to us all, as a church, is that we would grow in our outreach.

As I think about Rock Valley Bible Church, I do think that this is one of our weakest areas. We have strengths in our doctrine and in our teaching. We have strengths in our fellowship. We have strengths in our commitment to serve Jesus. But, I believe, we are weak when it come to outreach. Now, we aren't at all perfect in any of these areas. But, compared with our efforts at reaching out, these are our strengths and our weaknesses. Outreach is a struggle for many of us. I know that it's a struggle for me; my guess is that it's a struggle for you as well. However, I do know that a few of you are doing an outstanding job in reaching out to the lost. For you, I commend you for your heart for the lost.

My hope and prayer for my message this morning is that we grow in this area in some way - that God would give us a greater heart for the lost, those that are without Christ and on their way to a Christless eternity. Appropriately, my message this morning is entitled, "Growing Up – In Outreach." For my text this morning, I have chosen 1 Corinthians 3:5-7. Let's consider these words carefully.

1 Corinthians 3:5-7

What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.

Here's my first observation, ...

1. We are Servants of the gospel (verse 5).

In verse 5 we read, ...

1 Corinthians 3:5

What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one.

With these words, we enter deep into Paul's rebuke of the Corinthians. Back in chapter 1, Paul began to rebuke those in Corinth for being divided, according to various teachers. In chapter 1, beginning in verse 10, Paul wrote the following words, ...

1 Corinthians 1:10-13

Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

Apparently, there were divisions in the church in Corinth as the people were lining up behind their favorite teachers. Now, all of these men were good men. All of these men were worthy to be followed. The apostle, Paul, of course, is the one who began the church in Corinth. As one of the founding fathers of the church, he certainly had some credibility behind him. Likewise, Apollos was a great preacher. Luke describes him as "an eloquent man ... [who] was mighty in the Scriptures" (Acts 18:24). Cephas was another name for Peter. He was the most prominent of all the disciples of Jesus. Furthermore, he was the one that God used to bring many people to a knowledge of the Savior

(Acts 2, 3).

Some in Corinth, claimed, "I follow Christ!" Of course, this is the right one to follow. However, you can detect an attitude from those who claimed to follow Christ, as if somehow they were seeking to trump the followers of Paul and Apollos and Cephas. "We have it right! We are following the right person--Christ Jesus Himself."

Now, the point of disagreement here in Corinth wasn't that any of these men were heretics. Nor was it that any of these men weren't worthy of being followed. Paul, himself said, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). That's not the problem in Corinth. Rather, the disagreement here was the following of a man, and thereby missing the core of our faith, which is Jesus Christ and Him Crucified. Even those who claimed to be following Jesus may have been missing the core of our faith.

Did you know that you can follow Jesus and miss His message? It's easy. Liberals do it all of the time. They focus their attention so much upon the life that Jesus lived, and they miss the death that Jesus died, which makes it all possible. That's why Paul said things like, "we preach Christ crucified" (1:23) and, "I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (2:2). Because, in all of their focus upon the teacher, they missed the core of the message of the gospel: "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to [many after His death]" (1 Cor. 15:3-8).

By the time we get to our text, (chapter 3, verse 5), Paul is seeking to explain the role of these men in the lives of those in Corinth. Consider, again, chapter 3, verse 5, ...

1 Corinthians 3:5

What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one.

With these words, Paul is calling those in Corinth to remember the days when they first came to Jesus Christ. Paul is the first one to bring the gospel to Corinth. Many of those in Corinth came to faith through the words of Paul. But, according to Acts 19:1, Apollos spent some time in Corinth as well. Surely, some of the Corinthians came to faith through his words as well.

As a result, there were many who were loyal to Paul, because he was the one who radically changed their lives. There were also many who were loyal to Apollos, because he was the one who had a great impact upon them. But, Paul puts it straight. He said, "We are servants, through whom you believed." Paul didn't lift himself up as some mighty apostle, who deserves undivided attention. Nor did he lift Apollos up as something special, either. Instead, Paul identified both he and Apollos as servants. They were merely servants of Christ who brought the message of the gospel to Corinth, and the people believed.

This is my point of application for us. We are Servants of the gospel (verse 5). That's all we are. We are servants through whom others may come to faith. In this way, we are like Paul. In this way, we are like Apollos. We, as believers in Christ, are the tools that God uses to bring people to Himself. And this is by design.

When Jesus left the earth, He gave His disciples a mission. He said it many times in many different ways. But, His aim was clear. We are His servants, entrusted with His gospel to spread it to others. We can read it at the end of every gospel account (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). Matthew's account reads like this, ...

Matthew 28:18-20

All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Mark's account reads like this, ...

Mark 16:15

Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

Luke's account says it like this, ...

Luke 22:46-47

Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

John's account says it like this, ...

John 20:21

Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.

We have a message that has been given to us by the King, and we are given the responsibility to deliver this message to the world.

Now, there are some that argue that these commands were given only to the disciples, who were the ones responsible for evangelism in the world. Or, by extension, they are only given to the leaders of churches - to elders and deacons - so that (they say) the rank and file members of the church have no responsibility to share the gospel with the lost. In some regard, you can see 1 Corinthians 3 in the same way. It's Paul and Apollos who are servants through whom people believed. They were the leaders of the church. The argument can be bolstered by verse 9, which says, "We are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building", thereby making a distinction here between the evangelists and the members of the church. Some are workers. Some are the field.

Now, it is true that Paul is making a distinction here between himself and the people. But, it's not a distinction of role and responsibility, as much as it is a distinction of analogy. Paul and Apollos were planting and watering (verse 6). But, those in Corinth were like those who were growing. Paul and Apollos were like farmers. Those in Corinth were like the field.

But, I don't think that you can reasonably argue that Paul and Apollos were the only ones given the task of evangelism. At this moment, they weren't even in Corinth! (at least Paul wasn't). Furthermore, when you look throughout all of history, people have come to faith in Christ through all sorts of means, not merely through leaders in the church. To be sure, some have been converted by the means of full-time evangelists. Many others have been converted by the means of their parents. Some have been converted by the means of pastors. Many others have been converted by the means of a friend. Some have been converted simply by reading the Bible.

God doesn't simply use the leaders in the church. He uses us all. And all of us have responsibility with the gospel. Now, some, with giftedness and with opportunity and with God's blessing have more fruitfulness. That's for sure. But, all of us have the responsibility to be servants of the gospel.

And I say this: there are people in your life who need to hear the good news of Jesus Christ from you! In fact, I would venture to say that it may be such that you have people in your life, such that you are the only Christian that they know. Perhaps it is in your workplace. Perhaps it is in your neighborhood. Perhaps it is in your family. There are enough non-church-goers in America today who have never been to church - who have never heard the gospel. You may be the only voice in their world that has the gospel to share with them.

I would encourage you to think about yourself as a servant of the gospel. Think about yourself as a servant, who has a message to tell everyone in your life. Quite frankly, I believe that this is a struggle for us. That's why I'm preaching this message. Because, I believe that there are many of us who need to grow in this area.

There is a reason why we struggle. Because we, who have come to know and love Christ, have come to have our eyes opened to the reality of the battle in which we are engaged. We have come to understand that, "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12). There is an intense spiritual battle going on in this world for our souls! And often our response to this is to isolate us from the world and its influences and its dangers. So, we avoid those former friends who drag us into the world. We dive into the church and its activities. We cut off the bad movies and the bad television stations. We homeschool our children. We stay away from those who live sinful lives. We stay in our holy huddles. And as a result, we often view those who need Christ as enemies, and not as those whom we are serving.

When Paul called himself a servant in verse 5, he was talking about being a servant to those who were apart from Christ. Think about it. Paul says, "[We are] servants through whom you believed." Paul and Apollos came to those without the gospel and served them by being a faithful witness of the gospel to them.

Do you view yourself as a servant to those in your life who don't know Christ? I'm all for separating ourselves from the world. I'm all for creating a healthy distance between our lives and those around us. I believe that this is Biblical. However, when we, in our minds begin to view those in the world as our enemy, we will miss our role as servants of Christ in their lives. When Jesus came, preaching the good news, to whom did He go? We went among the tax gatherers and sinners, even being called their "friend" (Matt. 11:19). Jesus said, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matt. 9:12).

So, let's be servants of the gospel. When you have an opportunity to serve those outside the kingdom, jump at the chance. Your neighbor needs help with the lawn, help him. Your neighbor needs help with the snow, help him. When you are out and about, consider yourself as a servant. Be courteous with those in lines at the super market. Open a door for others. Say "please and thank you." And pray for opportunities to speak with others about Christ. Such things will help to set your frame of mind, that God may give you an opportunity with the gospel.

I heard this week a testimony of a man who was out shopping at a store. There was an older woman who needed help with her groceries. When she made the request, this man jumped at the chance to help her with her bags. So, he carried her bags to the car for her. And before departing had an opportunity to explain to her why he was eager to carry her bags to her car, sharing the gospel in a few moments with her outside, just as she was about to head for home. So, let us consider ourselves as servants of the gospel.

My second point comes from verse 6. Verse 5 addresses who we are. We are servants of the gospel. Verse 6 addressed what we do. ...
2. We plant and water (verse 6-7).

Look at verse 6, ...

1 Corinthians 3:6

I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.

This gives us a great perspective of our duties to the unbelieving world around us. We are to plant and water. It's not our responsibility to convert people. That's God's job. That's clear in this verse. "God was causing the growth." Our responsibility is to plant and water. What does

this look like? For those in Corinth, it looks like this.

Acts 18:1, 4, 6-11

After these things [Paul] left Athens and went to Corinth. ... And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks. ... But when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." Then he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue. Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized. And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city." And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Here you see Paul planting. He planted with the Jews first. When they rejected the gospel, he turned to the Gentiles. He spent 18 months in Corinth while God was causing the growth.

For us today, it looks like last Thursday. We recently purchased a new stove and microwave oven. Thursday was the delivery day. Yvonne and I were praying together in the morning. With outreach on our minds, she prayed that we might be able to share the gospel with those who would deliver the stove and microwave. I'm there listening to her praying, agreeing with her in prayer, but thinking, what form is this going to take? Well, on Thursday afternoon, when the guys came by, Yvonne was out running errands. God brought to my mind the prayer that Yvonne had prayed in the morning. I thought, "How can I reach out to these gentlemen with the gospel?" So, I sought to engage them in conversation. It is not normally my thought to engage service men in conversation. I didn't get too far. However, on the way out the door, I handed them some gospel tracts, (which were left over from Halloween), and said, "Here, this is for you to read."

Now, I have no idea what God might do with that tract. But, in this instance, I was planting a seed. And from what I discerned of these gentlemen, I would be surprised if either of them had ever heard the gospel before. Perhaps this was the first time that either of them had ever faced their sin and the salvation that Jesus offers to those who believe. I really don't know. But, at least I was seeking to do something. And I did the bare minimum. I gave an attractive and easy to read gospel tract to them. And, I asked them to read it. With some people, it will be a hit and miss situation, like a chance encounter with the furniture delivery man. But, with other people, there may be some long-term opportunities.

For instance, I think about yesterday, Christmas Day. Yvonne cooked up some nice big cinnamon rolls. We went to our nearest neighbors and brought them a Christmas Card and a giant cinnamon roll for them to enjoy. With the Christmas Card, we included a short little letter about our family. In the letter, we included a picture of the church, hoping to give them a further idea about our life and our church, which they have heard about. We have done this for years (maybe 8 or 9 years). Last year, we gave them little evangelistic booklets written by John Piper. And the curious thing is this: I can't remember any of them ever giving us anything for Christmas, which is fine with us. It's just not what they do. But, it's what we do, in seeking to be their servant. Giving them Christmas gifts like this is a declaration to our neighbors that we are their servants, and are interested in serving them and helping them. And it was interesting what took place this year. More than in any others, we were invited into every home. Unfortunately, we had another family coming over yesterday evening, so we couldn't spend too much time with each family. But, their invitation shows a level of trust with us. All we are doing is planting and watering in the lives of our neighbors.

Or it looks like this. For the sake of the gospel, we have been connected with an exchange student from Rockford College. He's a full-time student from a foreign land. He has been to our house on two occasions now. During Thanksgiving, he spent the day with us in DeKalb with our family. I just emailed him yesterday to get together with him before classes begin again in January. At some point, we hope to bring him to church with us. Our aim with this relationship is to plant and water the gospel in his life.

Such are a few of the ways that I have sought to plant and water in the lives of unbelievers. But, I know that in my heart, I need to increase in these things. I don't think that I'm a major success in outreach. I find that reaching out to people is a hard thing to do. I find that my life is filled with far more evangelistic failures than evangelistic successes.

I would encourage you as well to find ways in your life to plant and water the gospel. It takes work. It takes effort. It takes intentionality. It's not just going to happen; you have to plan and carry out the plan. When it comes to delivering Christmas goodies to our neighbors, it's always hard. It's hard to put the packs together. It's hard to organize the kids. It's hard to walk in the cold to our neighbor's house. Having an exchange student in our home isn't always the most convenient thing. But, we are eating anyways. So, he can certainly join us on occasion. So, find something that you like to do. Or find something that you are already doing. And, engage non-Christians in your life. And plant and water the gospel in their lives.

Do you find it hard to reach out to people? I listened to a message this week from a man who is pastor of evangelism in the Philadelphia area. His name is Jim Donahue. He explained why outreach is so difficult. Here's what he said, ...

The flesh is going to oppose you in every time you do evangelism. ... The flesh is going to distract you. ... Every time that you go even to invite somebody [to church], you are going to have a million excuses not to do it. ... You will meet with opposition every time you go to share the gospel. I have a love/hate relationship with evangelism.. At times I love evangelism. I'm on fire. I'm ready to talk. I'll talk to a tree if there's nobody around. I'm just ready to go. But other times, I hate it. I'm scared of it. There are times when I just want to run away. I just shrink away.

And so, I have this love/hate relationship with evangelism. But this is what I found: Evangelism is about ... overcoming the lies of the flesh, and ... overcoming the fear of man.

People think that evangelism is for those who are gifted for evangelism and it's all natural for them. People easily say, 'He's natural at evangelism. It's easy for him.' No it's not.

Every time I go to do evangelism or reach out or even to invite someone out, there is resistance. There are doubts. There is the flesh coming up and saying, ... "maybe you shouldn't do it. I'm not really sure. They don't look like they are having a good decade. Maybe you should hold off. I don't think you know what you're doing. They don't seem open. There are people in line behind you. Just get out of here! Pull out! Pull out!"

Every time. I have been doing evangelism since I have been saved 16 years ago. Every time there is resistance. Every time.

It's not just a matter of, 'Hey, just do this a lot and then you will become so natural, that you won't have any problem.'

No. Do you know what I have found? Evangelism is learning to overcome, ... the lies of the enemy ... the fear of man ... and doing it anyway. That's what it is. That's what I have learned.

I've simply learned how to overcome the lies in these areas. I've learned how to identify the lies of the flesh. I've learned to combat lies with truth. The main truth that I use is Romans 10:14, 'How can they believe in Him whom they have not heard?' [1](#)

This man went on to explain how he used this verse to persuade himself of the need to speak the gospel, and trust that others might hear. So, let's learn to overcome the lies. Let's grow in our boldness to speak with others.

Your spheres of influence are many. Parents, if you have children, you have a ready audience at home. Plant and water the gospel with your children. And then, live before them a life worthy of the gospel. Let them see your marriage, with all of its struggles and failures. And let them say, "I want a marriage like that, and I want the God that produced it."

Church family, we have people right here in our midst that you can reach out to - to plant and water the gospel. There are people coming in and visiting the church. Meet them and greet them. Reach out to them. It's a fearful thing to come to church. So, when you see someone new, do what you can to help make them comfortable at church. Children, when you see visiting families come with children, go up and greet them and welcome them. They may just become some of your best friends.

Last week, there was nobody present to greet a new family entering the church building. So, I greeted them. I showed them the coat racks. I showed them the nursery. I saw them in the service. After I did the Children's notes, I looked for them, but they were gone. Now, this is all probably my fault; I need to organize the greeters at church. But, if you see someone new, speak with them. If nothing else, slow them down so that I can speak with them.

Perhaps with you, it just starts with this - inviting people to church. I do believe that you can do this. You can take the business cards that we have produced, and invite people to church. It's not very threatening. I have found that with the new building, it has been relatively easy to invite people to church, which I have done. That's a way to water and plant as well.

One evening, I was here working with some men of the church, putting up the speakers in the auditorium. They were on the scaffold doing work. I was the gopher boy. At one point, they needed a 50 foot black extension cord. So, I went to Lowe's up her at 173 and Alpine. I was having difficulty finding what I needed, so I went to a man for help. He asked, "What's this for? Inside? Outside?" I said, "I'm hanging speakers in a church building. It's just right down here on Alpine. You are welcome to join us for worship at 10 AM on Sunday mornings. We just purchased the building last week, and now, we are installing speakers and a projector. That's why we need power." It's as simple as that.

We, as a church, can organize some inviting efforts. And I hope to do so. As we approach Easter, we will have a great opportunity to canvas the neighborhood with flyers, inviting people to come to our Easter Celebration. I have a pastor friend in Mount Morris who wants to bring his youth group up here to Rockford to help us with that effort. But, nothing is more powerful than you inviting those who you know to come and visit us at church.

I was very encouraged by the way that you all invited people to the Christmas Eve service on Friday. Many family and friends came to that service, many of whom don't know Christ. And they heard the gospel. We planted and watered on Friday.

Now, here's what I want for you to realize. We had the nice sign out front that said, "Dec. 24, 5PM." Do you know how many people came to church from the sign? Zero. Do you know how many people came because of a personal invite from someone at church? Twenty? Thirty? Something like that? It's the power of invitation.

And, as we have opportunity now to do some more community-outreach oriented events here at the church building, it's important for you all to be out and about inviting people to come to church (as a first step). And those invitations come best from your sphere of influence. It opens the door speak further. We have Outreach Bibles and business cards that we have made up for you to give out to those you know and meet. These may help you to invite others to church.

Regarding our outreach as a church, there are some things that we might do as a body to increase our outreach. Some have begun to express their interest in starting up an AWANA program here at the church. We also have an opportunity to start up a tutoring program here at the church. I just spoke yesterday with someone who works for Youth for Christ, who helps churches organize such programs in churches. We do have a great opportunity to have a Vacation Bible School as well. I was told that the previous church in this building had their first VBS ever just this past year. We have an opportunity to build on that momentum.

Any of these programs would be fine and helpful for us as a church. They take a lot of energy and a lot of manpower. But, God may use them to reach out to the community around the church building. But, I want to put such programs in perspective for you with a quote from John Piper, who writes, ...

I do not become excited when denominations or churches react to their lack of growth by merely adding a new program. I know that the reason so few conversions are happening through my church is not because we lack a program or staff. It is because we do not love the lost and yearn for their salvation the way we should. And the reason we do not love them as we ought is because such love is a miracle that overcomes our selfish bent. It cannot be managed or maneuvered into existence. It is an astonishing miracle.

Examine yourself: Does it lie within your power right now to weep over the spiritual destruction of the people on your street? Such tears come only through a profound work of God. If we want this work of God in our lives and in our churches, there will be agonizing prayer: 'God, break my heart!' I choose the word 'agonize' carefully. It is the word Paul used in Romans 15:30, 'Now I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together [sunagonizasthai] with me in your prayers to God on my behalf.' With such 'agonizing together' God may grant tears. And without those tears we may shuffle members from church to church, but few people will pass from darkness to light" [2]

This leads me to my last point. We have seen how we are Servants of the gospel (verse 5) and how we plant and water (verse 6). Now, we see that, ...

3. God causes the growth (verse 7).

Verse 7 reads like this.

1 Corinthians 3:7

So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth [is everything!].

For those who think that evangelism is us doing our part and God doing His part, sort of like a partnership, verse 7 puts it straight. It's us planting and watering, which is nothing. It's God causing the growth, which is everything. God uses us to accomplish His work. He does everything.

Throughout the entire New Testament, it is clear that God is ultimately the one who changes people. 1 Peter 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope." God causes us to be born again.

When speaking with Nicodemus, Jesus never commanded him to be born again. If you look carefully in the text of John 3, you hear words like this, "Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). "You must be born again" (John 3:7). Jesus is merely putting before Nicodemus the requirement of entering into the kingdom—the new birth! But, Jesus never commanded Nicodemus to "be born again," as if he had the ability to do this. Rather, Jesus put for the necessity of being born again to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Just as you had no control in being born the first time, so also do you have no control of being born the second time. "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). There is no controlling the wind. There is no controlling the Spirit. But, when the Spirit comes and changes a soul, it's like being born all over again! And God is the one who does it. He opens the eyes to see the light of the gospel of the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Cor. 4:4). He opens the heart to believe (Acts 16:14). He opens the minds to believe (1 Cor. 2:14). That's why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:30, is "by His doing that you are in Christ Jesus."

God converts. God causes the growth. So, what does that mean? It means that we need to pray. It means that we need to plead with God to give life to those who are apart from Christ. Plead that God would move in their life. And, as Charles Spurgeon said so well, "The Holy Spirit will move them by first moving you."

So, in God's plan to cause growth in the church, He moves us to have a heart to reach out to others. We need to grow in outreach. May God give us the strength to do so. May God give the growth.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on December 19, 2010 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Jim Donohue, "How to Build an Evangelistic Church" a message from the Sovereign Grace Ministries Leadership Conference in 2005.

[2] John Piper. Brothers, We Are Not Professionals, pp. 56-57.