Making Room for Growth

**Theme:** Preparation always comes before growth.

**Introduction:** Growth does not simply happen because we have a desire to grow. Growth requires a season of preparation to bring about the changes necessary to accommodate that growth. Maybe you’ve never considered that growth in any area requires a season of preparation.

 Moses spent 40 years in the Sinai desert, where God was preparing him for the day when he would become Israel’s deliverer. Joshua spent 40 years serving Moses. This was preparing him to become the next leader of God’s people. Elisha served Elijah for many years, preparing him to receive the double portion anointing. Jesus disciples prepared for 31/2 years under the direction of Jesus, to lead the church. Paul spent three years in Arabia in preparation before fully entering the ministry God had called him to fulfill.

 God will never entrust us with more than we are capable of handling. He will not allow what He gives us to be wasted. There will always be a season of preparation before growth.

**I. Preparation Comes Before Growth**

* **We must increase our ability to handle growth**

 **A. The Widow an the Oil. 2 Kings 4:1-7 (NLT)** One day the widow of a member of the group of prophets came to Elisha and cried out, “My husband who served you is dead, and you know how he feared the Lord. But now a creditor has come, threatening to take my two sons as slaves.” **2**“What can I do to help you?” Elisha asked. “Tell me, what do you have in the house?” “Nothing at all, except a flask of olive oil,” she replied. **3And Elisha said, “Borrow as many empty jars as you can from your friends and neighbors.** **4**Then go into your house with your sons and shut the door behind you. Pour olive oil from your flask into the jars, setting each one aside when it is filled.” **5So she did as she was told. Her sons kept bringing jars to her, and she filled one after another. 6Soon every container was full to the brim! “Bring me another jar,” she said to one of her sons. “There aren’t any more!” he told her. And then the olive oil stopped flowing. 7**When she told the man of God what had happened, he said to her, “Now sell the olive oil and pay your debts, and you and your sons can live on what is left over.”

 **1. The Lord instructed her to prepare for this miracle before He performed it.**

 **2. God blessed her to the degree of her preparation and not beyond.** When all the pots had been filled the oil ceased. In the same way, God will only give us increase to the degree of our preparation for growth. God will not allow what He gives us to be wasted. Preparation must always come before growth.

 **3. God only gave her what she made room for and no more.** This principle applies to every area of our lives, as well as the ministry. We must make room for growth before it can take place. Why would God ever give us what we are incapable of handling?

 **B. Jesus, and the Marriage at Cana. Turning the Water to Wine. John 2:1-11 (NLT)** The next daythere was a wedding celebration in the village of Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, **2**and Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the celebration. **3**The wine supply ran out during the festivities, so Jesus’ mother told him, “They have no more wine.” **4**“Dear woman, that’s not our problem,” Jesus replied. “My time has not yet come.” **5But his mother told the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”** **6**Standing nearby were six stone water jars, used for Jewish ceremonial washing. Each could hold twenty to thirty gallons. **7**Jesus told the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” When the jars had been filled, **8**he said, “Now dip some out, and take it to the master of ceremonies.” So, the servants followed his instructions. **9**When the master of ceremonies tasted the water that was now wine, not knowing where it had come from (though, of course, the servants knew), he called the bridegroom over. **10**“A host always serves the best wine first,” he said. “Then, when everyone has had a lot to drink, he brings out the less expensive wine. But you have kept the best until now!” **11**This miraculous sign at Cana in Galilee was the first time Jesus revealed his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

 **1.** Notice here again, that preparation came before the miracle. **2.** By doing our part we allow God to do his part. "When we do what we can do, God will perform what we cannot."

 **C. Jesus, and the Feeding of the Multitude.**

 **Mark 6:30-44 (NLT)** The apostles returned to Jesus from their ministry tour and told him all they had done and taught. **31**Then Jesus said, “Let’s go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile.” He said this because there were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his apostles didn’t even have time to eat. **32**So they left by boat for a quiet place, where they could be alone. **33**But many people recognized them and saw them leaving, and people from many towns ran ahead along the shore and got there ahead of them. **34**Jesus saw the huge crowd as he stepped from the boat, and he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things. **35**Late in the afternoon his disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. **36**Send the crowds away so they can go to the nearby farms and villages and buy something to eat.” **37**But Jesus said, “You feed them.” “With what?” they asked. “We’d have to work for months to earn enough money to buy food for all these people!” **38**“How much bread do you have?” he asked. “Go and find out.” They came back and reported, “We have five loaves of bread and two fish.” **39Then Jesus told the disciples to have the people sit down in groups on the green grass. 40So they sat down in groups of fifty or a hundred**. **41**Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, looked up toward heaven, and blessed them. Then, breaking the loaves into pieces, he kept giving the bread to the disciples so they could distribute it to the people. He also divided the fish for everyone to share. **42**They all ate as much as they wanted, **43and afterward, the disciples picked up twelve baskets of leftover bread and fish. 44A total of 5,000 men and their families were fed.**

 **1.** Notice that Jesus brought the people to order before He performed the miracle. Once again, we see that preparation & order always comes before growth.

 **2.** Verse 44 says there were about 5000 men. Add women and an average of 2 children each, and you have anywhere from 10 to 20 thousand people Jesus fed through this miracle.

 **3.** What do you think would have happened if Jesus had performed the miracle before He brought the people to order? People would have rushed to get the food and trampled each other. They would probably begin to fight over the food and what was intended to bless may have turned into something very different.

 **4.** If God does not require order and preparation to come before growth, what He intended to be a blessing will be lost, because of our inability to handle it.

 **D. Counting the cost.**

 **Luke 14:28-32 (NLT)** **“But don’t begin until you count the cost.** For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it? **29**Otherwise, you might complete only the foundation before running out of money, and then everyone would laugh at you. **30**They would say, ‘There’s the person who started that building and couldn’t afford to finish it!’ **31**“Or what king would go to war against another king without first sitting down with his counselors to discuss whether his army of 10,000 could defeat the 20,000 soldiers marching against him? **32**And if he can’t, he will send a delegation to discuss terms of peace while the enemy is still far away.

 **1.** Although this Scripture is referring to counting the cost of being Christ's disciple, the principal can be applied to making room for growth as well.

 **2.** We must have order and preparation before God can give us increase.

 **3.** Whether our personal lives or the ministry of the local church, the principal remains the same. Order and preparation must come before growth & increase! This is normally going to require that we lay something down first. We cannot carry God’s will when we are holding onto our own.

 **E. We must first desire growth.**

 **1.** Just as growth cannot occur in our personal lives without a desire to grow, so goes the local church. Every dream begins with a desire.

 **Psalm 37:4-5 (NKJV)** Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart. {5} Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.

 **2. Next we must develop a plan of action to see the growth occur.**

 **a)** This means developing the ability to manage the growth that occurs.

**b)** Jesus had to prepare his disciples to handle the growth that was to occur on the day

 of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came.

**c)** The early church had to develop a plan to handle the growth that was occurring as well.

 **Acts 6:1-7 NKJV)** But as the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent. The Greek-speaking believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food. **2**So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, “We apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program. **3**And so, brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility. **4**Then we apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word.” **5**Everyone liked this idea, and they chose the following: Stephen (a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit), Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas of Antioch (an earlier convert to the Jewish faith). **6**These seven were presented to the apostles, who prayed for them as they laid their hands on them. **7So God’s message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too.**

**Conclusion:** **Ephesians 3:20-21 (NKJV)** Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, {21} to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

 God desires to doe exceedingly abundantly above all we can ask or think, by His power that is a work in us. However, we must prepare for growth to handle it when it comes.

 Growth does not occur just because we want it too. It happens because we expect it and add action to our faith by making room for it through preparation to handle it.