

There is something spontaneous about genuine church growth. Normal growth does not depend upon successful techniques or programs, although planning has its place.

Rather, growth is the normal consequence of spiritual life. What is alive grows. Normal church growth is spontaneous in the sense that the nature of the Church is to grow – spiritually, numerically and in its cultural impact.

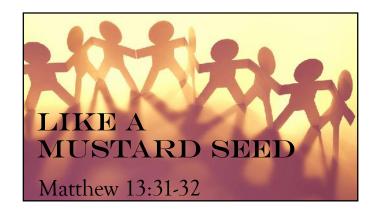
Howard A. Snyder

How does the Kingdom of God grow?

How does the church grow?

How do we remove hindrances to growth?

"New wine must be put into fresh wineskins"



He put before them another parable: The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.'

Matthew 13:31-32

A COMICAL BEGINNING

- A man takes a single seed and plants it
- It grows into a great tree or bush;
 the birds come and nest in it



MYSTERIOUS LIFE FORCES

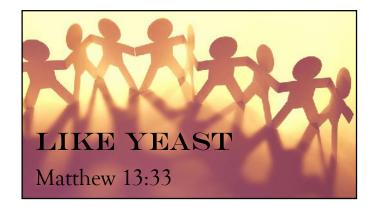
- Planting the seed sets a dynamic in motion
- Leads to a mature plant

CHRIST'S MINISTRY & PRESENCE

- The seed of faith is planted
 the seed leads to full life
- The presence of Jesus in us changes everything

FAITH, HOPE & CONFIDENCE IN GOD

- 1. A victorious ending of full life is the picture
- 2. Not in the form we expected it: a shrub! surprise/mystery is part of the journey
- 3. The parable is a picture of outward growth



He told them another parable: The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.

Matthew 13:33

ANOTHER HUMOROUS STORY

- A woman takes leaven and works it into large amounts of flour
- Creates bread for 100 people!

POTENT LEAVEN

- Transforms the entire amount of flour
- Even though it is invisible it does an amazing work
- It is a picture of total success

THE POWER OF JESUS' MINISTRY & PRESENCE

- Smallness in the beginning but the effective and transformative victory is sure
- We can have confidence in the growth of the kingdom of God

THE SURPRISE

- Yeast' in the biblical literature has a negative connotation – a corruption
- During Passover one is not to eat anything with yeast for a week (Deuteronomy 16:3-4)
- Here Jesus uses this negative image positively

INTERIOR GROWTH

- The kingdom of God is pictured as starting small and continually expanding
- God is the source of all life and is our primary reality
- This parable highlights interior growth



God is at work, even though human eyes may fail to perceive what is happening.

Douglas R.A. Hare

PLANTING: TELLING THE GOOD NEWS

- The story of Jesus is 'the seed'
- The full potential of life is in the seed
- Evangelism is simply sharing the story

THE POWER OF 'SUN, RAIN, SOIL'

- The seed requires the right environment to grow
- We all need the proper inputs for spiritual vitality and life
- Scriptures, worship, spiritual disciplines

THE POWER OF CHURCH COMMUNITY

- Tending the garden 'koinonia' fellowship is essential for vibrant gardens
- The work of pruning & weeding is necessary for healthy life

EXERCISING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

- The synergy of every part working together – a charismatic community
- Celebrating diversity, giftedness, abundance, vitality

LIVING OUT THE WHOLE GOSPEL

- Both evangelistic and prophetic
- Meeting the needs of the entire person (James 1:27; 2:14-17)



A SLOW, PATIENT GOD

- God gives us innumerable opportunities to grow and know him
- God allows 'do overs'!
- It is never too late to come to the banquet