

# GROWING

## why growth matters, what it looks like and how it happens

*“All over the world this gospel is growing.. ”*  
[Colossians 1.6]

‘Growth’ is the theme of this series of studies, and it’s begun with the prayer that it will prove to be a real growth point in our life, and lives, as God’s people here.

Growth is expected among God’s people, since the God who makes alive is the God who also makes things grow: and growth is exhorted upon them, as something which is neither occasional nor optional.

*“Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*

You can find the background to this series [here](#).

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## 8. Isaiah 40.9-11 [w/b Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> October]

*“.. He tends His flock like a shepherd..”*

Our growth as Christians is bound up with our relationship to Jesus Christ - a relationship which is likened in the Scriptures to that between a shepherd and his sheep. Insofar as elders are called to exercise, in Christ's name, something of this shepherd ministry, we've been exploring the core components of that distinctive 'shepherd ministry': the shepherd knows his sheep, feeds his sheep, guards his sheep and, finally, leads his sheep.

It's this latter aspect in particular that we're looking at in this study, using a well-known passage which highlights the coming of the Lord Himself to be our shepherd.

*[There may not be time for all the questions to be addressed in your Community Group: key questions for us as a fellowship in this study are questions 2, 5 & 6. Do try as always to leave good time for shared prayer!]*

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1. **Read Isaiah 40.1-31.** The verses on which we're focusing here are part of a chapter which is rich in 'purple passages': taking the time to read the whole chapter will help you understand better the context.

What really speaks to you from this chapter?

If you had to put the message of the chapter in a sentence or two how would you summarise it?

2. **Read Isaiah 40.1-8.** The message of the prophet in this chapter and beyond is a message of comfort and hope.

What occasioned the need for such words of comfort and hope?

What is the reason, according to the prophet, that the people can have this hope?

How does this message bring comfort and encouragement to us?

3. **Read Isaiah 40.3-9.** These verses point forward to the ministry of John the Baptist (see for instance Matt.3.3), who in his turn heralded the coming of Jesus.

What is the message the prophet is given to declare?

What makes this good news?

4. **Read Isaiah 40.10.** Notice the two-fold 'See' in this verse: the prophet exhorts his readers to open their eyes and 'see' how things really are in this world and what the Lord is doing.

What is the prophet wanting to underline in this verse?

Reflect on this verse for some moments (that can be one of the implications of the exhortation to 'see'): how does this minister to you in your situation?

5. **Read Isaiah 40.11.** The prophet reverts to the imagery so commonly used to describe the relationship between the Lord and His people - that of the shepherd and His sheep.

What does the fact that the Lord "*tends His flock like a shepherd*" mean for you as a follower of Jesus?

Try and give practical examples of how this has worked out in your own experience.

6. **Read Isaiah 40.11.** The second phrase in this verse points to a particular facet of the shepherd's care for his flock - "*He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart.*"

What does this tell you about Jesus?

What lessons will this have for those who are called under God to exercise this shepherd-ministry within the life of the church?

**7. Read Isaiah 40.11.** The final phrase in this verse speaks of the lead which the shepherd gives - particularly here to *“those that have young.”*

What does the Lord mean us to understand by this reference?

Can you think of occasions when what’s said here about the shepherd has been well illustrated in your life?