

# GROWING IN THE LORD

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## PART I GROWING AS A CHRISTIAN

### Three Major Areas of Our Christian Growth

1. Growing as a *Christian* (Personal Christian growth)
2. Growing as a *Family*
3. Growing as a *Church*

### Key Verses (We are called to pursue spiritual growth):

1. 2 Peter 3:18
2. 1Peter 2:2
3. Eph.4:15
4. Colo.2:18-19

### What it is not:

- Not our position in Christ (salvation/new birth)
- Not just spiritual zeal or activities
- Not self improvement
- Not a mechanical process or a program (5 steps to...etc.)
- Not gathering data (knowledge, bible study, biblical scholarship etc)
- Not mystical passivity (just meditate, do nothing, “let God it for me” attitude)

### What is it then?

*Spiritual growth is the transformational process whereby the Holy Spirit produces spiritual maturity in a believer, resulting in spiritual discernment, fruitfulness and Christ-likeness of character.*

*“Christian maturity is the growth which the Holy Spirit produces over a period of time in the believer” (Charles Ryrie).*

*“That transformational process whereby I increasingly express my relationship with Christ who lives in me, and I expand my capacity to bring God greater glory, and bring me His greater good” (Tony Evans).*

### **Related Concepts**

**1Cori.3:1-4:** *Spiritual, mature.* “Spiritual” implies “mature.” Being “carnal” or “fleshly” denotes a condition of “babyhood.” The *natural man* is unsaved (1Cori.2:14). The *spiritual man* is saved and spiritually mature (2:15; 3:1). He has made progress in his spiritual life. The *carnal man* is a believer, but weak, still a spiritual babe, immature, and self-centered.

**Heb.5:11-6:1:** The Hebrew Christians were not making progress as they should have. They had not grown proportionately with the time they had professed faith in Christ. They were still in their spiritual infancy, desiring milk, and not solid food. This reminder is followed by a warning concerning failure to move forward to maturity (6:1-8). Throughout the book, the author reminds them who they were (past) who they are now (present), who they can be (future), and what are the dangers ahead.

Spiritual growth will result in spiritual progress, spiritual power, spiritual priorities, spiritual passions and spiritual pursuits.

*In the Bible, the word “maturity” seems to hold the key to the concept of spirituality or spiritual growth. “Godliness,” and “fear of God” are also related terms.*

### **It Includes:**

- Increasing in my knowledge, understanding, appreciation and application of God’s Word.
- Increasing in my faith and trust in God
- Increasing in my practice of Christ-like qualities
- Decreasing in my frequency and appetite for sin
- Matching my practice with my position
- Manifesting the acts of the flesh (Gala.5:19-21) less and producing the fruit of the Spirit (Gala.5:22-23) more and more.

### **The Key to Spiritual Growth**

Remember, there is no spiritual growth without spiritual birth.

The master key that unlocks the whole truth of spiritual growth is the *glory of God* (living for God's glory).

**2Peter 3:18:** Giving God glory is related to spiritual growth.

**2Cori.3:18:** What it means to glorify God

**1Cori.10:31:** Even the most common behavior and the very routine things are to be conducted for the glory of God.

### **Establishing Good Growth Habits (Practical steps toward your personal spiritual growth)**

1. A healthy, balanced spiritual diet. Personal Bible study & "quiet time." Make sure it is meaningful, beneficial and effective. Take responsibility for your spiritual health.
2. The importance of spiritual exercise – PRAYER. Prayer is indeed hard work, because it is a spiritual exercise. Roadblocks to effective prayer must be removed first.
3. The exercise of regular church attendance and fellowship.
4. The exercise of witnessing.
5. Develop intimacy with God
6. Enlist superior help. There is no greater help than the help of the Holy Spirit. He is the supreme helper. He also ministers to your needs through spiritually mature friends, family, mentors and the elders of your local church.
7. Learn to manage temptation.
8. If you fall down, don't stay down.
9. Follow great and godly examples which God shows to you in the life of others.
10. Keep your eye on the goal.

### **Reflection**

Are you feeling stagnant in your Christian life? Have you established good growth habits? What is the action plan you want to pursue for spiritual growth? Do you feel like your spiritual project to be a solo project? Whose help are you getting?

## **PART II**

### **GROWING AS A FAMILY**

**Psa.128:** Celebration of the blessings of a family growing together – father, mother and children. The believer who really enjoys the blessings of the Lord, is the one who acknowledges the Lord in every area of life and who walks in practical obedience to the Word of God.

**Psa.127:** God’s blessing is seen in three realms – building a house (family), protecting a city, and earning a living. In all three instances, the sovereign plan and blessing of God is far more crucial for the successful outcome than all human efforts combined.

**Back to the Basics (Gen.2:18-24; Eph.5:22-6:4; 1Pet.3:1-7; Colo.3:18-21; Titus 2:4-5; 1Tim.5:4, 8; Prov.22:6; Deut.6:4-9)**

1. **Establishing the Divine Order & Following it-** God’s blue print for the family. This includes God’s order for husbands, wives, and children. (headship, loving leadership, sacrificing, forgiving, being kind and compassionate, understanding, submitting, caring, providing, honoring, teaching, disciplining, instructing, obeying etc).
2. **Developing Practical Ways to Intensify Our Spiritual Growth As a Family (to be a Christ-centered Home)**
  - The Lordship of Christ in the home. Supreme priority for Him – Jesus the family’s Savior & Lord.
  - Developing and following values, policies, principles, and practices based upon the Lordship of Christ in the home.
  - The examples of parents – their values, habits, attitudes and priorities.
  - The priesthood of parents in the home. A privileged and unique ministry; called and ordained by God as priests unto their children – represent God to the children, and to represent the children to God.
  - Evangelistic ministry to the children – presenting the Gospel and leading them to salvation in Christ.
  - Family altar – the Word & Prayer
  - Spiritual training

- Spiritual encouragement
- Loving the Church and God's people and the importance of fellowship and church gatherings, and attending the church as a family.
- Commitment & involvement in Christian ministries.
- Christian giving, hospitality
- Awareness of missions

### **Reflection**

Think about creative ways through which we can develop more family-oriented ministries in our church.

Plan for special prayer and discussion times for parents to share their struggles, and to seek counsel and encouragement.

What concrete measures can be taken to boost the spiritual interest of our children and to help them to be committed to the local church?

## **PART III GROWING AS A CHURCH**

### **The Three-fold Ministries of the Church (Acts 2)**

1. Worship – upward dimension of the Church's ministry (God)
2. Edification – inward dimension of the Church's ministry (Believers)
3. Evangelism – outward dimension of the Church's ministry (World)

*The health and growth of a local church is vitally related to their commitment to the three-fold ministries of the church. These ministries are carried out within the four pillars of the Church.*

### **Four Pillars of the Church (Acts 2:42)**

1. Apostles' doctrine (teaching)
  2. Fellowship
  3. Breaking of Bread
  4. Prayer
- (See 2:42-47)

The ministry of the Church is also described as:

1. The Worship of the church
2. The Fellowship of the church
3. The Proclamation of the church
4. The Witness of the church

### **Our Mandate to Serve**

1. Serve God with spiritual gifts (Rom.12:3-8; 1Peter 4:7-10).
2. Find our place to serve. Find the area of service and serve there for the greater glory of God (Rom.12:4-6).
3. The manifestation of our service (1 Cori.12:7). It is the Holy Spirit's imprint on your service. The Holy Spirit manifests Himself through your service.

### **The Principles behind the Practice that Contribute to the Growth of the Church**

1. The doctrine of Spiritual Gifts
2. The doctrine of Ministry
3. The doctrine of the Priesthood of Every Believer

### **Discovering, Developing & Exercising Your Spiritual Gifts**

The doctrine of Spiritual Gifts is vitally important because the growth and maturity of the body of Christ depends on their proper functioning (Rom.12:3-8; Eph.4:7-16).

- Rom.12 begins with our responsibility to worship God, and then moves on to our responsibility to serve God in the context of the body of Christ, the church. Our worship has to lead to service.
- Every Christian has been given grace (serving grace or “grace-gifts”) that is designed to lead to God-honoring service in the church.
- Thinking realistically and with sound judgment about serving the Lord with your spiritual gifts is the first exercise of the renewed mind.

In the description and teaching of spiritual gifts the New Testament writers seem to assume that believers will know what their spiritual gifts are. Hence no detailed formula of discovering one's spiritual gifts is given in the NT. The following practical guideline may be of help:

1. Asking (praying)
2. Awareness through biblical teaching
3. Aspiration (desire and willingness to serve the Lord)
4. Activity (get involved in the ministries of your local church)
5. Ability (evidence of your giftedness)
6. Affirmation (the blessings that will accompany your service and others will confirm it).

(OR)

- By prayer
- Enlightened by study
- Indicated by desire
- Confirmed by ability
- Accompanied by blessings
- Recognized by others

### **Practical Insights from Two Passages**

**1. Hebrews 10:24-25:** stir people up for love and good works; encourage and exhort one another; assemble together regularly. We are one body ministering to one another and helping one another to grow.

**2. Ephesians 4:15:** growing up in all things happen in an environment of truth and love.

### **Reflection**

- Consider the importance of caring ministries in a hurting world/church. Have you seen people leaving churches because no body cared for them in their need?
- The book of Acts mentions both the qualitative and quantitative (numerical) growth of the church. What can we learn from this?
- The vital role of pastoral leadership in teaching, mentoring, equipping and developing a vision for growth.
- The greater need to encourage one another to serve and to discover/develop their spiritual gifts.
- Standing in unity of the Spirit, and with the spirit of love, with focused vision we can make things happen for God's glory.
- Where do you fit in the area of service in your local church? How can you contribute to the growth of the body of Christ? What are the hindrances? How can they be removed?

- How can we implement the Great commission more effectively through our ministries?
- Discuss the contemporary application of 2 Chronicles 15:3 to the topic of Growing as a Church.
- Prayerfully consider how we can plan and order various ministries of the church to effect more growth and blessing? What are the practical steps and changes that need to be done?