

HOW TO GROW AND MATURE SPIRITUALLY**THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE**

I, seeking to believe the best about every Christian (1 Cor. 13: 7), am convinced that Christians want to grow and become more mature spiritually. However, I am also convinced, perhaps through nothing more than my own life's experiences and observations, that many Christians do not know how to grow in spiritual maturity. Yes, there are scores of scriptures that teach that Christians are to grow in spiritual maturity—but the “how” of it is often left up to the individual to determine. So “how” does one grow?

**You must make a determination to grow.** Someone has said, “If you aim for nothing, you will hit it every time.” This adage is true with regard to everything in life, and particularly matters concerning spiritual growth. In order to grow, one must not only desire to grow but he also must establish goals that will help him chart a course that he can follow. Christianity is a “doing” religion. Without goals one hardly will have any idea of “how” he can begin to grow, nor will he have any real way of measuring whether or not he is growing.

**You must emulate a good pattern.** I really believe this is the key to proper spiritual growth. The use a pattern certainly has good precedence (Heb. 8:5). Christians are commanded to follow the example of Christ (1 Pet. 2:21). Paul teaches us that we can also follow godly people as they follow Christ in faith (1 Thes. 1: 6; 2 Thes. 3:7). Imagine trying to sew a dress with no pattern. Or, imagine trying to perform some technical action without instructions to follow. Patterns make tasks understandable and easier to perform. In the realm of growing in spiritual maturity, one must certainly follow Christ—but one also should connect with someone at the local congregation who is spiritually mature. Making this connection will enable an individual to witness first hand what it means to live as a Christian. Undoubtedly, in such a relationship, one will get to experience different types of visits, different acts of kindness or thoughtfulness, Bible studies in homes, and many other things related to living a faithful Christian life. Some might wonder if the one who is mature will mind the company. I can say personally that I know of no one who would mind—in fact—there is nothing but pure joy knowing that someone else desires to grow in spiritual maturity and live a faithful Christian life! Over a period of time, you will learn to do the things that the spiritually mature do—and then hopefully you will mentor someone else who is in the same boat in which you used to be (cf. 2 Tim 2:2).

**You must consistently put into practice what you see.** The hardest part of doing anything is typically starting it. Unless one starts, he cannot grow. An individual wanting to grow in spiritual maturity must determine to put God first in all things. He must decide to get out of the recliner and turn off the television. He must make the time to do the things God demands that he do. He will likely need to rearrange his priorities and deny himself in the process (Matt. 10: 37-39). When a person takes the steps and actively begins to live the Christian life, he will likely find that it takes relatively little time to do a lot of good. You see, when a person lives for others, his own life becomes even more enjoyable in every area (family, work, responsibilities, recreation, etc.).

What are some of the benefits of growing in spiritual maturity? You will have a

*“...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel...” (Amos 7:8)*

**ANCIENT FIREWORKS**

Text: \_\_\_\_\_

I. A \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

II. A \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

III. A \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

**THE NEEDED CURE**

Text: \_\_\_\_\_

I. His \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

II. The \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

III. His \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

greater sense of God’s love in your life. When you mirror Jesus’ life, your life will be the “abundant life” of which the master spoke. You will have a greater appreciation for all of the Bible truths related to faithful Christian living. You will also have an improved attitude toward faithful Bible preaching. Sermons that used to bore, or possibly offend, will now sound like golden nuggets of truth. Your desire for more truth will be insatiable. Within a congregational context, the effect will be tremendous. Brethren will have an increased love for one another and an increased desire to work together in unity, and thus, they will be blessed by God in their efforts.

The importance of growing in spiritual maturity cannot be overstated. Imagine a room full of immature individuals who are given a goal and task to accomplish together. Likely, in such an environment of immaturity, there would be arguments, unhappiness, selfishness, disrespect, gossip, back talking, quitting, hurt feelings, and horrible attitudes. Such a group would have no chance of accomplishing the task set forth for them to do. But imagine the same room filled with mature people who are given the same goal and task. In stark contrast to the room of immature people, this room reflects great communication, fulfillment, cooperation, selflessness, respect, desire to achieve what was asked, and wonderful attitudes. Congregations made up of a majority of spiritually immature people reflect exactly what was described in the room above containing immature individuals. Congregations made up of spiritually mature individuals often are the ones who stand out as accomplishing great works for the Lord.

Peter wrote, “...giving all diligence to add (choreograph is meaning of “add,” mdd) to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1: 5-8). All Christians must be striving to grow in spiritual maturity. When all Christians determine that they will grow, choose a good pattern to emulate, and begin to consistently put into practice what they learn and see, then the Lord’s church will be well on its way to producing fruit for God.

*-Mike Dugger*

LOVE

It is alarming to see brethren who claim to be children of God “bite and devour one another” and if they are not careful they will be “consumed one of another”. This contention is not defending doctrine, but a matter of judgment. It is a sin, the sin of disposition. This should not be, because we have been called out of sin to live **holy lives** before God and are designated as saints (1 Cor. 1:2).

Being part of one another we are described as being members of a body (1 Cor. 12:12, 27). When all is proper with a physical family, they enjoy brotherly love, (philia). Barclay’s comments on the noun “philia”, and the verb “phelein” states, “There is a lovely warmth about these words. They mean to look on someone with affectionate regard—best translated ‘to church’—they have in them all the warmth of real affection—all beautified words to express a beautiful relationship— closeness and affection”. God has planned for His spiritual family to practice and rejoice in love of the brethren (Heb. 13:1; 1 Pet. 1:22; 2 Pet. 1:7).

First Corinthians 1:10 tells us we are brethren in Christ. What does it mean to say we have Jesus Christ as our Lord? **Lord** implies servants who are to obey. **Jesus** implies that sinners are to be saved by His grace. **Christ** which means prophet, priest, and king implies the necessity of believing His word, accepting His sacrifice for sin and obeying Him, for all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Him (Mat. 28:19,20). This divine name is, in itself, a strong appeal to abandon this ugly spirit (1 Pet. 2:21-23).

God gives us another word in the Bible that is to direct our lives. If we fail in this we are taking a disastrous path because it eventually results in the damnation of the soul. That word is love (agape). William Barclay:

Agapan (verb form) has none of the warmth that characterizes philein—There is a warmth in philein, not in agapan—agape has to do with the mind; it is not simply an emotion which arises unbidden on our hearts; it is a principle by which we **deliberately** live.

Agape has supremely to do with the will. It is a conquest, a victory, an achievement—The basis of every conceivable right relationship is the love (agape).

If I have agape love it means I will try to think, speak, and act toward you in the way that is best for you, not for me, regardless of my feelings about you.

Why should people love? God has so commanded (1 John 5:2,3; 2 John 6; Rom. 13:10). Love is the synonym of “God”.

Love transmutes every thread throughout the whole web of relation into a golden ray, and bathes the soul in a new and sweeter element. Love hides a multitude of evil. Everything is beautiful viewed from the point of **love**.

“Love is a fire that kindles its first embers in the narrow nook of a private bosom caught from a wondering spark out of another private heart, which glows and enlarges until it warms and beams upon multitudes of men and women.”

Love is omnipresent in nature. Oh, how much tenderness, how much devotion, how much sacrifice is couched in this little word of four letters.

Think how many poor souls are groping their way in darkness and despair, how many are fainting by the wayside, and how many are sinking into perdition daily for the lack of love.

God is love (1 John 4:16). How can I be a follower of God and fail to practice love? It takes practice to make anything perfect in anything. The word is not a playground, but a school room; life is not a holiday but an education; and the one final lesson for us all is, to learn to love.

Love “thinks no evil,” imputes no motives, sees only the bright side, and puts the best construction on every action. Can you think of anything more needed in this cold uncharitable world than “love”? It is possible to cry, Lord, Lord, very loudly, and to have none of the spirit of Christ (Mat. 7:21-23).

-E.L. Whitaker