

## Continuing To Grow

### Int.

1. Aim: To show that growth is necessary in all areas of life: business, science & industry .
2. Spiritual growth is necessary in the life of a Christian
  - a. Eph. 4:14-15 "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15. But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:"
  - b. 1 Pet. 2:2 NKJV "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby:"
  - c. 2 Pet. 3:18 NKJV "but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen."
  - d. 2 Thes. 1:3 "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;" Exceedingly = increase above ordinary degree
  - e. Any living organism that does not grow will soon die.
3. But spiritual growth must be well-rounded, balanced growth
  - a. The Christian must grow in knowledge, in zeal, in faith, in Christ-like character, in good works - Rom. 10:2 "zeal without knowledge"
  - b. The Christian must not be full of knowledge while his disposition remains un-Christlike
  - c. Prayer of a child: "God help the good people to be nice".
4. This lesson is intended to help us continue growing ever closer to God and more productive in our service to Jesus Christ, and to help us to be nice.

### Discussion

## I. HINDRANCES TO GROWTH

### A. LACK OF EFFORT

1. Growing in Christ is not automatic
2. One may still be a "babe" after many years - "old baby"
  - a. Heb. 5:13 ESV "for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child." Babe = KJV Infant = TCNT
  - b. 1 Cor. 3:1,2 "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. 2. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able."
3. Growth requires effort, but those who are spiritually lazy will simply follow the course of least resistance; such will forever remain "babes", if they do not fall away altogether

### B. DISCOURAGEMENT

1. Some people make a good beginning, but get discouraged and quit
2. Reasons may vary: church troubles, personal problems, lack of encouragement from others, etc.
3. But consider the example of the apostle Paul:
  - a. Few of us would ever have the problems he had - 2 Cor. 11:24-29
  - b. Yet he did not "lose heart" (become discouraged) - 2 Cor. 4:8-9 "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9. Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;"
  - c. Why? Because he knew his labor was not in vain - 2 Cor. 4:16-5:1

4. And so he encourages us not to grow weary in doing good
  - a. Gal. 6:9 "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Faint not = lose heart
  - b. 1 Cor. 15:58 "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

### C. THE LAW OF DISUSE

1. A knife stays bright when used, but unused it becomes rusty
2. So it is with Christians, we lose what knowledge, ability, and opportunity we have when we do not use them!
3. To use another metaphor, unless we are earnest in our endeavor, we will simply "drift away" from the Lord - Heb. 2:1
4. Parable of Talents - Mt. 25:29 "For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

### D. THE LAW OF INTERFERENCE

1. Crops, trees and flowers do not grow well when crowded
2. So our spiritual growth will be hindered if we allow others to crowd out our spiritual life
  - a. Businessmen may become too busy to attend to God's business

### E.

- a. A woman may get so occupied with housekeeping that she has little time for God
  - b. Young people may be so busy with school activities that prayer, worship, good works and Bible study are crowded out
  - c. Preachers might get so tied down with meetings, administrative duties, etc., that they too do not have time to spend alone with God
2. Jesus warned about the danger of interference - Mark 4:18-19 "And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, 19. And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful." To strangle, drown
  3. In an effort to prevent succumbing to these hindrances, here are some...

## **II. SUGGESTIONS FOR CONTINUING YOUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

### **A. BECOME ACTIVE IN THE WORK OF THE CONGREGATION**

1. Begin immediately!
  - a. It is important not to delay (remember the "hindrances")
  - b. There is work for everyone, and it is best to start with something you are able to handle
  - c. Even the most humble service can be a source of joy for those who are doing it to please God
  - d. Ps. 84:10 "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."
  - e. Jn 13:12-17

2. Offer your services to the elders!
  - a. These men will be glad to find work for you to do in keeping with your ability
  - b. Sometimes they hesitate to call on people for work if they are not sure the people are willing
  - c. But let them know that you have the attitude of Isaiah: "Here am I! Send me." - Isa. 6:8
  
3. Look for work needing to be done!
  - a. The best servant is one who can see things to be done and does them without having to be told every step to take
  - b. Most of us are good critics; here is how we can put that ability to good use:
    - (1) Whenever we see something we want to criticize, take that as an opportunity to SHOW (not tell) how it should be done
    - (2) Someone else's failure is often our opportunity to be of service
    - (3) In other words, "Don't criticize, energize!"

## B. START A PROGRAM OF REGULAR PRIVATE DEVOTIONS

1. Spend time each day alone with God, engaged in prayer, Bible study, singing praises
2. Such time consistently spent will supply the spiritual nourishment necessary for spiritual growth
3. Many Christians do not grow because they try to exist on a "spiritual starvation diet"!

### C. BECOME INVOLVED IN LEADING PEOPLE TO CHRIST

1. Begin looking for people who will be interested in studying the Bible.
2. Even if you don't do the actual teaching, you can do what Andrew and Philip did: lead a friend to Christ! - John 1:40-46
3. Those involved in leading others to Christ rarely ever stop growing in Christ themselves!

### D. PRACTICE CONSTANT SELF-EXAMINATION

1. The Scriptures call us to examine ourselves in our relation to Christ - 2 Cor. 13:5  
ESV "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!"
2. Here are some questions we should often ask ourselves:
  - a. Do I have a better Bible knowledge than one year ago?
  - b. Am I as interested in Jesus Christ today as when I was baptized?
  - c. Have I helped someone else to become a Christian?
  - d. Am I enjoying life as a child of God?
  - e. Am I improving my life, my disposition, and becoming more like Christ?
  - f. Do I set a good example for other Christians?
  - g. Am I growing in such activities as Bible study, prayer, worship?
3. Self-examination is not an easy process, but true spiritual growth is impossible without it!

## CONCLUSION

1. If we implement the suggestions in this lesson we will successfully embark on a spiritual journey with Christ that will last through eternity!
  2. It is sad, but true, that many Christians are often just religious enough to be miserable; but the life of the Christian is intended to be one filled with love, joy, peace, and so much more! - Gal. 5:22-23
  3. It is my prayer that this lesson may be useful in helping you to truly experience the ABUNDANT LIFE that Jesus provides! - Jn 10:10
  4. "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it." 1 Thes. 5:23-24
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