

HOW TO GROW AND MATURE SPIRITUALLY

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 of 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 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, dis- respect, 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 from *Sapulpa Bulletin*

ILL

Sunday: John Cody Carter; Millie Robertson (PM); Clara Scott (PM).

Wednesday: Clara Scott; Millie Robertson.

Clara Scott has been receiving outpatient treatment on her leg at the wound center. Leta Thrasher had surgery on Thursday, December 10 at Cox South in Springfield, Missouri and was dismissed on Friday.

Those battling cancer: Ledgia Campbell, David Cole, Shauna Heck, Betty James and Cleo Stone. Please remember these in your prayers.

HOME BOUND

Kathleen Camp is in Room 101 at the Royal Terrace Nursing Home in Olathe. Barbara James' Aunt, Evelyn Marquardt is at Sharon Lane in Shawnee. Please remember these in your prayers and visitation.

OUT OF TOWN

Wilba Hopkins is visiting relatives in Springfield, Missouri this weekend. Chris Edwards was away on business last week.

MEN'S BUSINESS MEETING

Our monthly Men's Business Meeting will be held this Sunday, December 13, following our AM worship. All men of the congregation are encouraged to attend.

SATURDAY SEMINAR

There will be a Saturday Seminar at the 39th Street congregation on December 19. The theme is "*What If...*" with lessons at 9:30 AM, 10:30 AM, and 11:30 AM. See the flyer on the bulletin board for titles and speakers.

ATTENDANCE

Sunday AM, 51; Sunday PM, 35; Wednesday PM, 31.

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Ephesians 6:10-11

Those To Serve

December 13, 2009

BUILDING AND COMMUNION.....Cole

MORNING WORSHIP

ANNOUNCEMENTS..... Joel Nelson
SONG LEADER..... Trent Thrasher
OPENING PRAYER Chris Edwards
PRESIDE..... George Thomas
ASSIST..... Jared Nelson
ASSIST..... Steven Schleif
CLOSING PRAYER..... Jeff Nemechek

EVENING WORSHIP

OPENING PRAYER John Cody Carter
CLOSING PRAYER..... Stanley Anderson
LORD'S SUPPER..... George Thomas

WEDNESDAY Dec. 16th

SONG LEADER..... Trent Thrasher
INVITATION Ted Thrasher

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday

Bible Study..... 9:30 AM
Morning Worship..... 10:30 AM
Evening Worship..... 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Ladies Bible Study 10:00 AM
Bible Study..... 7:00 PM

Preacher: Ted J. Thrasher

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