

Growth in Christ

...*We may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ*
Ephesians 4:15

1. Not the increase of gifts, knowledge, or power

1 Corinthians 13:8

Love never falls *away*. But whether prophecies, they will be rendered useless; or tongues, they will cease; or knowledge, it will be rendered useless.

1 Corinthians 12:29b

...Do all *have* works of power?

2. The increase of God in us

Colossians 2:19

And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.

3. Christ making His home in our heart

Ephesians 3:17a

That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith...

4. Our cooperation

Proverbs 28:13

He who covers his transgressions will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes *them* will obtain mercy.

1 Peter 2:2

As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation,

Romans 8:14

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Growth in Christ

Not the increase of gifts, knowledge or power

In 1 Corinthians 1:5 and 7, Paul told the Corinthians that they had all knowledge and lacked no gifts. But then he said in 3:1 that he could not speak to them as to spiritual. He told them that they were still carnal, fleshly babes in Christ. This is why we say that Bible knowledge and gifts in themselves do not help. The Corinthians had both, but were very short in growth. We are not opposed to Bible knowledge; neither are we opposed to the gifts. But today the Christian life is not a matter of knowledge or gifts—it is a matter of growth in life. It is good that you have Bible knowledge but do not stop here. You must go on. Knowledge may be a bridge to bring you from one side to the other, but do not stay on that bridge. You need to go on to life.¹

In 1 Corinthians 3 we see the growth, the transformation, and the building with precious materials. Bible knowledge is good, but do not remain there. We all must grow. The Lord is looking for the building which comes out of the growth in life and the transformation by life. Nothing else can satisfy Him.

To perfect the believers is not simply to teach them the Bible. To perfect the believers is a matter of feeding them and of helping them to grow. Ephesians 4:15 says that we need to grow up into the Head in all things. Then verse 16 says that after growing up into the Head, we must all be fitted and knit together by every joint of supply, according to the operation in measure of each part. This is the way that the Body, the church, is built up directly.

Do not be distracted by anything. Bible knowledge may help, but do not be distracted by it. Gifts may help, but do not be frustrated by them. After using these bridges to get from one side to another, leave them and go on to the growth in life that will produce adequate and proper transformation. Then we will have gold, pearls, and precious stones for God's building. God's intention is to have a building.²

The increase of God in us

The increase of the element of God means that more of God Himself has been mingled with us and received by us to become our

element. Therefore, the real growth of life is the increase of God's life within us. Life is God Himself. When life grows in us, God is increased in us. Life grows and increases to an extent that we may be filled unto all the fullness of God. This is the final word of Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3.³

The building up of the Body of Christ is the increase of God in the believers for their growth in Christ. Colossians 2:19 says, "Holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, by means of the joints and bands being supplied and knit together, grows with the growth of God." "Grows with the growth of God" may also be translated "grows with the increase of God." God is increasing in us in His essence essentially. It is by this essential increase of God in us that the church as the Body of Christ grows.

A cup may have water inside of it, but what is the quantity of water within the cup? As the water increases within the cup, the water eventually overflows from the cup. This overflow is the fullness of the water. When the water is overflowing from the cup, the water can be seen. God is within us, but is He overflowing from within us? How much of God is in us? Do we have "two gallons" of God within us, or is God only within us in a small amount? God needs to increase in us.

The Spirit of God is God's divine essence, His divine element. When we receive the Spirit of God, we receive God Himself in His essence. We have received God Himself essentially, but how much of God is within us? God Himself essentially needs to increase in us. This is why we have to be filled with the Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit is to receive God essentially, to let God fill us essentially in full. This is to let God increase within us, to let God grow in us.⁴

Christ making His home in our heart

The Christian life is not a matter of good character or good works. It is altogether a matter of growth into Christ in particular things. By growing day by day in Christ, we gradually put off the old social life and put on the church the new man as the new community life. As we grow, we take Christ both as our life and as our person. Growth depends upon Christ making His home in our hearts. If we do not give Christ the opportunity to make

Key Verses

1 Corinthians 3:1 And I, brothers, was not able to speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to fleshy, as to infants in Christ.

Colossians 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.

Ephesians 3:17-19 That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are and to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.

1 Peter 2:2 As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation

Romans 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Growth depends upon Christ making His home in our hearts

His home in us, we can neither take Him as our person nor have the genuine growth in Christ. We grow in Christ only by taking Him as our person. The more we take Christ as our person, the more we grow up into Christ in particular things.⁵

Whenever a person moves into a new house, it takes him a while to become settled in that house. His getting settled is his making his home in the house. This is what Paul means by Christ making His home in our hearts. Christ wants to become settled in every part of our heart. Paul realized that the believers in Ephesus had Christ in them, but that they did not have Christ making His home, getting Himself settled, in every part of their heart. This is why Paul prayed such a prayer. Our emotion, mind, will, and conscience must be touched by Christ and gained by Christ. The indwelling, occupying Christ needs to take over our emotion, our mind, our will, and our conscience until He gets Himself fully settled in all the inner rooms of our inner being.

While Christ is making His home in our hearts, we are rooted for growth and grounded for building. Christ making His home in our hearts is a matter in faith, not a matter of sensation. We must believe that today Christ as the very embodiment of the Triune God is settling Himself in our inner being. While He is doing this, we are rooted for growth and grounded for building in love.⁶

Our cooperation

An elderly Christian was once asked by a brother concerning the secret to Christian growth. He answered by asking, "When was the last time you made a confession?" The brother did not understand what this meant. He wondered if confession had to be made daily, as often as taking a meal, and he admitted that he had not made a confession for a few years. Later he found out what the elderly Christian had meant. A Christian grows by making confessions. When a man confesses to God what he has sinned against God, and confesses to man what he has sinned against man, he grows spiritually.

Proverbs 28:13 says, "He who covers his transgressions will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy." Brothers and sisters, we have to realize that all of our former sins must be confessed thoroughly. If we have sinned against man, we have to confess to man. If we have sinned against God, we have to confess to God.⁷

You may say that you are walking according to the Spirit, but then a time comes when you are desirous to exchange an unpleasant word with your roommate. That is the time for you to be led by the Spirit. This means to let the Spirit kill your exchanging tongue, your word-exchanging activity. Every time you kill a practice of the body by the Spirit, that is actually being led by the Spirit.⁸

If we do not live and walk according to this leading of the Spirit, we may be the children of God concerning which the Spirit witnesses with our spirit in crying, "Abba, Father," but we do not have the mark that designates us as the sons of God. We may be God's children, but we do not have the growth which comes by living and walking according to the leading of the Spirit in life. The leading of the Spirit marks us out as being the sons of God in the growth of life.

The children of God are in the initial stage of the divine life, the stage which mainly concerns the birth, while the sons of God are in a more advanced stage, the stage which concerns the growth in life. All real Christians are children of God, having the witness of the Spirit with their spirit, but not all have the mark that they are the sons of God who are growing in the divine life and living and walking according to the leading of the Spirit. Therefore, we all must move forward in the growth in life from the initial stage of

being the children of God to the more advanced stage, showing that we are the sons of God by bearing the distinct mark of the leading of the Spirit in life.⁹

Assignment

Take some time before the Lord to consecrate the remainder of this academic year to grow normally every day.

Prayer Assignment

Pray Paul's prayer for growth in Ephesians 3:16-19 at least three times in the coming week.

Additional Daily Verses

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
1 Corinthians 3:6	Hebrews 6:1	Colossians 2:19	Ephesians 3:16- 19	1 Peter 2:2-3	Proverbs 28:13	Romans 8:14, 16

Weekly Memorization Verses

Ephesians 3:17

That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love

Proverbs 28:13

He who covers his transgressions will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.