

Spiritual Growth

By Pastor Kelly Sensenig

Roy Robertson was a soldier at Pearl Harbor in 1941. He said: "My ship, the West Virginia, docked at Pearl Harbor on the evening of December 6, 1941. A couple of the fellows and I left the ship that night and attended a Bible study. About fifteen sailors sat in a circle on the floor. The leader asked us to each recite our favorite Scripture verse. In turn each sailor shared a verse and briefly commented on it.

I sat there in terror. I couldn't recall a single verse. I grew up in a Christian home, went to church three times a week, but I sat there terrified. Finally, I remembered one verse - John 3:16. I silently rehearsed it in my mind. The spotlight of attention grew closer as each sailor took his turn. It was up to the fellow next to me. He recited John 3:16. He took my verse! As he commented on it I sat there in stunned humiliation. In a few moments everyone would know that I could not recall from memory even a single verse. Later that night I went to bed thinking, 'Robertson, you're a fake.'

At 7:55 the next morning I was awakened by the ship alarm ordering us to battle stations. 360 planes of the Japanese Imperial Fleet were attacking our ship and the other military installations. My crew and I raced to our machine gun emplacement, but all we had was practice ammunition. So for the first fifteen minutes of the two-hour battle, we only fired blanks hoping to scare the Japanese airplanes.

As I stood there firing fake ammunition I thought, 'Robertson, this is how your whole life has been - firing blanks for Christ.' I made up my mind as Japanese bullets slammed into our ship, 'If I escape with my life, I will get serious about growing in my Christian life and following Jesus.' Roy Robertson did get serious. He became the first missionary of "The Navigators" and did a lot of evangelistic work throughout the years.

Friend, have you been experiencing growth and maturity in the Lord or have you been firing blanks for Jesus Christ? Has your spiritual growth been stunted? Are you only playing the game of Christianity or are you really serious about growing in your Christian life, getting closer to the Lord, and serving Him? In this study, we are going to examine where each one of us is at in relation to our spiritual growth and

discover how we can grow deeper in our walk and maturity with God. Growing again and developing in our Christian life in a greater way should sound exciting to us. We need spiritual advancement and growth so that we might find true fulfillment in life and stay on the

With God's help we can experience spiritual growth.

This truth about growth is presented in two steps.

I. By learning how to grow (the way of growth)

The Bible reveals two ways to grow.

A. Through the Word of God

1 Peter 2:1-2

“Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.”

1. Stunting our spiritual growth - vs. 1

Verse one speaks of our old way of life and what stunts our spiritual growth and advancement. Sometimes children have no appetite for the good things because they have been eating the wrong things (spiritual junk food). Peter is warning us to “lay aside” certain wrong attitudes of heart that would hinder our appetite for true spiritual growth.

Some examples are given. We can be filled with “malice” (wicked thoughts and actions against God and others) and “guile” and “hypocrisies” (living a pretend Christian life and double standard – one foot in the church and one foot in the world). We can also be envious of others and as a result find ourselves speaking against them in some way. The Bible calls this “evil speakings.” This type of speaking not only includes worldly and vulgar talk but also tearing others apart with backbiting and gossip).

I can assure you that you are not growing if these wrong attitudes are hidden in your heart. You have become stagnate in your spiritual growth. When it comes to “evil speaking” in relation to gossiping about others I can tell you this: If you are moaning – you are not growing! When Christians are growing in the Word, they are peacemakers, not troublemakers, and they promote the unity of the church so we can then grow together with God!

2. Stabilizing our spiritual growth – vs. 2

a. We need milk

This verse explains the way of stable and consistent spiritual growth by using a figure of speech. He views the Bible (God’s Word) as a bottle of milk and says that we must drink it (assimilate it, apply it to our personal lives on a daily and consistent basis), if we are going to grow in our spiritual lives. How does this happen? It’s by listening to God’s Word, accepting the Word of God, applying the Word to your daily life, and acting upon it, allowing it to transform us.

The imagery Peter gives is of an infant child needing milk to grow. If a child is going to grow physically, he needs milk. By comparison, if we are going to grow spiritually, we need the spiritual milk of God’s Word, which provides us with the spiritual nutrition that we need to keep growing in our Christian experience. We grow by nutrition and this nutrition comes by applying God’s truth to our lives. Christian friend, if you get lazy in your personal devotions, church attendance, and application of God’s Word to your daily life (applying it to your thought life, your actions, conduct, and character) then you will impede your growth and find yourself lacking spiritual advancement.

We grow by getting the right nutrition and our spiritual nutrition comes through applying God’s Word to our lives on a daily and moment by moment basis. We not only grow by learning and knowing right doctrine but by the application of doctrine and all the teachings of Scripture to our lives. In doing this, we can allow God to make us into what He wants us to be, we learn to make better judgments, move in the right direction, and allow our lives to advance spiritually.

b. We need meat

The Bible is comparable to spiritual nutrition that we need in order to grow not only here in Peter (the milk of the word) but also the meat of God's Word.

Hebrews 5:13-14

"For every one that useth milk *is* unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

In Peter's passage the "milk" of the Word is viewed as the overall spiritual nutrition of God's Word. In this passage, a different context, the writer is contrasting milk and meat. In this section of the Bible "milk" refers to the simple teachings found in the Bible (salvation and service) while "meat" is referencing the more advanced and deeper teachings of the Word of God (aspects related to sanctification and righteous living – "the word of righteousness" that needs to be applied to one's life). If we are "unskilled" in the Bible we won't grow and we set ourselves up to be "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14). We can be led down the primrose path of compromise and heartache. By obeying the light (revelation) we receive from God's word, we can form proper spiritual judgments and save ourselves from moral and doctrinal dangers.

We need both milk and meat to grow! We can only grow by nutrition. The problem with many Christians today is that they have become "dull of hearing" (Heb. 5:11). Their ears and hearts are not really open and in tune to God's Word and they are not getting it from many pulpits today which have simply become a sounding board for what the people want to hear!

We grow by nutrition which comes through hearing, applying, and doing what God tells us in His Word. Jeremiah 15:16 speaks of this spiritual nutrition found in the Bible: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts."

When I was on a music tour during my college days, an older man came up to me holding his Bible in the air, waiving it in front of me, and said, "I eat this book. I love this book. I eat it every day." What he meant was that he was assimilating and applying the Bible to his life every day! He was absorbing it and allowing it to transform him. Beloved, we can't experience growth and maturity unless we are growing in the Word of God.

When I read the Bible I should ask myself these questions:

- Is there some doctrine I must learn?
- Is there a command for me to obey?
- Is there a lesson for me to learn?
- Is there some change I need to make in my life?
- Is there a sin I must forsake or confess?
- How can I make this passage real in my life?

This is how we grow in relationship to studying the Bible and applying it to our lives.

Football players react to the football being hiked. They watch the quarterback and when he gets the ball they are off in an instant. They are block each other, go after the quarterback, they are running downfield to try and catch or intercept the football. There are players running everywhere all because they reacted to the football. You know, we need to react to the Word of God! We need to respond to what the Bible is teaching and conveying to us. This is God's Word for us today. It's God speaking to us! It's God wanting to direct our lives. Have we been reacting to the Bible?

1 Peter 2:2

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

In this context, the phrase "as newborn babes" does not necessarily mean that Peter's readers were new believers; however, they may have been saved for several or many years. What the metaphor of a baby drinking milk is teaching and means is that at any stage of our Christian life, we must be hungry for God's Word, similar to a baby which is thirsty for a bottle. We get some idea of the thirst of a healthy baby by the impatient, aggressive, determined way that a baby sucks and swallows milk.

We are talking about stabilizing our spiritual growth in this point. Now let's expand on this point.

How can we be sure that we will grow?

1. Desire growth (“desire”) – 2a

We went to the famous Chick Fila on a Monday night during the holiday season. Let me give you some good advice. Don’t go there on a weekday between Christmas and New Year! It gets really full and packed with people and screaming kids. Anyway, after we were done eating, it was time for my grandson to drink his milk out of a bottle. So we all sat there and watched him drink. This little boy was excited for his bottle. When the bottle was placed on the table in front of him he started a new type of dance routine, bopping up and down, because he was so excited about drinking more of that milk.

This is the picture that Peter gives to us in this verse. We can’t grow unless we are like a baby that is impatiently, aggressively determined to get a bottle of milk. We must “desire” (crave, long for it with all of our hearts). The word used here denotes a very strong emotion, a burning or intense desire, or passion fixed upon something.

The word “desire” is comparable to:

- The strong desire a husband or wife has for a spouse
- The strong physical craving that accompanies extreme hunger
- The longings one has to see a deceased loved one
- The intense desire a Christian parent has for a spiritually wayward child to repent and return to obedience
- The strong desires believers have for the salvation of an unbelieving family member or close friend.

Are we really thirsty today for the milk of God’s Word? If we really are thirsty for it, we will study more than we do, be more faithful to church than we are, and stay committed to our devotional reading and time with God. Thirsty Christians are nourished Christians and nourished Christians are growing Christians! How thirsty are you for the milk of God’s Word?

Psalm 119:174

“I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD; and thy law *is* my delight.”

Psalm 42:1

“As the hart (deer) panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.”

We thirst for God only when we thirst for truth. We get to know God through the Book that He gave us. Knowing God comes through knowing what God is like and we can only discover this through reading God's Word. What is your true desire and longing in life? How thirsty are you to drink or apply and appropriate God's truth to your life? How much do you really desire to know and apply the Scriptures to your daily life?

2. Don't seek growth outside the Bible ("sincere") - 2b

There are many things in this world that can deter and dampen our spiritual growth – selfishness, sin, worldliness, business, and a lack of solid Bible teaching and learning. We need to be in a church where we can grow. If we are not being fed the "word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15) then we are not going to mature in our Christian lives. We can't grow on substitutes, replacements, and quack remedies for spiritual growth. We can only grow by nutrition (the milk of the word) from the absolute standard of truth.

For this reason, we must learn to drink from what is termed the "sincere" ("adolos" = unadulterated, uncontaminated, pure and without deceit) truth of God's Word. When we come to God's Word, we can know that what it says and how it directs our lives is the right way, the pure way, the truthful way. There is no deceit, trickery, and spiritual flaw in what God's Word is saying to us. Therefore, instead of following the gurus of church growth, the imitation remedies for spiritual growth, we need to get back to the "sincere" (pure, wholesome) and ONLY way to grow through listening, studying, and applying the Word to our daily lives. Once again, the Word of God is "sincere" meaning that it is pure and there are no flaws in it.

Psalm 19:8-9 brings this truth out:

"The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether."

Psalm 119:140

"Thy word *is* very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it."

Stay in the book and you will maintain Christian growth in your life. Stay in the Bible and you will not flounder in your life. It is the only reliable source and book that will

bring spiritual growth and advancement into our lives. Don't fall for that which is not pure, wholesome, or contaminated. Worldly philosophies and errant teachings (self-esteem, pop-psychology, mind sciences, seeking the baptism of the Holy Spirit) will stunt your growth. They are cheap imitations that won't change you. The only true way to grow is through the Word of God.

When Warren Wiersbe was a child, he did not like to drink milk (and he said that his father worked for the Borden Dairy!). He shared how his mother used to add various syrups and powders to make his milk tastier. But he said none of them really ever worked. This is what Peter is teaching us. There are no replacements for the "sincere" (pure, unmixed, unadulterated truth of God's Word).

It is sad when Christians have NO appetite for God's Word, but must be "fed" religious entertainment and Christian Rock Music and other kinds of substitutes. The only way to grow is through applying God's absolute standard of truth to our hearts and lives – everything else is simply a cheap imitation that does not work!

3. Determine to maintain growth ("ye have tasted") – vs. 3

1 Peter 2:3 adds these words:

"If so be ye have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious."

Peter is saying that since these saints had already experienced the spiritual blessing of the Lord in their lives of salvation and spiritual growth, they should continue to seek this same blessing and remain focused on growing spiritually. This is not the "if" of doubt, but certainty (we might understand it like this: since ye have tasted). Peter's final remark "if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord," is an "if" that in Greek is called a first-class condition, which simply means that it is a fact. They had already tasted the Lord's grace and kindness (in both salvation and spiritual growth).

Since it was true that they had already experienced the Lord's grace or kindness in bringing salvation and growth into their lives, this wonderful reality should motivate them to continue to experience more spiritual growth in their lives. Why? It's because this act of God's kindness or grace in saving their souls and giving spiritual meaning to their lives was so sweet and wonderful.

Peter already stated in verse 2 “that ye may grow thereby” (Grow!) and now adds: “If so be (since) ye have (already) tasted that the Lord *is* gracious.” In other words, we can keep on growing since we have already experienced growth in your lives, since we have already tasted how good it is, and since the first taste will keep us coming back for more or the same!

If something is sweet (tastes good) you normally go back for more! Caramel popcorn is one of my favorite sweet things. You can’t just eat one bite. You know what happens. You go back for more God’s grace being experienced in our lives (His growth and blessing) causes us to go back for more!

Because we have already tasted of God’s kindness (since we have already tasted of God’s blessing through spiritual growth), it should whet our appetites to feed more and more on His Word and continue to grow and receive His blessing upon our lives. Once you taste your favorite ice-cream, you should go back for more of the same! Right? Sure it is! This is why many times you order the same flavor of ice-cream. The point is this; once we’ve tasted of the real thing (spiritual growth), we should keep going back for the real thing instead of the substitutes of this world. God’s initial work of grace in our hearts and lives should stir us on to want more of the same gracious work of spiritual growth and enrichment.

Psalm 34:8, “O taste and see that the LORD *is* good: blessed *is* the man *that* trusteth in him.” It is a serious thing to “taste and see that the LORD is good” (Ps. 34:8) and then to turn away from Him, craving the carnal things of this world. The children of Israel did this when they were on their way to Canaan. The Lord fed His pilgrim people in the wilderness with “manna from heaven” and gave them instructions for the daily gathering of its bounty (Exod. 16:4-31). The Bible which we possess today is our manna from heaven! However, it wasn’t long before the people began to criticize and complain. “Give us flesh to eat,” they said, and then, adding insult to injury, they continued, “We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic: but now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes” (Num. 11:4-6).

Christians are like this today. They view the manna of God’s Word as insufficient to satisfy them and keep them spiritually fit for the journey. But God’s manna is enough! Well, God gave them the flesh after which they lusted (quale) and sent

judgment with it (Numb. 11:18-35). The psalmist drew the spiritual lesson accurately. He said, "And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul" (Ps. 106:15). Christian friend, we had better remember where the true food is found! It's found in Scripture and if we start desiring the delights of the world, we will discover leanness of soul. The world will not satisfy us (John 4:13), nor will we experience true spiritual growth and fulfillment in life.

If you want to maintain your spiritual walk and growth, advance in the area of sanctification, then you must be in the Word, reacting to the Word, applying it to your daily routine in life, allowing it to change your life.

Joshua 1:8

"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

True success in life is spiritual success which is something that can only come through spiritual growth and progress. Unless we are like my grandson, jumping up and down (doing his little dance routine), eagerly anticipating and ready to drink his bottle, unless we are thirsty and ready to receive and respond to the milk (the spiritual nutrition of God's Word), we can't grow. We won't really advance in our Christian lives.

1 Peter 2:2 once again reads: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." Please pass the milk!

We now come to the second way to grow.

B. Through the grace of God

2 Peter 3:18

"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

Peter has some important things to say about growth in his two epistles. He is now telling us that we grow together because of our link or relationship with God –

receiving of His help, assistance, and strength. This is why we are this year focusing on Growing together with God! We need God's help so we can grow and become the kind of person that He wants us to be.

2 Peter 3:16-17 leads into our verse:

"As also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction (false teachers wind up in hell). Ye (the brethren who are saved) therefore, beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness."

The word "wrest" means to twist and refers to distorting the meaning of the Word of God. Beware of the Scripture twisters! These are people who misinterpret the Bible ("wrest ... scripture") and mislead saints and therefore stifle their spiritual growth and advancement in Christ. Second Peter 3:17 warns us about falling and failing in our Christian lives because we lapse into some kind of weird teaching (there are plenty of them around!) that is not the truth. As a result, we can stifle our spiritual growth and not remain stable in relationship to our Christian life and sanctification through Christ alone.

Of course, nothing is said in this verse about losing our salvation but falling from our "steadfastness" (our commitment to spiritual living and spiritual growth and stability in life). Peter is talking about someone who comes along with a fanciful "interpretation" of Scripture, some new way to grow and experience the Christian life. They will sometimes say, "You need this in addition to Jesus Christ." They suggest that we need psychobabble to go along with the sufficiency of Jesus Christ! You must do this or else you won't make it in life. You have to become part of this system and way in order to really meet your full potential.

This type of person is actually seeking to draw us off into his own little corner and is trying to lead us away from God's truth, promises, and our sufficiency in Christ. Beware of the leaven of modern psychology and psychotherapy today. Christians use these things as a crutch instead of their relationship with Jesus Christ. Peter defines this wrong path as being "led away with the error of the wicked." Peter is simply says, "Don't go!" Don't go down this primrose path. In essence, he is saying, "Don't go" (2 Pet. 3:17) but instead "Do grow!" (2 Pet. 3:18). Second Peter 3:18

reminds us how continued spiritual growth will keep us from falling, failing, floundering, and missing out on the spiritual blessings that God has for us.

1. The commitment to spiritual growth - GROW

The tense of the word “grow” in the Greek language (present imperative) means to “keep on growing.” This means we should be committed to keep growing and moving forward in our Christian experience, making progress, and maintaining spiritual growth. Growth is to be a constant reality and continual journey in our personal lives. The theologians call this “progressive sanctification.” Have you been progressing? We are to keep on growing and living the Christian life. Our lives should be constantly developing. A sustained life of spiritual growth means stability and blessing.

Someone said:

“The Christian life is like riding a bicycle. Unless you keep moving, you fall off!”

Don’t stop peddling or you will fall off the bicycle! If you stop growing, you will fall and become dormant. When we stop advancing in our spiritual growth, we become unstable, unusable, and unfit for the Lord’s work. Beloved, we must keep on growing or else we will stop growing. We should not stop and start and live a roller coaster Christian life – up and down in relation to our spiritual growth. Stay at it! Well, how have you been doing? Are you committed to new spiritual growth in 2015? Are you ready to keep on keeping on?

Keep on growing! This means that we must take the initiative to grow. The human will plays a decisive part in the experience of spiritual growth. We must desire and want spiritual growth to happen in our lives and put in place those things which enable us to grow.

Tom Constable said:

“Believers must will to remove the hindrances to growth while actively fostering the conditions which promote growth.”

The hindrances to growth would include such things as worldly habits and friends, carnal expressions, lust, pride, covetousness and ungodliness. However, when the conditions for spiritual growth are maintained (reading God’s Word, making right

choices, desiring growth) God's grace will surely cause us to grow, mature, and advance in our spiritual progress. In order to keep on growing we must get rid of hindrances to growth and follow the conditions that promote healthy growth. This brings us to our next point.

2. The method for spiritual growth = GRACE

God is reaching out to us in His kindness and benevolence. And this is how we grow! We grow by grace. The method of all spiritual growth is "grace" (it occurs through God's favor and blessing being lavishly poured out and experienced in our lives in some special way). The term "grace" when applied to spiritual growth in Second Peter (2 Pet. 3:18 with 2 Peter 1:2, 3, 8) speaks of God's divine enablement, His sanctifying power, supernatural transformation, endless spiritual resource and supply, and complete blessing and fulfillment that He showers upon our lives. In relationship to New Testament believers, grace (God's special favor and blessing) is portrayed as His sanctifying power, divine enablement, and the complete supply that He gives to live the Christian life. We can't make it without His grace! Without God's sustaining, empowering, and life-transforming grace being communicated to us, we will live in defeat and become stagnate in our spiritual walk and growth.

One thing is certain; I can't grow by law (legalism – personal effort) for it provides me with no power and assistance from God to live victoriously.

John Bunyan (1628-1688) is usually attributed with the following saying:

"Run, John, run, the law commands
But gives us neither feet nor hands,
Far better news the gospel brings:
It bids us fly and gives us wings."

If you are saved and now growing in your Christian life, it is only because of God's amazing grace!

To "grow in grace" in Peter's epistle is undoubtedly referencing a new way to grow, unlike any previous revelation or teaching about sanctification that was found in the Old Testament. God's grace is manifested in a new, living, and dynamic way in the Dispensation of the Grace of God. The New Testament reveals a new working

of God's grace which allows Christians to grow and draw closer to God. God's empowering and sanctifying grace is now being experienced through Jesus Christ who lives within us.

Yes, we are saved by grace, but grace does not end at the point of our salvation. We also "grow by grace" which in Peter's epistle refers to God's divine enablement and power to grow spiritually through Christ's indwelling life. They can rely upon Christ's sanctifying life for transformation of living and spiritual development of character traits that resemble Christ's life (2 Peter 1:5-7).

3. The explanation of spiritual growth = Jesus Christ

The explanation of how God's grace changes our lives, or how we experience God's grace, is found in the next words: "in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Grace boils down to one thing – Jesus Christ! This repeated phrase in Peter's epistle refers to a new working of God's grace for His Church Age saints which is manifested and experienced through an intimate awareness, knowledge, and close relationship which they can possess with Jesus Christ (union with Him). In other words, spiritual growth happens in our personal lives through experiencing a transforming, life-empowering, and dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ.

God works with different groups of people in different ways throughout the span of history or the ages. God has a different economy or dispensational outworking with His New Testament saints. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not experience this specific work of grace in their lives as we do today. Do you know why? It's because Jesus Christ had not yet come. Therefore, none of the Old Testament saints could "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." This is a new working of God's grace for a new people. We are privileged beyond measure. God has graced our lives in a new and wonderful way.

Peter is saying, if we are going to grow, it will only happen through God's life-transforming grace," His favor and blessing being poured into our lives (John 1:16), which is displayed and evidenced through our New Testament, life-transforming, relationship with Jesus Christ ("in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"). In other words, the way we partake of God's grace and experience His sanctifying grace in our lives today is through His Son, Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:20). In Colossians 1:10 Paul concludes with the similar words: "increasing in the knowledge

of God.” When we are “increasing” we are also growing and moving forward in our Christian experience. This means we are growing together with God! The concept of “the knowledge of God” speaks of both the sphere where spiritual growth takes place and also the means of that spiritual growth (2 Pet 3:18). We can only grow as we develop an awareness of who God is, experience His power in our lives, and then follow His will.

We are not only saved by grace (Eph. 2:8-9), but we should also grow in grace as it relates to our personal relationship with Jesus Christ – experiencing His presence and power in our lives. Of course, the Bible does NOT say that we grow into grace and somehow earn or merit God’s grace and our salvation before God (Rom. 3:24). We grow “in” grace (in the sphere or atmosphere of grace) which in this verse is referring to our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Let’s investigate from this epistle what it means to grow in grace. In the context of the book “grace” is defined as the inward working and expression of God’s life (Jesus Christ) being communicated to us on a daily basis. Four times in the epistle Peter explains the working of “grace” in our hearts and lives as possessing a personal knowledge or intimate awareness of Christ’s life and experiencing both inner and outer transformation through Christ’s life.

2 Peter 1:2, “Grace (God’s empowering and sanctifying grace) and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.” Peter is saying that we are to experience God’s grace and peace in our lives through a deepening walk and relationship with Jesus Christ (“through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord”). This means that we are to grow by experiencing and possessing an intimate awareness of God’s presence and sanctifying power through Jesus Christ.

Second Peter 1:3 once again emphasizes how the transformation of God’s grace takes place in our lives. It comes “through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.” Second Peter 1:8 once again verifies this working of God’s grace through Jesus Christ: “For if these things be in you (godly traits and virtues), and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful (spiritually unproductive) in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The working and manifestation of God's grace toward New Testament saints keeps pointing to the person and sanctifying work of Jesus Christ. Only as we develop this intimate knowledge and awareness of our relationship and dependency upon Christ can we grow and progress in the area of sanctification.

John 1:16 declares:

"And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

This is the new administration and working of God's grace in the present dispensation. Christ lives within us to manifest His life-transforming and life-sustaining power (a special New Testament work of grace taking place in our hearts and lives today). Jesus Christ repeatedly gives a sufficient and ample supply of His grace for New Testament saints.

"He giveth more grace as our burdens grow greater,
He sendeth more strength as our labors increase;
To added afflictions He addeth His mercy,
To multiplied trials He multiplies peace.

When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources
Our Father's full giving is only begun.

His love has no limits, His grace has no measure,
His power no boundary known unto men;
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again."

Hebrews 4:16

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace (strengthening and enabling grace) to help in time of need.

Jesus is the answer to spiritual growth today. We grow through our link with Him and our life in Him. We develop and make it in life because of our reliance upon Christ, our response to Christ, and our sanctifying relationship that we have through Jesus Christ living within us.

Galatians 2:20

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

Paul is saying the same thing as Peter. We grow in view of our spiritual union and togetherness with Jesus Christ. Second Peter 3:18 once again says, “But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

“We mutter and sputter;
We fume and we spurt;
We mumble and grumble;
Our feelings get hurt.
We can’t understand things;
Our vision grows dim,
When all that we need
Is a moment with Him.”

4. The result of spiritual growth = the glory of God

2 Peter 3:18 concludes with these words: “To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen.” What is the result of spiritual growth? It’s the glory to God! “To Him be glory both now and forever.” Our spiritual growth and advancement in life glorifies Jesus Christ. When we learn to keep ourselves separated from sin and error and are advancing in spiritual living, becoming more like Christ in our attitudes, and conduct. This is what glorifies God. In other words, a growing Christian glorifies God because God’s character and likeness is being portrayed or reflected through his or her life. Growth glorifies God because it brings God out into the open. Our spiritual growth and life will reflect God’s life and character before others and in this way God gets the glory, honor, and praise.

Your spiritual growth brings glory to God. The question is how much glory has God been receiving from your life? It depends how much you are growing and advancing in your spiritual life. Only as we reflect Jesus Christ can we glorify God! So, keep on growing!

Beware of becoming “carnal” (1 Cor. 3:1-3) and stagnate in your Christian growth and living. When we stop developing in our sanctification and our growth becomes stunted, it’s then that we “fall from our own steadfastness” (2 Pet. 3:17) and lose the blessing of God’s liberating and life-transforming grace that He wants to shower upon our lives through Jesus Christ. Don’t stop growing. Grow in grace! Let God’s grace shine through your life this year and today.

Somebody said:

“If you are not growing in grace you probably have become a disgrace!”

We can grow and bring glory to God in our lives, or we can become a disgrace and defame the name of God. Let’s grow together and in doing so we will find our sufficiency in Jesus Christ. This is the way to grow! Once again, to “grow in grace” in the framework and teaching of the New Testament means that we need to experience our dynamic and life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ; His life of sustaining power, transformation, and fulfillment (2 Peter 3:18).

Beware of rabbit trails! There are various rabbit trails or detours that we can take in life which can actually stunt our spiritual growth in Christ. These substitutes for spiritual growth seek to add to or replace our relationship and reliance upon Christ for personal growth and sanctification. There are many empty and worthless experiences that seek to override our growth in Christ. Such things as pop psychology, the Word Faith Movement (“Name it and Claim It movement”), and the charismatic confusion that is so prevalent today, along with the experiences of speaking in so-called tongues, the slayings in the Holy Spirit, laughing in the Spirit, and such like are all unbiblical experiences that do not promote true spiritual growth.

All these things draw us away from our sanctifying relationship with Christ. They can become rabbit trails that lead us away from our true spiritual growth in Christ (His presence, power, and character) and they can result in confusion and immaturity. The Book of Colossians also reveals that there are several systems that can stunt our spiritual growth.

Did you ever have one of those bug zapping lights? The summer bugs fly toward the light and there is an electrical current that zaps them. There are two systems that zap our spiritual growth. They are grace killers and therefore growth killers.

1. Ascetic legalism

Colossians 2:20-23

“Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.”

Some Christians can become deceived into thinking that sanctification and ultimately salvation can be gained and maintained through complying with strict manmade codes and rules. They somehow think that living *without* and *depriving* oneself of certain comforts in society is the way to sanctification. Of course, ascetic legalism has nothing to do with sanctification or salvation. The color of our clothes, neglecting the basic blessings for societal living that come from God (1 Tim. 4:3-4), or depriving ourselves of the basic necessities of life has nothing to do with our sanctification or spiritual growth.

Jesus spoke about this in Mark 7:8:

“For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, *as* the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.”

Ascetic legalism is a grace killer. It takes away from the true way to experience growth in our spiritual lives, which is through our relationship with Jesus Christ.

2. Esoteric mysticism

The term “esoteric” means something that is secret and mystical in practice (subjective experiences) which can only be known by a restricted group of people. There is a lot of this going on today. Mysticism means that people use subjective experiences, such as dreams, visions, TM, Yoga, so-called speaking in tongues and other charismatic experiences, as the measuring stick of spiritual growth and advancement.

Colossians 2:18-19 speaks of these types of experiences:

“Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.”

This is referring to those experiences outside our life with Christ which stunt our spiritual growth. The Gnostics claimed to have experiences of dream and visions through angelic assistance and in doing this they ignored their life-changing grace relationship with Jesus Christ.

The self-induced and imaginary experiences of mysticism will not bring spiritual growth into our lives. These types of experiences do not honor the “Head” of the church which is Jesus Christ, who lives within us to reproduce Himself through our lives. We can only increase or advance in spiritual growth through our link with our Head (Jesus Christ). The verb “increaseth” is the same verb translated “grow” in 2 Peter 3:18. The “increase of God” (spiritual growth) can only be experienced when we are relying on our Leader and Head (Jesus Christ).

John 3:30 reminds us:

“He must increase, but I *must* decrease.”

Colossian 2:19 is referring to this same New Testament relationship with Jesus Christ, a new working of God’s grace, which results in our spiritual growth. Christ’s presence and power transforms us – not mystical experiences such as dreams, visions, encounter’s with angels, and many of the other experiences being promoted today such as talking in tongues, laughing in the Holy Spirit, being slain in the Spirit, etc. Where does stability and spiritual growth come from in life? It comes through Jesus Christ and our loving and life-changing relationship with Him.

There is a tendency in human nature to move from objective truth to subjective experience and to shift the focus from our personal relationship with Christ to experience. This has always intimidated weak believers and threatened the church. Today there is a brand of mysticism that is most commonly seen in the charismatic movement where Scripture and our relationship with Christ takes a back seat and is a distant second in importance to visions and revelations.

This has always been the case down through the years of Church history. When such intimidation came from the sixteenth-century mystical charismatic's of Martin Luther's day, the Reformer was very firm with them, clinging to biblical revelation and the centrality and sufficiency of Christ. In particular, the followers of Thomas Mumunzer and the radical form of the Anabaptists gave great prominence to the work and gifts of the Spirit and to mystical experiences and knowledge.

Their cry, expressing their super biblical experience, was (and I'm quoting) "The Spirit, the Spirit!" Luther replied, "I will not follow where their spirit leads." When they were granted the privilege of an interview with Luther, they gave their cry "The Spirit, the Spirit!" The Reformer was not impressed and thundered, "I slap your spirit on the snout."

We should not seek to participate with these types of artificial experiences, such as out of body experiences, self-made and learned experiences, the mind sciences, etc. True growth and spirituality does not come by these mystical experiences but through our connection with Jesus Christ – our New Testament, grace relationship with Him.

Colossians 2:10 declares:

"And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power."

The verb "complete" (playroo) literally means "to fill up, fill to the full, fill to the brim, fill measure, supply liberally." This portrays how Jesus Christ is the believer's complete resource. *To be complete in Christ speaks of our sufficiency in Christ!* The truth that God's saints are "complete in him" means that we possess everything and find everything that we need in Jesus Christ for salvation, sanctification (growth), service, and satisfaction. We lack nothing for this life or the next life! We have everything from A-Z in Jesus Christ. Nothing is missing. Nothing is lacking. Nothing needs improvement.

We are filled to overflowing! We are complete in Christ. Have you been acting like it, living like it, depending on it? What kind of life have you been living? Do you doubt your salvation? Has the devil been working you over? What are you doing with your life? Are you advancing spiritually? These are important questions.

This fullness or completeness in Christ has been specifically applied and experienced by the Church today (“the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” - Ephesians 1:23). In Ephesians 3:19 Paul prayed that every saint “might be filled with all the fulness (plurality) of God.” In other words, Paul prayed that the saints would be living according to their fullness and completeness in Christ, which means they would know, believe, and practice what they possess in Christ. He wanted them to claim their spiritual riches in Christ (Eph. 1:3) and realize, not only theologically, but experientially, what Christ has done for them and is doing for them today.

The Bible expressions of “fulness” and “complete” are portraying the same thing. *Christ is sufficient to save and sanctify us.* These Bible expressions mean that Christ becomes everything *for* us and everything *to* us! I can’t be saved without Him. I can’t be sanctified without Him. I can’t be satisfied without Him. I can’t serve effectively without Him. I can’t be spiritual without Him. I need His fullness and completeness operating in my life.

Jesus taught a simple analogy in John 15:5:

“I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit (spiritual growth and advancement): for without me ye can do nothing.”

Drawing from the life of Jesus Christ is the only way to grow. We can’t produce spiritual fruit or growth without relying totally and unreservedly upon Jesus Christ. Knowing Jesus Christ in a greater way (Phil. 3:10), growing through one’s relationship with Him, experiencing His daily power, presence, and personal transformation that He brings to your life, is the only way to advance in our spiritually lives.

2 Corinthians 3:5 declares:

“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency *is* of God.”

You won’t grow through asceticism or mysticism. These are grace killers which take us away from concentrating on our sanctifying and life-changing relationship with Christ. I received an email from one of my friends. I saved it because it was so crazy! It reminds us that we should not base our spirituality and growth on dreams.

“Hi, Pastor and Lois! I had a weird dream last night about Berean. We were visiting, and there were tons of new people at the Church. There was choir practice afterwards, and there were so many choirs and so many people participating in them, that most of the people got up and left before the service was even over, so they could get ready for these choir practices - including you, Pastor! The practices were held outside in the parking lot. Apparently, they were going to go on for so long that two kids were carrying a mini refrigerator out with them (so they could eat lunch). One of the kids had a bass drum (hard to carry when you're also carrying a fridge), so I guess you were expanding the instrumental section!”

I’m so glad that God is not guiding us by dreams and visions nor can we grow and advance in our spiritual lives through mystical means. We can’t grow through ascetic legalism or esoteric mysticism. We can only grow through Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 3:18

“But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen.”

Amen! It is true! One Sunday on their way home from church, a little girl turned to her mother and said, "Mommy, the preacher's sermon this morning confused me." The mother said, "Oh? Why is that?" The little girl replied, "Well, he said that God is bigger than we are. Is that true?" The mother replied, "Yes, that's true, honey." "And he also said that God lives in us? Is that true, mommmy?" Again the mother replied, "Yes." "Well," said the little girl, "If God is bigger than us and he lives in us, wouldn't He show through?"

Of course, she was thinking in the physical realm, but she makes a good point when applied to the spiritual realm and our spiritual growth. We need to let Jesus show through our lives this year as we grow by His power and ministry taking place in our hearts and lives.

Are you resting and trusting in the sufficiency of Christ for your spiritual growth and advancement? Is Christ everything to you? If so, thank Him for His fullness (John 1:16; Col. 2:10). If not, perhaps you’ve been trusting in some type of deceptive human wisdom, meaningless religious rituals, or some kind of mystical experience formed in your own mind and unrelated to reality.

Colossians 2:7 summarizes what we've studied thus far. It reveals that we grow through our relationship with Jesus Christ and the Word of God: "Rooted and built up in him (Jesus Christ – growing through our spiritual life and union with Him – depending upon Him for power, fruitfulness, enrichment, fulfillment, and guidance), and established in the faith (what Christians believe and embrace – the Scriptures – the Bible), as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."

Yes, we are built up, we grow in our Christian life through the Word of God and the grace of God which speaks of our sanctifying union with Jesus Christ. Outside of this there is no true spiritual growth. We need to be rooted in Christ and established in the Word of God if we are going to grow and mature in our Christian lives.

How deep are your roots? Only as we rely upon Christ, experience His sanctifying life through ours, and are aggressively applying the Word of God to our lives, can we expect to develop strong roots and be built up spiritually. We can't advance without good roots!

With God's help we can experience spiritual growth.

II. By living out our growth (The display of growth)

A Christian displays growth when he is becoming more like Jesus Christ in his everyday life. This is how we "live out" our spiritual growth on a daily basis. What is your deepest longing and desire in life? For many of us it's the longing to be married, get a new job, or take our next vacation. However, for the believer our deepest longing should be to become more like Jesus Christ in our character, conduct, and the entire course of our living.

"I have one deep supreme desire:
that I may be like Jesus.
To this I fervently aspire,
that I may be like Jesus.
I want my heart His throne to be,
so that a watchful world may see
His likeness shining forth in me.
I want to be like Jesus."

A. The examination of Christlikeness

Ephesians 4:13 says:

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

Although many project this verse out into the future when we reach our final destination in Heaven, it’s really talking about our present spiritual growth through the gifted leaders God has given to us in the Church. When they properly preach, teach and apply God’s truth to our lives, we will grow.

In the context, Paul is teaching that right now God has gifted people to minister in the church, such as pastors, teachers, and evangelists, so all the church can attain or reach four goals in this life.

What are the four goals?

1. Agreement in the Word of God (“the unity of the faith”).

As a body of believers we can possess a wonderful unity in the truth and standard of God’s Word instead of being “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4:14). We can agree on the main things and rally together under the banner of the cross and truth in these last days.

2. Reliance on the Son of God (“knowledge of the Son of God”)

This is an intimate knowledge and awareness of the presence of Jesus Christ in our lives. It’s when we come to fully depend upon Him for power and transformation in our lives (2 Pet. 3:18; Phil. 3:10).

Ephesians 4:15 puts it like this:

“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ.”

Grow up! Paul is talking about growing up. How concerned are we about our own spiritual growth? We should strive for growth in our Christian experience. We

should want to “grow up into him” (meaning in relation to experiencing Christ’s controlling power and transformation in our lives – Gal. 2:20). In fact, our growth in Christ should be “in all things” (with reference to every area of our lives – all the spiritual qualities of faith, love, virtues, and spiritual character that brings us to spiritual maturity).

3. Growth as a man of God (“unto a perfect man”)

The word “perfect” means to reach a goal. This speaks of reaching the goal of spiritual maturity in our Christian life and walk. We should want this in our present life on earth and not wait until we get to Heaven to discover the secret of spiritual maturity. Are we growing or withering in our present Christian experience?

4. Christlikeness in the plan of God (“unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”)

The purpose of all spiritual growth is to mirror Jesus Christ in and through our lives on a daily basis. It is God’s plan for us to become more like Christ in all His fullness (Eph. 1:23; 3:19), which means to experience His life in ours, so that we might display His life before others. This means I should seek to become more like Christ in my marriage, my relationships, my job, in the home, and in whatever I do and experience in my life.

“More like the Master I would ever be,
More of His meekness, more humility;
More zeal to labor, more courage to be true,
More consecration for work He bids me do.

More like the Master I would live and grow;
More of His love to others I would show;
More self-denial, like His in Galilee,
More like the Master I long to ever be.”

B. The examples of Christlikeness

Three Biblical examples are given.

1. The example of growing in faith and love.

2 Thessalonians 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.”

a. Christlike faith

Growing in Christlike faith and love is important. Sometimes we need to take a giant leap of faith and expect God to do great things with and through our personal lives. There must be in our hearts an atmosphere of faith and anticipation, an outlook that says, “Oh, Lord, do a new thing!

Someone said:

“There is no future for a man whose faith has burned out!”

Lord increase our faith! Growing in faith is part of Christlikeness. We need to possess greater faith in the midst of our trials and conflicts by realizing that God knows what He is doing and that His purpose is coming to pass in our lives. Beloved, we can't explain everything; we must simply live by faith. Are you ready and willing to trust in Him as you pass through the deep waters?

Pastor David Moss said:

“The essential element of faith, however, is believing that God is right about everything.”

If we could answer all the "whys," we would not need faith. We need to possess faith in relation to trusting God for our future as it relates to finding a marriage partner, a job or giving us guidance for some other important decisions.

Someone said:

“Stop looking at our watches and calendars and simply look by faith into the face of God and let Him have His way – in His time.”

We need to experience a growing faith in connection with our daily dependence upon Christ for victory, power, strength, peace, and comfort. It takes faith in God's

providence, promises, and power to get through life. We need to learn the secret of taking a few minutes in the day to focus on Christ, remember His love, quote a promise and by faith receive the grace needed for that hour.

b. Christlike love

Growing in Christlike love is also important (“and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth” – 2 Thess. 1:3). Our love for one another should be sacrificial. It should be manifested in the ways expressed in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. Love does not retaliate, it’s kind, it does not envy others, it does not boast of oneself, promote unbecoming behavior, it’s not selfish, has a long fuse, does not reflect upon doing evil to others, hates sin, rejoices in the truth, continues to bear the pitfalls of others, believes in the best, has bright hope for the future, and continues to endure.

Someone once said:

“When God measures a man, he puts the tape around the heart - not the head.”

No person really lives until he learns to live by faith and love. Only when we are growing and abounding in faith and love can we say that we are truly advancing in our spiritual lives.

2. The example of growing in holiness.

Ephesians 2:21

“In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.”

Growing in holiness is part of Christlikeness. We are not growing in Christlikeness unless we are growing or advancing in holiness. Holiness is a command to be obeyed, a course to be followed, and a commitment to be kept. Does the holiness of God matter to you on a daily basis? God’s holiness and purity should be our goal in life in relation to everything that we say or do. Holiness should be reflected in our deeds, conduct, amusements, and our inner transformation.

1 Peter 1:15-16

“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”

Holiness is a heart attitude. This is true when it comes to modesty, modeling Christ before others, and molding our lives according to God's standard of truth instead of after the world (Rom. 12:2). Do you possess a sincere heart or desire to reveal and promote God's holiness in your life this year? What areas must you change? In what greater way can you demonstrate God's holiness in your life this year? We need to take inventory and remember that the crowning attribute of God is His holiness, and if we want to be like Jesus, we will be more holy in our everyday living.

“Hide me Lord in Your holiness
Every sin I now confess
Praise to You, forgiving Lord
Hide me in your holiness
Hide me in Your holiness.”

3. The example of growing in service.

Colossians 1:10

“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

Growth in our Christian service is part of Christlikeness. Christians are to be perennial fruit-bearers. Here is a helpful reminder. Although a person is not saved *by* good works, he most certainly is saved *for* good works (“created in Christ Jesus unto good works” - Eph. 2:10).

When we are “fruitful” it means that we are growing. This verse reveals that we are to be growing in good works. Our acts of Christian service that we render unto others and God are very important. They indicate that we are becoming more like Jesus Christ. Only as we grow in our service can we become more like Jesus Christ. Are you ready to really get serious about serving Jesus Christ? If so, get busy for the Lord and reach out to serve Him in new ways, greater ways, and exciting ways.

“I will serve Thee because I love Thee
You have given life to me
I was nothing before You found me
You have given life to me.”

In short, as we know more of His presence, power, and perfect ways for our lives (revealed in the Word of God), we will continue to be fruitful and productive in our Christian experience.

Christlikeness is the goal of all spiritual growth and when we grow in our faith, love, holiness, and service we are becoming more like Jesus Christ in our daily walk.

True growth, lasting growth, and rich growth come when we follow God's steps for spiritual growth. First, we experience spiritual growth through the Word of God by applying it to our daily lives in every situation. We read it, study it, meditate upon it, and appropriate it to our lives. Second, we grow as a result of God's grace taking place in our hearts, through Jesus Christ's sanctifying presence. There are no shortcuts to spiritual advancement. There are no shortcuts to Christian living. It involves constant prayer, meditation, obedience and fellowship with God. Beware of the high cost of shortcuts! A shortcut solution to a problem may alter the symptoms, but it can never deal with the causes.

A man who had bought a new hunting dog was eager to see how he would perform. So he took him into the woods one day, hoping to track down and bag some really big game. No sooner had they gotten into the woods than the dog picked up the trail of a bear. Off he went, with the excited hunter close behind. Then the animal stopped suddenly, sniffed the ground, and headed down an altogether different path. He had caught the scent of a deer that had crossed the path of the bear.

A few minutes later, the process repeated itself. The dog stopped, smelled the ground, and headed in still another direction. This time it was the scent of a rabbit that had crossed the path of the deer. The poor pooch was sidetracked again. On and on it went, until the breathless hunter caught up with his dog - only to find him barking triumphantly down the hole of a field mouse.

If we are not careful, the same thing can happen to us as believers. A series of distractions can come across our trail in life. If each one is pursued just far enough, it can pull us a bit further off the trail of what is most important in life, which is growing and following Jesus. In the words of the writer of Hebrews: "Let us go on" (Heb. 6:1). Are you maturing in your Christian life and walk? Don't be sidetracked or become distracted. Stay focused on growth, loving the Lord, and serving Him. You cannot stand still. You are either growing or becoming stagnate in your Christian

life. You are either moving forward or going in reverse. You cannot be neutral and growing at the same time. Examine yourself today. Are you growing through studying and applying the Bible to your life? Are you growing in Christlikeness and obedience? Make sure you are committing yourself to the most important matter in your Christian life which is spiritual growth and personal maturity.