

The Department of Church Growth and Development
Bible Study Outline
Scripture Text: 2 Peter 3:1-18

Lesson One: Understanding the Meaning of Spiritual Growth

Proposition: Every Christian should grow in grace more and more, advancing from one state of practical religion to another, and increasing daily in the knowledge of our divine Lord and gracious Savior Jesus Christ that God might receive the glory due to His name.

There are three areas of spiritual growth for the Christian as he/she strives to reach full potential in Christian life: Grow in their understanding of meaning of spiritual growth, understanding the areas of spiritual growth and understanding the importance of the means of grace in spiritual growth.

1. **Spiritual Life and growth:** Where there is not spiritual life, there is not spiritual growth.
 - a) Spiritual life and growth begin at spiritual conception.
 - i) Spiritual conception like natural conception is difficult to pinpoint.
 - ii) It is evidenced by the signs of growth within.
 - (1) Conviction (a sense of guilt for sin)
 - (2) Repentance (a godly sorrow for sin and a desire to change)
 - (3) Spiritual appetite (a strong hunger and thirst to know more about the Lord and His word)
 - iii) It is a growth which will ultimately lead to spiritual birth.
 - b) Regeneration is the name of this new spiritual birth. (1 Jn. 3:1-8)
 - i) It is becoming a new creation. (2Cor. 5:17)
 - ii) It is receiving the seed (nature) of God within. (1Jn. 3:9)
 - iii) It is receiving a new heart. (Eze. 36:25-27)
 - c) Spiritual Growth will continue in the Christian from the time of this birth until the time of his physical death.
2. **God and Spiritual Growth:** Just as God is the only one who can impart spiritual life, God is the only one who can produce spiritual growth. (1Cor. 3:6, 7)
 - a) As the Holy Spirit is the agent of our spiritual birth, so He is the agent of our spiritual growth.
 - b) As the word of God is the instrument of our spiritual birth, so it is the instrument of our spiritual growth. (Ja. 1:18; 1 Pe. 2:2)
3. **Climate and Spiritual Growth:** Humans can play a role in affecting the climate and atmosphere in which the Spirit and the Word may work.
 - a) We have the option to plant seeds of the word.
 - b) We also have the option to water the seeds that others before have already planted.
 - c) Thus, we are co-laborers with God in affecting the climate and treating the soil of the hearts of those we are trying to reach for Christ.

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Scripture Text: 2 Peter 3:18; Matt. 13: 10-16

Lesson Two: The Areas of Spiritual Growth

Proposition: There are three areas of spiritual growth for the Christian as he/she strives to reach their full potential in their spiritual life: Grow in knowledge of God, grace of God and the love of God.

1. He is to grow in the knowledge of God. (2Pe. 3:18)

- a) One of the things Christians receive at the new birth is a new capacity to see, hear, and understand things of God, things which the unconverted are unable to see, hear and understand. (1Cor. 2:14; Matt. 13:10-16)
- b) The Christian immediately develops an appetite for the word of God and for fellowship with God in order to know Him better. (Matt. 5:6; 1Pe. 2:2)
- c) The Christian grows in his capacity to perceive spiritual things.
 - i. He first gains sight to see what the blind cannot see; the things which are obvious to all who have sight.
 - ii. As he grows, he begins to gain insight: the ability to see that which is under the surface.
 - iii. As he continues to grow he gains foresight: the ability to see that which is beyond the obvious and out of the view of the majority.
- d) He grows not only in his knowledge about God, but in his knowledge of God. (Intimacy and Fellowship)

2. He is to grow in the grace of God. (2Pe. 3:18)

- a) Another thing a Christian receives at his new birth is a new capacity to keep the Lord's Commandments. (1Jn. 2:3-6)
- b) The grace of God which brings salvation also teaches the Christian how to say "no" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and how to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age. (1 Timothy 2:11-12)
- c) With God's help, he is to "work out" his soul's salvation with fear and trembling. (Phil. 2:12-15)
- d) He is not called to be perfect, but he is called to be blameless. (1Th. 3:13; 2Pe. 3:14)

3. He is to grow in the love of God (1Jn. 2:5)

- a) Another thing a Christian receives at his new birth is a new capacity to love as Christ loves. (Jn. 13:34, 35; 1Jn. 3:14; 4:7)
- b) He is able to exercise not only a romantic love (eros), not only a friendship love (philio), not only a family love (Stergae'), but an unconditional love (agape') which enables him to love not because, nor if, but in spite of.
- c) As he grows, he learns how to love not only in words or in tongue, but in action and in truth and that love of God is perfected in his life. (1Jn. 3:18)

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Lesson Three: The Means of Grace – Key Contributing Factors of Spiritual Growth

Proposition: The means of Grace are those things which God has provided for our spiritual growth and therefore enable us to reach our full potential as Christians. The four primary factors which contribute to the Christians spiritual growth are the Word, service, worship and fellowship.

1. Proper Spiritual Diet: The Word (1Pe. 2:2)

- a. The word of God is to the spirit what physical food is to the physical body.
 - 1) It provides spiritual nourishment and nutrition.
 - 2) It gives the soul what it needs to effectively fight off spiritual diseases.
 - 3) It keeps the Christian strong and healthy.
- b. Personal Bible study must become a daily part of the Christian's life so that he takes personal responsibility for his own spiritual and faith development.
- c. Sunday School and Group Bible studies must become a priority in his life that he may make sure that his doctrine is sound.
- d. The preaching of God's Word must become the highlight of his worship experience, because it directly feeds his soul.

2. Proper Spiritual Exercise: Christian Service (1Pe. 4:10)

- a. Service is to the Christian what exercise is to the athlete.
 - 1) It keeps him strong.
 - 2) It keeps him in shape.
 - 3) It makes him productive.
 - 4) It keeps him out of trouble.
- b. The Christian is to use his gifts and talents in God's service; he is always to grow in his usefulness in God's service. (1Cor. 15:58)

3. Proper Spiritual Rest: Christian Worship (Eph. 5:19-20)

- a. Worship is to the spirit as rest is to the physical body.
 - 1) It renews and rejuvenates.
 - 2) It inspires and energizes.
 - 3) It calms and relaxes.
- b. The Christian must develop a personal prayer life which enables him to rest in the Lord and gain spiritual strength.
- c. He must also consistently be a part of public worship, whereby he is able to be strengthened.

4. Proper Spiritual Environment: Fellowship (He. 10:25, 1Jn. 1:7)

- a. Fellowship is to spiritual growth as environment is to natural growth.
- b. Love is the environment in which the Christian must grow and grows best.