



GROWTH IN HOLINESS

KEY VERSE:

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall (II Peter 1:10).

- 1 Corinthians 3:1.** 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 your with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.
 3. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among your envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

- II Peter 1:3.** According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:
 4. Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.
 5. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;
 6. And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;
 7. And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.
 8. 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.

- Ephesians 4:13.** Until 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 fullness of Christ:
 14. 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:
 16. From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Background Scriptures
 1 Peter 1:18 – 2:5

Devotional Reading
 1 John 4:10-18

Central Truth:

The development of holy character is a daily process.



THE LESSON EXPOSITION

BACKGROUND

Holiness of heart and life is a crisis and a process. It is both instantaneous and progressive. The work of cleansing from sin, which "the God of peace" does, is accomplished at a point in time. The development of character and conduct conforming to that state of purity is not accomplished in a moment or a day. It is a process which will occupy one's entire life.

Some mistakenly consider that Christian perfection, which is the love of God filling a cleansed heart wrought by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, would preclude any possibility of spiritual growth. In reality, cleansing and the fullness of the Holy Spirit prepare and equip the Christian for the most effective growth in grace. It could be prepared to the restoration of health to the body as a condition for physical growth, or the removing of weeds from a garden as a condition for more rapid growth.

The most saintly and mature may, no must, continue to grow in grace and cultivate a character and outward life that reflects the divine nature wrought within. What God has done may not be improved upon, but may be more accurately demonstrated in outward conduct by continual growth "in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord ... Jesus Christ."



I. THE DILEMMA OF NO GROWTH (1 Cor. 3:1-3)

1 Corinthians 3:1. And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. The carnal nature, which is enmity toward God, if permitted to continue in one's heart, will thwart spiritual development or growth in grace. The carnal nature which wars against the Holy Spirit in the believer will bring about death of spiritual life if not destroyed (Rom. 6:6 and 8:6, 7).

2. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat. One of the symptoms of an infected physical system is a loss of appetite for good, strong, nourishing food. Depravity in the heart will tend to neutralize desire for spiritual nourishment.

3. For ye are yet carnal. Believers are carnal until they consecrate themselves, confess their carnal state, and exercise confidence, trust, and faith in the cleansing merits of Christ's atoning blood. Those carnal Christians had many virtues enumerated in chapter 1 of this book. They also demonstrated definite carnal traits. **Envy, and strife, and divisions.** Paul clearly declared these to be indications of spiritual depravity. He did not acknowledge this state as the ideal or the most they may expect. He bemoaned their present state, and in II Cor. 1:15 he declared his confidence that if he could visit them, they might receive "a second benefit."



II. THE PRIORITY OF GROWTH IN GRACE (II Peter 1:3-8)

II Peter 1:3-7. Beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith. Adam Clarke wrote on this passage, "**Virtue.** 'Courage' or 'fortitude,' to enable you to profess the faith before men in these times of persecution. **Knowledge.** True wisdom, by which your faith will be increased, and your courage directed, and preserved from degenerating into 'rashness.' **Temperance.** A proper and limited use of all earthly enjoyments, keeping every sense under proper restraints, and never permitting the animal part to subjugate the rational. **Patience.** Bearing all trials and difficulties with an even mind, enduring in all, and persevering through all. **Godliness.** Piety toward God; a deep, reverential, religious fear; not only worshiping God with every becoming outward act, but adoring, loving, and magnifying Him in the heart: a disposition indispensably necessary to salvation, but exceedingly rare among professors. **Brotherly kindness** ... the strongest attachment to Christ's flock; feeling each as a member of your own body. **Charity.** Love to the whole human race, even to your persecutors: love to God and the brethren they had; love to all mankind they must also have. True religion is neither selfish nor insulated; where the love of God is, bigotry cannot exist.

Narrow, selfish people, and people of a party, who scarcely have any hope of the salvation of those who do not believe as they believe, and who do not follow with them, have scarcely any religion, though in their own apprehension none is so truly orthodox or religious as themselves."

"Thus Peter urges us to add one thing after another in a beautiful order until the chorus is complete and the Christian life is fully equipped with every virtue. And each grace gained helps bring to perfection the other graces" (**Beacon Bible Comm.**).



III. THE GOAL OF GROWTH (Eph. 4:13-16)

Ephesians 4:13. Until we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God.

"The ultimate spiritual target for the church begins with the unity of the faith. The faith identified here is the content of the gospel in its most complete form. Oneness in fellowship is impossible unless it is built on the foundation of commonly believed truth. God's truth is not fragmented and divided against itself, and when His people are divided and fragmented, it simply means they are to that degree apart from His truth, apart from the faith of right knowledge and understanding" (Terry Pollard).

14. That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro. "The immature Christian is gullible; and in the history of the Church no group of believers has fallen into more foolishness in the name of Christianity than has much of the church today. Despite our unprecedented education, sophistication, freedom, and access to God's Word and sound Christian teaching, it seems that every religious huckster can find a ready hearing and financial support among God's people. The number of foolish, misdirected, corrupt, and even heretical leaders to whom many church people willingly give their money and allegiance is astounding and heart breaking. The Christian who is properly equipped will not fall prey to such trickery, scheming, craftiness, and deceitfulness" (Terry Pollard).

15. But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things. "This is a principle that applies to every aspect of the Christian life and ministry. Authentic, mature believers whose lives are marked by love will not be victims of false teaching, but will be living authentically and proclaiming the true gospel to a deceived and deceiving world. The work of the church goes full swing, from evangelism to edification to evangelism, and so on and on until the Lord returns. The spiritually equipped church, whose members are sound in doctrine and mature in their thinking and living, is a church that will reach out in love to proclaim the saving gospel. God does not equip us to stagnate but to serve" (Terry Pollard).

16. From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth. "Each of these phrases in this verse is extremely significant in conveying truth about the function of the Body. Christ holds the Body together and makes it function by that which every joint supplies. That is to say, the joints are points of contrast, the joining together or union where the spiritual supply, resources, and gifts of the Holy Spirit pass from one member to another, providing the flow of ministry that produces growth. Where God's people have close relationships of genuine spiritual ministry, God works, and where they are not intimate with each other and faithful with their gifts, God can't work. God does not look for creativity, ingenuity, or cleverness, but for willing and loving obedience. The sum of all that these truths affirm is that every individual believer is to stay close to Jesus Christ, faithfully using his spiritual gift in close contact with every believer he touches, and that through such commitment and ministry the Lord's power will flow for the building up of the Body in love" (Terry Pollard).



"KEY" COMMENTS

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall (II Peter 1:10).

Wherefore the rather. Rather than be blind concerning these spiritual graces (vs. 5-7), be diligent about them. By so doing, your election is made sure. Here is seen conditional eternal security. Those who fail to diligently add to their spiritual life the graces which Peter enumerated, lose their election, and, sooner or later, find that sin has again mastered them (see v. 9). But "If ye do these things, ye shall never fall."

In His teaching, Jesus told of the wedding guest who was not diligent to heed his royal host's requirements (Matt. 22:11-14). He was among the called, he responded to the call, and he would have been elected to final approval had he but met the king's wedding garment standard. In accepting the invitation it was understood that the guests would observe acceptable decorum. There are those who believe that God is so magnanimous that anyone who has tried to live a decent life and not be **too** bad will be accepted. The Bible extends no such hope. Jesus said, "Many are called, but few are chosen." His clear implication is that the unchosen are those who do not diligently heed God's will.

Yes, there is danger of falling. "Judas by transgression fell," and he was an apostle. In 1 Cor. 10, Paul discussed the failures of Israel and then exhorted, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (v. 12). Even though there is danger of falling, there is no necessity to do so. The old maxim says, "Stronger than I have fallen, but weaker than I have stood." It is not a problem of whether or not one shall be able to stand; it is a matter of embracing God's means of grace whereby He enables His servant to stand. "For God is able to make him stand" (Rom. 14:4).

Summary. God calls one; it is his duty to be diligent in following that calling. He calls all to eternal life, but this does not mean that one's personal relationship with Him is unconditionally eternal. For this reason, Peter exhorted to diligence in the building of a Christian character after one has reached the crisis experiences of regeneration and sanctification. Faithfulness in this area assures one of final election to glory. As one "adds" virtue, knowledge, etc., the Lord "multiplies" grace and peace (v. 2). And His multiplication far exceeds man's addition.



EXPOSITION

DOCTRINAL DISCUSSION

The necessity of growth in grace would not be obscured were it not for the fact that many mistake grace and growth. A simple illustration is sufficient to make us aware that this is so. No one ever expects a perfect, newborn baby to write a book about his entrance into the world or have mature feelings on **any** subject. Yet it seems that many expect the newly sanctified to **immediately** have the same mature ethics, constancy of devotion, and views on culture and customs as they have! Truly God does tell us in Rom. 12:2 in the Greek to, "be being transformed." There is nowhere in the Bible a measuring stick that can be placed upright by a sanctified person to tell whether or not he is growing or whether he has attained the blessing! It is far better to base our experience of entire sanctification on the witness of faith and fruit! This we believe is the essence of what Wesley had to say on the subject. It is still fitting to emphasize in our day.

One trap that the sanctified fall into is measuring their apparent or actual effectiveness by what others are succeeding in doing after they were filled with all the fullness of God. Dr. Daniel Steele, in his book **Love Enthroned**, addressed some remarks to preachers that are fitting for us all. I have condensed and abridged it for the benefit of those who do not have access to the book.

"The relation of the baptism or fullness of the Spirit to the efficiency of the believer is a subject of intense interest to all believers... It is generally supposed that the copious effusion of the Spirit upon the believer will render him like an electric battery, emitting such shocks of power that sinners will instantly tremble and fall down and cry for mercy as did the thousands under the pentecostal preaching of Peter."

Steele said this is very rare and gave some cases when it has happened such as Dr. Fenney and that of a "Father Carpenter" of New Jersey. He gave an instance of the latter in which he related the case of a woman who for twelve years believed she had sinned so that she was again lost and in fact had sinned against the Holy Ghost so that she could never have God's mercy. Fater Carpenter went to her, got a full confession from her, rebuked Satan, and cast him out so that the woman was left in peace. Steele's comment is that such power is rarely seen in the Church.

To encourage us he gave the case of Samuel Rutherford of whom, Steele said, the superlatives in the English language are exhausted to express his (Rutherford's) supreme love to the adorable Son of God. Yet Steele went on to state, in Rutherford's own words, "I see exceedingly small fruit of my ministry. I would be glad of one soul to be a crown of joy and rejoicing in the day of Christ. I have grieved heart daily in my calling."

Steele stated that it cost more to keep a soul in the love of Christ than to see him saved so that the person that can do this has a higher gift than the gift of power to convert many.

He made the point that the personality of the person filled with the Spirit and certain powers of each person are magnified by the Spirit for that person's work. He said, "This power is always efficient to conquer sin and in its higher degrees to overcome self. But its effect upon others is modified by our temperament and mental constitution."

Steele further emphasized the fact that one's state of grace or its depth apparently may not be shown in the success or failure of the person in working for the Lord. He wrote, "The chief effect of the Spirit-baptism is to secure strength of impulse and continuity of effort on the worker himself."

Steele told of a bishop who seemed to imply that a preacher and God can see a revival anywhere. Steele refuted this and said that God uses a variety of people for a variety of purposes. He stated, "God has varieties of work and different agencies." Steele may have been referring to preachers only, but this implies to us all as well.

I have always felt that Peter gives us the best method of growth in **II Peter 1:5-8**: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add 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."

We will continue to grow in **all** the fruit of the Spirit after being filled with the Spirit. That would mean that many who are entirely sanctified will learn that love demands our fidelity in the smaller details of our life, virtues such as: promptness, remaining silent on things given to us in confidence, and being faithful to our responsibility. The area of self-control is an area where we must proceed with love, but there is a clear statement to the effect that this is a fruit of the Spirit. We must examine our lives to see whether we are growing in controlling our eating habits, our sleeping habits, our talk, our recreations, and other things that perhaps the Spirit will reveal to us. Perhaps some of us would not emphasize one of these so much if we were not trying to compensate for another in which we are sadly lacking. Lord, help us to grow in love!

It is impossible to list **all** the areas in which we will grow. Among others there are ethics, social graces and conscientiousness. Most of us, no doubt, would find many other areas if we would grow in love! Love does not make us lawless, but gives us liberty to practice all Christian graces within the bounds of the law of love.



FOCUS

WORKING WITH THE WORD!

Carnal (1 Cor. 3:1-3). The word "carnal" appears three times in these three verses, and although the last two instances are somewhat stronger terms in the Greek, they all have the same basic meaning.

Carnal, as it is used here, means to have the nature of the flesh or to be under the control of the human nature instead of wholly belonging to God. Another word is used when Paul spoke of physical bodies, but he employed this one to describe the nature that is an enemy of the Holy Spirit. This is obviously written to Christians, for he called them "brethren," "babes in Christ," and later in the chapter "the temple of God." But in spite of that fact, they were not producing the fruit of the Spirit as they should, but rather bearing the fruit of carnality. "The Corinthians had not grown. Instead of developing in grace and humility, they were proud of their gifts and abilities; instead of expressing a strong spirit of unity, they were full of discord and dissension; instead of a sharp sensitivity to sin, they were tolerating the worst sins in their group; instead of glorifying Christ, they were bickering among themselves; they were misusing the Lord's Supper and denying the resurrection" (**Beacon Bible Comm.**). If for no other reason, men need to be cleansed from the carnal nature so they can grow. We expect babies to be babies, and we need patience and charity as we help them grow, but their growth will grind to a stop if they continue to serve the carnal nature.

Envyng ... strife ... divisions (1 Cor. 3:3). The word from which "envyng" is translated is usually rendered "jealousy." It is that spirit that refuses to honour another, but boasts great things of it. This leads to strife and divisions. Paul seemed to be rather dogmatic that where these unrighteous fruits occur, there is carnality in the heart. There is a verse in Proverbs that supports that conclusion, and it is, "Only by pride cometh contention" (**13:10**). That doesn't leave much of a loophole, but then one shouldn't need any. William Barclay writes about this, "If [a man] is at variance with his fellow men, if he is a quarrelsome, argumentative, trouble-making creature, he may be a diligent church attender, he may even be a church office-bearer, but he is not a man of God."

Add (II Peter 1:5). One of the first things learned in school is addition. So it should be in the Christian life. "Add" comes from a word meaning "to join to, to furnish one thing after another, so that there be no want or chasm" (Thayer's **Greek-English Lexicon**). The Greeks sometimes used the word with the meaning "to lead a chorus." Thus the word implies adding in unity and in harmony. There needs to be a disciplined diligence applied to Christian growth.

"Unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13). Paul's emphasis in this paragraph of **Eph. 4:13-16** is on the character of the Christian community. Indeed the character of the Church is determined by the character of its individual members. The prevalence of mature and stable individual members determines the maturity and stability of the Church. Paul never viewed the church as a static institution, but always as a growing, developing, spiritual organism moving toward the ultimate ideal of a mature, stable, adult perfection that excludes all error, doctrinal and practical, and that embodies in principle and practice the truth of God revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ" (Terry Pollard).



POINTS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Caught in the Doldrums

Nothing was so feared by seamen in the days when ocean vessels were driven by wind and sail as the doldrums. The doldrums is a part of the ocean near the equator, abounding in calms, squalls, and light, baffling winds. There the weather is hot and extremely dispiriting. The old sailing vessels, when caught in the doldrums, would lie helpless for days and weeks, waiting for the wind to begin to blow.

Have you been caught in spiritual doldrums where you mechanically and slavishly go through the motions of outward religious ritual, but fail lamentably to "grow in grace" and Christlikeness?

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Dig Deeper

A farmer once dug a well, and to this well he brought his horses and cattle to drink. From it he drew for a long time sufficient for all the needs of his herds, but a drought came one summer and the flow of water diminished in the well and ceased to refresh his herds. Consequently he had to drive them to surrounding springs and brooks to give them the necessary water.

One day a visitor stopped at his home and talked to him about his well. He said, "Why not dig the well deeper?"

"But," declared the farmer, "the next digging must be done through a stratum of rock and flint."

The visitor was persistent and said, "Even so, though it is necessary to go through flint and rock, blast the rock, and just a few more feet may give you the most refreshing stream of water you can imagine."

This was done, and to the farmer's amazement and joy, the blast brought in a gushing stream of water which not only filled the well but overflowed it. It was a veritable fountain of life for his homestead.

Is it not true that with many of us there has been a spiritual drought, and there is no water in our well? We have dug as far as the rock, but we have never gone through the rock. Too many Christian lives are only superficial.

Dig deeper, brethren! Let's blast a few rocks and see if there will not come a stream of the water of divine grace that will so fill our hearts and lives with the glory of His grace, that serving Him and doing His will, in fact, the whole routine of Christian life and duty, will become a joy and pleasure.

VALUE IN VERSE

More holiness give me,
More striving within;
More patience in suffering,
More sorrow for sin;
More faith in my Saviour,
More sense of His care;
More joy in His service;
More purpose in prayer.

More purity give me,
More strength to o'ercome;
More freedom from earthstains,
More longings for home;
More fit for the kingdom,
More used would I be;
More blessed and holy,
More, Saviour, like Thee.

More gratitude give me,
Bliss
More trust in the Lord;
More pride in His glory,
More hope in His word;
More tears for His sorrows,
More pain at His grief;
More meekness in trial,
More praise for relief.

- Philip P.

ILLUMINATING ILLUSTRATION

Lt. John A. Macready of the Army set a new altitude record when he reached a height never before attained by an airplane pilot to that date. In a test flight over Dayton, Ohio, he pushed his plane to 40,800 feet above sea level – nearly eight miles. Macready used oxygen above 20,000 feet, but near the ceiling of the flight, when ice accumulated in the oxygen tube, he had to resort to an emergency tank that he carried strapped to his body.

“Upward and onward” must ever be the motto of God’s children. Long ago Paul said, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14).

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TEACHING TIPS

As humans there are many things in life we do not know. Salvation from sins does not change this fact. One may even obtain the experience of heart holiness, but will not be spiritually mature right off. There needs to be a process of spiritual growth over time before spiritual maturity will be present.

1. List some things that will help spiritual growth to occur.

- a. Bible reading – Frequent contact with God’s Word seems a must.
- b. Prayer – Frequent communication with God must be made.
- c. Walking in the light – God’s will and way must be found and followed.
- d. Ministry – Being a vessel through which God’s love flows to others can also aid in spiritual growth.

2. **Give some advice to consider in making Bible reading effective in our spiritual growth.** It is important to remember that Bible reading is not optional, but is both a privilege and a requirement (Ps. 119:11). The Bible is a vital source for spiritual knowledge, guidance, encouragement, and help. It has answers to problems we face. It offers insight to God’s will for our lives. It tells of future events and offers hope for the child of God and warning for the sinner.

Each person should establish a consistent and frequent Bible reading schedule. People differ in many ways. Some are a.m. people, while others are p.m. people. Some have schedules that allow rather unorthodox period of quiet time. Some have many people around, and others live alone. Regardless, each should determine his appropriate time for reading the Bible. A serious effort should be made to read the Bible daily at a time when the person can concentrate and think clearly.

The amount of scripture to read will vary from time to time. Initially, it would seem wise to start with several verses and establish consistency in reading. (e.g. It is better to average 10 verses a day than to read 100 today, 100 tomorrow, and none for days. It may be hard to average 100 a day, so it’s easy to quit altogether.) Over time the length of reading will likely increase. On certain days a person may feel impressed to read longer passages. Some people are very able readers and find that reading several chapters is quite easy. Others may struggle through several verses. Regardless, an established, consistent Bible reading program seems wise.

Prayer mixed with Bible reading can also help one grow spiritually. Each person should ask God to reveal from His Word what He wishes. The Bible should be read open-mindedly as God’s will and way is sought.

The Bible should be read in context. Sometimes, this may necessitate reading a whole chapter or a complete story in order to get the proper meaning. The Bible can “say” many things when taken out of context. Care should be taken to guard against erroneous interpretations.

It is also good to memorize passages of God’s Word. These passages may well come to us in situations when a Bible is unavailable and help us through a difficulty.

It is a must to practice what God’s Word teaches. Much heartache and trouble can be avoided and much good can be accomplished if there is obedience to the Word.

3. **Give some advice to consider in making prayer effective in our spiritual growth.** Prayer might be defined as communication with God. It involves both speaking and listening. It is a vital link for finite man with human frailties and temptations to an infinite God who is willing and able to help. God knows the need, but He desires us to admit our dependency on Him.

The establishment of a consistent prayer life is essential. It’s easy for new converts to feel less than spiritual because an older convert prays two or three hours a day, and they only pray ten minutes. The devil would like for that person to become discouraged and quit all praying. Perhaps over time the ten minutes can be lengthened to fifteen, twenty, thirty minutes a day or longer. It would seem better to pray a little each day than to pray a lot one

or two days and then skip for days. A premium should not be placed on the length of time, but rather on hearing from and speaking to God.

When praying, each one should talk openly and honestly with God. Nothing is hidden from Him, so admission of trouble and need is in order. Each should talk to God about all areas of life. It's good to talk to God, but it is essential to listen to Him.

Several things might be dealt with in the actual prayer. Part of the prayer should include praise to God for who He is. He is worthy of all praise and inhabits the praises of His children. Another part of the prayer should involve a confession of any sins to God. Forgiveness, if needed, should be sought. The part we are very familiar with is the one dealing with making our requests and petitions to God. (He can and will help us and desires us to ask Him for help.) As someone said, "Anything big enough to worry about is big enough to pray about." The prayer should finally include a part of thanksgiving for what God has done and will do.

Faith must be exercised for prayer to be truly effective. It's one thing to believe that God can answer prayer, but quite another to believe that God will do it! The Bible has many promises that can be claimed in times of prayer. If God has promised something, we can claim the promise if we meet His conditions.

4. Give some advice to consider for growing spiritually by walking in the light. Spiritual light might be defined as God-given direction to man. It may come through reading God's Word or in times of communion with God.

Light does not originate with mankind contrary to what some people seem to think. God may use people to speak through when giving light, but the light itself comes from God.

When considering the idea of light from God, it is important to remember that it will do good only if it's desired. If one's mind is made up before consulting God about some issue, likely God's light or direction will have little positive effect on his life. God is light and the source thereof. He knows how to lead, guide, direct, sustain and help each person. He can give a step by step plan to follow for each individual. God has given many directions in His written Word. (Again, a reason why the Bible should be read.) He gives specific instructions to individuals through prayer.

Once God gives light on any area of a person's life, that person has to decide how to deal with it. It can be rejected and turned against. However, the person is still responsible for it. If one walks against light, he will eventually be blinded by the light and be in spiritual darkness. Then what once was known to be wrong will no longer seem wrong due to a lack of spiritual sight. Each one must remember that right is right and wrong is wrong whether he or she agrees or disagrees. On the other hand, light can be accepted and followed. Each person should purpose to find and follow God's will.

At times it may seem difficult to know God's will on certain issues. Proverbs 3 tells us to acknowledge God in all areas of life, and God will then direct our paths. In times of uncertainty God should be given the benefit of the doubt. In times of confusion major decisions of life should not be made. (Satan is the author of confusion – not God.) Continue to seek God's will, and He will direct the true child of God.

Light should be followed one step at a time. Tomorrow, next week, next month, or next year need not be worried about.

5. Give some advice to consider about ministering to others as spiritual growth is sought. Spiritual growth can be experienced by sharing God's love and plan of salvation with others. The second commandment Jesus gave is to "love thy neighbour as thyself." Efforts should be made to win friends, but more importantly to win people to the Lord. As study and prayer is made in preparation for sharing the gospel with others, growth should occur within the person.

An area to consider for increasing effectiveness in ministry is that of spiritual gifts. Each one should by God's help identify his spiritual gift(s) and determine how they should be used to minister to others. (e.g. One who can work well with his hands may help change a tire of a needy person. This could lead to a friendship which might lead to a sharing of faith in Jesus Christ.)

Each person should try to be positive in general. Naturally, some situations in life are negative, but an overall positive attitude will likely be much more convincing of the rightness of serving Christ than will a negative one.

At all times each person must strive to live right before others. One "flaw in the armour" can be a major obstacle to overcome in ministering to others. It's essential to be faithful in all tasks of service no matter how small. If a person is faithful in small tasks, he may well be eventually entrusted with bigger ones. Conversely, if a person cannot accept small responsibilities, perhaps he is not deserving of major ones.

A child does not grow into a mature adult overnight. Neither does a new convert develop into a deeply mature and spiritual Christian overnight. It takes time and effort in both cases. Spiritual growth is a process to be made one step at a time. For one totally dedicated to God's will and way, spiritual growth will come!



PERTINENT PRINCIPLES

* Purity is to be distinguished from maturity. When inbred sin is destroyed, there can be no increase of purity, but an eternal increase in love and all the fruits of the Spirit

- Amos Binney

* Sanctification is the Christian's gate, not his goal.

- Paul Pierpoint

* Holiness is a life as well as an experience.

FURTHER THOUGHT

In the natural world, light is necessary for growth. This can be likened to the entrance of the Word through the preaching of the gospel, which locates the need and reveals the remedy. It should be the sincere desire of every Christian to conscientiously walk in every ray of light God throws across his pathway!

Heat is also necessary for growth. Few plants are designed to thrive in the cold. Likewise, be sure and stay where God's fire burns most brightly and keep a good supply on your altar so as to develop as you should.

Another necessity is moisture. What moisture is to the plant, the Spirit of God is to the Christian. Therefore, one must keep himself where God can bless and give him outpourings of His Spirit.

Air is also necessary. As plants cannot thrive in a polluted atmosphere, neither can the soul thrive in a polluted Spiritual atmosphere. Therefore, he must create his own atmosphere through reading his Bible, keeping prayerful, taking time to be holy, meditating in the Word, and rendering service to God and man.

- E.W. Roy