



Lesson 13: Christian Growth

When a person gets saved, he begins a new life. According to 2 Corinthians 5:17, old things have passed away and all things have become new. At this stage, the new believer is much like an infant; in fact, Bible refers to a new believer as a baby. Like physical babies, new believers need to grow, develop, and become strong and mature. This lesson will explore the process of Christian growth.

1. Read 2 Peter 3:18. Is growth a biblical idea?

What are two areas Christians are to grow in?

By “grace” Peter is speaking of the Christian life in general. “Grow as a Christian” is the idea. Many aspects of the Christian life are capable of growth—faith may grow exceedingly, hope abound, love increase, and patience have its perfect work, and saints may grow more humble, holy, and self-denying.

Paul said (Phil 3:10) “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings.” He’s talking about an increased understanding of and walk with Christ. That should be our goal as well.

How can one grow in his/her knowledge of Christ?

2. Read 2 Peter 1:5-8. What does this passage suggest about Christian growth?
3. Read Ephesians 4:11-13. What goals does the author write about here?
4. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. How can one become “thoroughly equipped for every good work”?
5. Read Hebrews 10:23-25. What is one of the benefits of church attendance?
6. Read Ephesians 4:22-24. This passage gives us a good outline of how Christian growth takes place. Notice the three steps involved:

☐ Put off the old man. The “old man” is the previous, unsaved lifestyle. Paul is telling us to put away the former sinful way of life. The first step toward Christian growth is quitting the sinful habits and behaviors that you indulged in prior to salvation. This may require that you stop going to the places and/or being with the people associated with former sinful behavior patterns. A clean break with the old unsaved life is required.

☐ Be renewed in the spirit of your mind. We renew our minds through exposure to the Word of God. As we read, listen to, think about, and memorize Scripture, we come to a new way of thinking, which influences our way of living. Faithful attendance at church and participation in Bible studies can greatly help the renewal process.

☰ Put on the new man. The new man is the lifestyle appropriate for Christians, the new way of life that accompanies new spiritual life. We must adopt those behavior patterns that the Bible commands us to pursue.

Remember that the believer has two natures, that is, two sets of characteristics: the old and the new. The old nature is that set of characteristics that is hostile to godliness and influences one toward sin. One receives a new nature, a new set of characteristics, at the point of salvation. This nature longs for the things of God—holiness, righteousness, purity, etc. The old, sinful nature still exists, but it need no longer control the believer. Believers are free from the power of sin to control their lives.

That doesn't mean that we no longer struggle with sin. The Christian must continually strive to undercut, uproot and disable the old nature so that it has less influence, while feeding the new nature so that it has more control. Sin still dwells within the believer. He is a new creation, but not a perfect creation. He is no longer a slave to sin. With God's help, he can overcome sin and live a righteous, although not perfect, life.

7. Read Luke 22:40. Prayer is another key element of Christian growth. Prayer shows that we are relying upon God's strength for the ability to make progress in the Christian life. Ask for God's help in turning from sin and toward holiness.
8. Read Philippians 2:12-13. The power for growth in holiness rests entirely with God. Nevertheless, the writers of the NT constantly exhort believers to work and strive toward spiritual growth. We are responsible to put to death the deeds of the flesh and to present our bodies a living sacrifice. So while sanctification is clearly God's work, the believer must expend effort and discipline himself if he wants to grow.

What disciplines will help the believer grow?

Conclusion: Christian growth is a gradual process whereby believers become more and more Christlike. As a person obeys the Bible and submits himself to its principles, he will become a stronger and more mature Christian. Keys to growth include Bible intake, church participation, a clean break with past sinful patterns of life and a commitment to adopting biblical behaviors.

Discussion:

1. What does Peter mean by “grow in grace”? *Grow in Christian graces such as kindness, humility, mercy, love, etc. General growth.*
2. Why is church attendance so important for growth? *It's where you hear the Word taught and preached, where others encourage and even rebuke you, and where you fellowship with other believers.*
3. What is the “old man”? *The sinful, pre-conversion lifestyle.*
4. How does one renew his mind? *Thru exposure to the Bible*
5. Is growth primarily God's work or man's? *God motivates it and man works toward it.*

