

Life Happens Growth Happens

Introduction: Measuring Growth

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)

Question: Have you ever been disappointed in your lack of spiritual growth?

The Mystery of Growth

Jesus also said, "The Kingdom of God is like a farmer who scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, while he's asleep or awake, the seed sprouts and grows, but he does not understand how it happens. The earth produces the crops on its own. First a leaf blade pushes through, then the heads of wheat are formed, and finally the grain ripens. And as soon as the grain is ready, the farmer comes and harvests it with a sickle, for the harvest time has come." (Mark 4:26-29 NLT)

Questions: How does change happen? Why is it so hard? Why is it so unpredictable?

Reality: It can be frustrating!

My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you! (Galatians 4:19-20 NIV)

Still More Questions

Four Foundational Statements for Growth

1st Statement: *I believe growth toward Christ-like character is worth your 100% commitment*

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field. Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. When he discovered a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned and bought it!" (Matthew 13:44-46 NLT)

A life devoted to things is a dead life, a stump; a God-shaped life is a flourishing tree. (Proverbs 11:28 MSG)

Note: There is nothing that even comes close to a life that is 100% committed to God.

2nd Statement: I believe 100% commitment to spiritual growth should be normative in a church

No prolonged infancies among us, please. We'll not tolerate babes in the woods, small children who are easy prey for predators. God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth and tell it in love—like Christ in everything. We take our lead from Christ, who is the source of everything we do. He keeps us in step with each other. His very breath and blood flow through us, nourishing us so that we will grow up healthy in God, robust in love. (Ephesians 4:14-16 MSG)

Note: When it comes to following Jesus, the issue is never what God will allow but what God wants. He wants you; He wants all of you.

3rd Statement: I believe spiritual growth requires community

"I also tell you this: If two of you agree here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you. For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them." (Matthew 18:19-20 NLT)

Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy. (Proverbs 27:6 NLT)

Note: We need people who dare to take the chance to go beyond telling us only what we want to hear. This only works when we are engaged in a group built on a foundation of love and trust.

4th Statement: I believe every moment is an opportunity for spiritual growth

Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing. If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. (James 1:2-5 NLT)

Note: Growth doesn't happen all at once. It is a process.

So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up. (Galatians 6:9 NLT)

Conclusion: Are You All In?

Realize: No one just drifts into becoming more like Jesus!