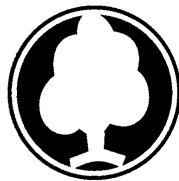


# Heritage Christian Church

## Participating Membership

### *Growing Relationship*

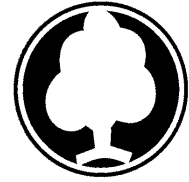


*Developing Intimacy with God*

*(Lesson 3 of 8)*

# ***Growing Relationship***

*Developing Intimacy with God*



“I think we need to throw out this plant—it’s all withered and brown.”

“The company is in trouble—our net sales have leveled off for the last four quarters.”

“Christina is already two months old but hasn’t grown beyond her birth weight. We’ve got to do something, Doctor!”

What do the above statements have in common? They all presume it’s in the nature of vital things to grow. All living organisms are programmed by their DNA to go through stages of growth until they eventually reach maturity. To be alive, by God’s design, is to change and to grow.

Why then do some Christians not grow spiritually? We would rush a child to the hospital if she failed to grow. How can we take similar steps to protect our own inner health when we stagnate and stop “gaining weight” spiritually speaking?

The first “G”, God’s Grace, emphasized a person’s beginning the Christian life—his or her first encounter with God’s grace. This “G”, Growing Relationship, is about one’s response to God’s grace over a lifetime. A person’s walk with God begins by grace, and it also continues by grace. Unfortunately, just as people misunderstand the extent of God’s work to initiate our Christian life, they fall into the trap of thinking their work—their effort to follow the rules—automatically produces spiritual maturity. To try to grow through one’s own efforts alone is as much out of harmony with God’s plan as not growing at all. Both lead to spiritual frustration.

The purpose of this study is to discover a balance between owning the responsibility to grow—which requires resisting what keeps us from growing—and trusting in the help and power of the Holy Spirit to bring about Christ-like character in us. That tension will be with us all of our lives. But if we’ll commit to move forward, we will experience the blessings of God’s grace active in our everyday lives—and marvel at the resultant miracle of our spiritual growth.

## **Day 1**

### ***Pursuing Growth***

In Colossians 2:6-7, Paul uses several different words or phrases to describe the quality of faith the people had. List as many terms as you can find from those verses.

In Ephesians 4:14-15, Paul describes two contrary scenarios: what should no longer characterize believers, and then traits that should be evident in a Christian. List as many of those dissimilarities as you can find.

Who is ultimately responsible for your spiritual growth? What are you currently doing to grow in your relationship with Christ?

Practically speaking, what else could you do to further your “growth in grace”?

Paul the Apostle knew well that Jesus had saved him, yet he talks of “striving” and “reaching” for something in Philippians 3:12-14. How would you put into your own words what Paul was working so hard to do in his life?

What is Jesus saying about growing as a Christian in John 15:4-5?

Traits that should no longer characterize believers...

Healthy traits a Christian should possess...

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## **Day 2**

### ***Tools for a Growing Relationship***

#### **THE BIBLE**

What do the following verses teach about the importance of Scripture in the life of a growing Christian?

Joshua 1:8  
Hebrews 4:12

1 Peter 2:2

(See also Psalm 1:2, 3 and Psalm 119:9-24)

## **PRAYER/SOLITUDE/WORSHIP**

What does Luke 5:16 and 6:12-13 tell us about Jesus' prayer life and His need to get alone periodically? What are the implications for you personally?

How is it possible to obey Ephesians 6:18 in our day and age?

## **Day 3**

### **THE PURPOSE OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES**

Spiritual disciplines are not ends in themselves (as the Pharisees in Mark 7:3-4 mistakenly thought). How would you describe in your own words the result of a spiritually disciplined life according to 1 Timothy 4:7, 8?

### **SIN'S EFFECT ON OUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

What is the clear call of God on every believer's life and conduct in 1 John 2:4-6 and 1 Peter 1:14-16?

Read Romans 6:1-11. As long as we're forgiven, why does it make any difference whether we sin or not?

To whom should we confess our sins? What should be the result of confession?

Psalm 32:3-5

James 5:16

## **Day 4**

### ***Personal Growth That Leads to Kingdom Action***

In the following passage, Jesus talks about His eternal purpose to construct something that will never fail. What is He going to build that will be “hell-proof”?

Matthew 16:18

Jesus’ charge to the early Christians still holds for us today. How expansive is his plan according to His words in the passages below?

Matthew 28:19-20

According to Acts 1:8, what is a possible strategy for reaching the world for Christ?

What implications does His plan have on your plans?

2 Corinthians 5:18, 20 tells us we are God’s ambassadors. We usually think of evangelism as an activity we do to benefit others. How does evangelism benefit you and build up your faith when you share it with someone?

## ***Day 5***

### ***The Elders' Affirmation on "Growing Relationship"***

Christ-followers know the grace of God that saved them is only the beginning of His work in them. They gratefully respond by actively pursuing a lifelong process of spiritual growth in Christ and seek to become conformed to His image. To this end, they consistently nurture their spiritual development through prayer, worship, and Bible study.

They regard the Bible as the final authority in all areas that it teaches about and desire to be wholly obedient to it. Christ-followers honestly confront areas of personal sin and engage the Holy Spirit's power in seeking to turn from sin.

### ***Personal Response Growing Relationship***

(Please retain for your membership interview)

Prayer, worship, and Bible study are vital elements in deepening one's walk with Christ. Describe how you are nurturing your spiritual growth through those spiritual disciplines.

Note: In asking you to describe your spiritual habits, we want to be careful to avoid the mistaken notion that legalistic formulas and rigid rules guarantee a healthy devotional life. It is more important that your walk with Christ simply be characterized by regular and meaningful input. What matters is that you're becoming more like Him, and that you're taking it upon yourself to improve your relationship with Him privately, and not solely being dependent on what public meetings provide.