

Sharing Our Stories...

The Christian life is a life of growth in our relationship with Christ. Spiritual maturity is a process over time, not a one time event.

- How much of a spiritual foundation have you received for your Christian life—either from your family or your religious background?
- What one or two things from your background do you think will be most helpful in your Christian life?

Reflecting on our Struggles...

“Discussion Questions”

- Why do you think many believers fail to grow spiritually?
- What might be some evidence of spiritual immaturity?
- How would you feel if, after many years, you looked back and realized you had failed to grow in the most important area of life, your relationship with God?



Think About it

There are two basic reasons why people aren't mature. One is time and the other is health. The world is full of immature people. Some are children who are healthy but have not had the time to grow. Others have had adequate time but have failed to mature either physically, emotionally or socially. Their immaturity can indicate either a health problem or an unhealthy growth environment. Spiritual growth is very similar to growth in these other areas of life.

Exploring the Solution

The Book of Acts is an historical account of the first believers' experiences after the resurrection of Jesus. In the second chapter, Peter (one of the early leaders) is speaking to a large crowd and many become new believers. This passage is about that group of new believers and what characterized their spiritual growth.

There are four characteristics of growing Christians found in this passage:

1 Devoted to the Word (2:42)

What does it mean to be devoted to something? _____

Who were the apostles? _____

What did they teach? _____

(See Matthew 28:18-20)

How could we devote ourselves to this same teaching today? _____

2 Devoted to Fellowship (2:42)

What is fellowship? _____

Why did the believers gather together so often? (2:46) _____

What is special about the type of fellowship these believers had? _____

How do close relationships like these help us in the Christian life? _____

How can we experience this kind of fellowship today? _____

Acts 2:42-47

42They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. 44All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

3 Devoted to Prayer (2:42)

What is prayer? _____

What do you think motivated the believers to devote themselves to prayer? _____

How can we devote ourselves to prayer today? _____

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4 Having an Impact (2:47)

Why did other people join them?

Imagine how exciting it would be if God used your life to influence others to become true believers in Christ.

The Issue

How do I mature in my Christian Life?

Consider a seed that is planted in poor soil with little water or nutrients and little sun. How well would it grow? _____

What would happen if the same seed was placed in rich soil with plenty of nutrients, water and sun? _____

The difference in growth would be caused by the environment. The same is true for us spiritually.

A. The two primary ingredients that God uses to cause growth in our lives are grace and truth. Truth gives us the understanding we need to live the Christian life. Grace provides the acceptance and encouragement we need to keep on going. But growth doesn't happen all at once. It occurs as a process over time. So an ideal growth environment is:

Grace + Truth + Time = Growth

Like the new believers in Acts, we experience "Grace + Truth + Time" in the context of relationships.

- B.** The upward relationship is with God and is experienced through His Word and prayer.
- C.** The inward relationships are with each other (believers) and are experienced in fellowship.
- D.** The outward relationships are with those who do not believe in Christ. Our influence with them is through our witness for Christ.



Taking Steps: How is your environment for growth?

Make a plan for how you can grow in each of the following relationships.

Upward – Word and Prayer **Example:** Take about 10 minutes each morning to continue reading the Gospel of John and talk to God about your day.

Your plan: _____

Inward – Fellowship **Example:** Go to church or to a Christian gathering.

Your plan: _____

Outward – Witness **Example:** Think about one or two people you care about and begin praying for them. Look for appropriate opportunities to tell them about the difference Christ is making in your life.

Your plan: _____

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