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GROWING UP INTO CHRIST

In a past lesson we explored what faith is. We learned that a better word for faith is trust. And we learned that we begin to trust God by reading His word, praying to Him and trusting Him with our life.

Are you interested in growing spiritually? You cannot grow by focusing on growth. Probably nothing is more detrimental to spiritual growth than to be constantly checking yourself for fruit. Is your goal to reach the “measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ?” (Ephesians 4:13) Do you sometimes wonder whether you are growing at all? There’s one sure way to tell. Look at whether you are eating. Isn’t the way to grow spiritually to partake of the Bread of Life? In this lesson we shall learn how to grow in our Christian faith. Are we to depend on Christ for salvation and then on our own works thereafter? What does God expect of me? What part of the process does God play and what part do I play?

1. What is the growth in the Christian life? 2 Peter 3:18 _____

2. Where do we obtain this grace? Hebrews 4:16 _____

3. Where do we obtain the knowledge of Jesus Christ? 1 Peter 2:2, 3

Note: It is through personal study of the Word that we come to a fuller understanding of the knowledge of Jesus.

4. What is it that needs to grow? 2 Thessalonians 1:3 _____

Note: Our faith must grow in its constancy of dependence on God. Peter was a good example of our situation. At one point his eyes are only on Jesus as he gets out of the boat and onto the water to be with Him, but once he takes his eyes off Christ and begins to depend back on himself ...he begins to sink. It’s not unusual for us to waver like this in our faith as well.

5. What is necessary to grow and bear fruit? John 15:4 _____

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Note: Growth in the Christian life is learning to depend upon God more and more. Dependence upon God is an all or nothing proposition. There is no such thing as a partial trust or partial surrender. You are either surrendered to God at any given moment or you are not surrendered to Him and are depending upon yourself.

6. Will Christ ever separate from us? Romans 8:35, 38-39 _____

Note: Nothing can separate us from the love of God; therefore, if we fall and fail we don't need to wait for God to "cool off." We don't give up and decide that we'll never make it to heaven. We don't try to "make things right" on our own and then come back to Him. We come to Him immediately, confess our sin and our need of Him. Through it all, our relationship with God continues.

7. But is it possible for us to separate from Christ? John 15:6 _____

Note: God will NEVER separate from us, therefore the only time separation occurs is when it's us doing the separating.

8. Are we naturally strong or weak? Matthew 26:41 _____

9. How do we grow strong? 2 Corinthians 12:9, 10 _____

Note: We must realize that as Christians we don't grow by becoming stronger and stronger. We grow by realizing anew each day how weak we are and how dependent we are upon God's grace.

10. How am I to stay connected with Christ? Colossians 2:6 _____

Note: "Do you ask, "How am I to abide in Christ?" In the same way as you received Him at first...you gave yourself to God, to be His wholly, to serve and obey Him, and you took Christ as your Savior. You could not yourself atone for your sins or change your heart; but having given yourself to God, you believe that He for Christ's sake did all this for you. By faith you became Christ's, and by faith you are to grow up in Him—by giving and taking. You are to give all—your heart, your will, your service—give yourself to Him to

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obey all His requirements; and you must take all—Christ, the fullness of all blessing, to abide in your heart, to be your strength, your righteousness, your everlasting helper—to give you power to obey.” Steps to Christ, p. 69

11. What is the secret to Christian growth? Hebrews 12:2, 3 _____

Note: “When the mind dwells upon self, it is turned away from Christ, the source of strength and life. Hence it is Satan’s constant effort to keep the attention diverted from the Savior and thus prevent the union and communion of the soul with Christ. The pleasures of the world, life’s cares and perplexities and sorrows, the faults of others, or your own faults and imperfections—to any or all of these he will seek to divert the mind.” Steps to Christ, p. 71

12. What will happen when we stay focused on Jesus? John 15:5; Philippians 4:13

Conclusion: Many people have the mistaken idea that spiritual birth comes from God but that spiritual growth is their own responsibility. It is simply not possible to grow in grace by our own feeble efforts. Growth is a gift from God. And we continue to receive this gift as we ask Him into our lives each day.

When God invites us to a place of complete dependence upon Him, when He asks us to acknowledge our helplessness apart from Him, He is not opening up the door for inactivity. The life controlled by God is the life of highest usefulness and service. Through Christ we can do all things.

ANSWER KEY TO LESSON #9

Q. 1- grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ

Q. 2- from God

Q. 3- through His word

Q. 4- our faith

Q. 5- to be connected to Jesus

Q. 6- No

Q. 7- Yes

Q. 8- weak

Q. 9- by depending on the power of Christ

Q. 10- to continue to receive him day by day

Q. 11- keep our eyes focused on Jesus

Q. 12- we will bear much fruit