

LESSON 2: GROWING UP IN CHRIST HANDOUT

THEME VERSE: *2 Peter 3:18: "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."*

Every living thing goes through various stages of growth. Growth is dependent upon many factors. If all the necessary factors are in place, there is rapid growth. If nothing is supplied, the living thing will starve and die. As Christians, we are living spiritual beings that need spiritual food to grow.

Understanding the new birth: The new birth is a spiritual experience that restores a person to the right living relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ (*John 1:12-13; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15*) Membership to God's family is by grace alone but we must be willing accept it. Before we are born again, we are dead in our transgressions (*Ephesians 2:1*). As a result, we cannot grow spiritually or respond to God's love. When we are born again, we become alive through faith in Christ Jesus (*John 3:3-5; Ephesians 2:2-6*). As a result, we can grow in spirit and respond to God's love. The new birth, therefore, is the passing out of death into life, the giving of life to men dead through trespasses and sins (*1 John 3:14*). The new birth also means the renewal of the mind (*Romans 12:2*) and the giving of a Godly nature upon the new Christian (*2 Peter 1:4*) The new birth is totally a work of God (*John 1:13; Ephesians 2:5; Colossians 2:13; James 1:17-18; 1 Peter 1:3*)

Results of the new birth: The born again person is a temple of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of God dwells in him (*1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19*). He is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit (*Romans 8:5-9*). He is free from the law of sin and death (*Romans 8:2*). He is being made anew into the likeness of his Creator in knowledge (*Col 3:10*). He believes that Jesus is the only Lord and Saviour (*1 John 5:1*). He overcomes sin and the world (*1 John 3:9, 5:4*). He practices righteousness (*1 John 2:29*). He loves the brethren (*1 John 4:7, 3:14*). Through regeneration and renewing of the mind, the regenerated person is already saved (*Titus 3:5*)

The necessity of the new birth: No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again (*Jn 3:3*). People must be born again b the spirit because all that they get by natural birth is flesh (*John 3:5-6*).

The manner of the new birth: It is God's work, having its origin entirely in God's will (*1 John 1:13*). God gives new birth through the cleansing, quickening and renewing work of the Holy Spirit (*Titus 3:4-5*). We become children of God through believing in or receiving Jesus Christ (*John 1:12-13; Galatians 3:26*). As the gospel comes to us; God speaks through it to bring us to Himself and to give us a new spiritual life so that we are able to respond in faith.

GROWING UP IN CHRIST: *All new-born babies need to grow until they become mature adults. This is also true of everyone who receives new birth in Jesus.* Growth in Christ means building a loving relationship with Him, and this journey to maturity is a life-long process. Trusting God over time leads to spiritual maturity. It depends on developing both your relationship with God and your relationship with people.

Relationship with God: For any relationship to grow, communication is very important. A Christian communicates with God through prayer and God communicates to the Christian using His Word, the Bible. A consistent devotional life is important for growth in Christ. This is the practice of meeting God through **Bible-study** and **prayer**. Set aside time and a place for daily, personal Bible study and prayer.

- **Bible study:** A good book to begin with is the book of John.
- **Prayer:** You can talk to God in prayer- sharing your thoughts, needs and desires and those of others. As you share your heart with God, give thanks and see answers to prayer, your faith and love will grow.
- **Hearing God's voice:** In obedience to His voice, we find peace, protection and provision for abundant life. It requires an intimate relationship to hear His voice.

Relationship with others: Growth in Christ also depends on your relationship with people. This involves communication with Christians through fellowship and communicating your faith in Christ with non-Christians through witnessing.

- **Fellowship:** God created us to belong to the fellowship of a big Christian family. To grow to maturity, you need to share your Christian experience with others who love God and walk with Him and likewise allow them to share with you. God has designed the local church to be the principal means of providing Christian fellowship and teaching from God's Word.
- **Witnessing:** This involves sharing faith in Christ and leading the hearers to saving faith in Jesus. Witnessing facilitates growth because the witness is challenged to have a solid faith in Jesus and live a life that qualifies him/ her to be a witness.
- **Discipleship:** One learns by hearing and practicing what is being passed on by the discipler. **Discipleship is the only process through which a believer will grow in faith.**

To be Jesus' disciple, one should: Belong to a local church, live by the standards of God's Word and surrender to the Lordship of Christ. Bear fruit, and be committed to fulfilling the Greatest Commandment (*Matthew 22:34-40*) and the Great Commission (*Matthew 28:16-20*). Go through the hands of mature Christians to grow.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR GROWTH IN CHRIST? Some people think that they are totally responsible for their spiritual growth. Others believe that God causes them to grow no matter what they do. **Both God and you have a part to play in your growth process.**

Fully obey Him so that your growth is not hindered (*John 15:1-17, Philippians 2:12-13, 1 Timothy 4:7-8*)

God helps you in your weaknesses as you co-operate with Him (*Isaiah 64:8, 1 Cor. 3:6-7, 1 Thess. 5:23-24, Hebrews 4:15-16*)

You need the input of responsible or spiritually mature people in your growth process e.g. pastors, parents, counselors, good friends, etc. Their help should only be additional to your determination to consistently do the things that have been mentioned and others you know and/or will learn.

God's love is unconditional; it does not depend on your level of spiritual maturity (Jeremiah 31:3). However, your progress towards maturity will help you live as God intended you to (John 10:10) and also help others to grow.