

# Spiritual Growth

## Introduction

- 1. Spiritual growth is a choice that we must make.**
  - A. It is commanded by God.**
  - B. It requires diligent effort on our part.**
    - 1) Yet we are assisted by God in our effort.**
    - 2) We are blessed by God both in this life and the next.**
- 2. Spiritual growth is too often hindered by low self-esteem.**
  - A. Too many Christians sell themselves short, because they do not view themselves capable of attaining higher levels of spiritual growth.**
  - B. Not believing in their God-given capability, they are prone to make excuses for not trying, and therefore not growing.**
- 3. Yet because God commands us to grow, we need to have faith that we can grow.**
- 4. What should be our goals regarding spiritual growth?**

## Behavioral Goals

### 1. **Our Ultimate Goal Is To Be Like Christ.**

#### A. **Jesus indicated this in talking about discipleship.**

##### 1) **A disciple is to become like his teacher.**

Luke 6:40 A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.

##### 2) **Jesus wants us to become His disciples.**

**Matthew 28:19-20**

#### B. **Paul made it clear that this is the goal of our redemption.**

##### 1) **God's desire is that we be conformed to the image of His Son.**

Romans 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to **be conformed to the image of His Son**, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

##### 2) **As we are being transformed in the image of Christ?**

2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are **being transformed into the same image** from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

##### 3) **We are to be renewed according to the image of Christ.**

**Colossians 3:10-11**

#### C. **An essential element of spiritual growth is to become more Christ-like, renewing our behavior to conform to the example of Jesus Christ.**

## 2. **Growing in the Knowledge of Christ.**

### A. **This is what Peter commanded.**

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 forever. Amen.

### B. **Not just academic knowledge, but personal knowledge through character development.**

#### **2 Peter 1:5-8**

- 1) **We must add spiritual characteristics to our faith, such as virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love.**
- 2) **It is with this kind of development that we are then truly fruitful in the knowledge of Christ.**

2 Peter 1:8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful **in the knowledge** of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### C. **These characteristics were best personified in Jesus Christ; the more we grow in them, the more we truly know and understand our Lord and Savior!**

### 3. **The Challenge of Reaching Our Behavioral Goals.**

#### A. **It requires diligent effort**

2 Peter 1:5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence.....

2 Peter 1:10 Therefore, brethren, **be even more diligent to make your call and election sure**, for if you do these things you will never stumble;

#### B. **It requires sustained effort.**

**Galatians 6:7-9**

#### C. **As stressed before, such growth does not come naturally; if we are not careful, we may revert back to our former conduct and character. We MUST “stay the course.”**

**2 Peter 2:20-22**

### 4. **True spiritual growth demands a renewal of mind and character.**

**Romans 12:1-2**

#### A. **The goal is to become like our Teacher, Jesus Christ!**

There are also.....

## Functional Goals

### 1. **The Church Is a Body with Many Members.**

- A. **In which every member is important.**  
**1 Corinthians 12:12-22**
- B. **In which not every member has the same function.**  
**Romans 12:3-5**
- C. **Every member must do its part.**

Ephesians 4:16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

- D. **The Lord's church grows only as each member their part in the body of Christ.**

### 2. **As Members of the Body, We Must Grow.**

- A. **We must find and develop our unique function(s) in the body of Christ**  
**Romans 12:6-8**
  - 1) **For some, it may be laboring in the Word (preaching, teaching).**
  - 2) **For others, it may involve ministering to others (visiting, serving in any way one can).**
  - 3) **For many, it may involve a multitude of talents and abilities that truly help the local congregation.**

**B. We must utilize our gifts (functions) in the service of God.**

1 Peter 4:10-11 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever.

- 1) **Those who speak, must do so as the oracles of God.**
- 2) **Those who serve, with the strength that God supplies.**
- 3) **Failing to grow brings reproach, for we are guilty of wasting what God has given us.**

Hebrews 5:12-14 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

**3. The Challenge of Reaching Our Functional Goals.****A. The challenge of determining our function(s) in the body of Christ.**

- 1) **Not all members have the same function; what is mine?**
- 2) **Am I lacking in certain talents, or are they simply needing to be developed?**
- 3) **Am I truly a one-talent individual, or using that possibly as an excuse not to develop what I am truly capable of?**

- B. The challenge of developing our function(s) in the body of Christ.**
- 1) While some skills may come naturally, others may take time and energy.**
  - 2) Is my lack of development the result of indifference or laziness?**
  - 3) Am I selling myself short through negative self-talk?**
  - 4) Am I allowing the allurements of the world to preoccupy my time and energy?**
- C. We need to be honest with ourselves; indeed, the Day of Judgment will reveal whether or not we have been honest.**

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

#### **4. Finally, a thought or two about....**

### **Congregational Goals**

- 1. Individual Growth is Intertwined with Church Growth.**
  - A. A primary function of the church is the edification of the saints.  
Ephesians 4:11-16**
  - B. We are challenged to minister our gifts to one another.  
1 Peter 4:11**
  - C. As we grow individually, so we grow as a church, and vice versa.**

**2. Church Goals Should Incorporate Individual Goals.**

- A. A congregation's goals should allow for the fulfillment of individual goals.**
  - 1) Providing encouragement through its educational programs.**
  - 2) Providing opportunity for Christians to serve in their various roles.**
  
- B. A congregation's goals will require the fulfillment of individual goals.**
  - 1) The church requires teachers and others who minister to the flock.**
  - 2) The church requires preachers and those who will support them.**

Romans 10:14-15 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? **And how shall they hear without a preacher?** And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO PREACH THE GOSPEL OF PEACE, WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!"

- C. To grow individually, we benefit greatly with the help of congregational goals!**

- 3. The Challenge of Reaching Our Congregational Goals.**
  - A. It depends heavily upon the cooperation of all the members.**
  - B. If we are not united in the need for spiritual growth, it is unlikely we will set congregational goals that will nourish such growth.**
  - C. If we are not growing individually, any congregational goals will unlikely be met.**
  - D. If we desire to grow as a congregation, we need to be growing as individuals, and set our goals for such!**

## **Conclusion**

- 1. Spiritual growth requires the setting and obtaining of goals.....**
  - A. Individuals must have both behavioral and functional goals.**
  - B. Both individuals and congregations must have similar goals.**
- 2. As we obtain our goals as individuals and as congregations.....**
  - A. Christ will be glorified!**
  - B. As disciples and as members of His body we will become what He desires us to be!**
  - C. If we desire to grow spiritually, then we need to set and strive for behavioral, functional, and congregational goals that will inspire us to go in the right direction!**

