

## *The Importance of Continued Growth*

### 2 Peter 3:18

**Intro** *Peter's exhortation is not only toward the "babes in Christ" but also to folks who had heard the truth repeatedly.*

- A. He mentions that they already know what he's been saying
  - 1. **2 Pet 1:12-15, 3:1-2**
- B. Growth is necessary in all areas of life: marriage, business, friendships, especially, spiritual.
  - 1. Spiritually, of course, it begins at "birth"
    - a. **1 Pet 2:2-3**
  - 2. It continues on as we journey from here to heavenly home
    - a. **1 Thess 4:7-12, 2 Thess 1:3-4**
- C. Most Christians begin new life with the desire to grow
  - 1. But for various reasons, the spark goes out & like an ember removed from a fire, they grow cold & listless.
  - 2. Let's recognize some hindrances and some solutions.

#### **I. Hindrances to growth:**

##### A. Lack of effort

- 1. Growth is not automatic or easy
- 2. There is great effort involved for everyone, young & old
- 3. It takes:
  - a. **Vision - Phil 3:13**
  - b. **Diligence - 2 Tim 2:15**
  - c. **Persistence - Phil 3:14**
  - d. **Constant practice - Heb 5:14**
  - e. A knife stays bright when it's used, gets dull with disuse. So it is with us, we can "lose our luster" (knowledge, ability, opportunity) when we fail to use ourselves in His service.  
(1) **Heb 2:1**

##### B. Discouragement

- 1. This growth-killer is the one of the most prevalent.
  - a. Despite a good start, too many become disheartened and simply quit.
- 2. Reasons vary: church trouble, personal problems, worry and stress over life, etc
- 3. Few could rival the discouragement Paul endured
  - a. **2 Cor 11:24-29**
- 4. Yet, he persisted
  - a. **2 Cor 4:7-10**
- 5. Because he knew his work was not in vain.
  - a. **2 Cor 4:16-5:1**
- 6. We can learn that same lesson
  - a. **Gal 6:9, 1 Cor 15:58, Heb 6:10**

##### C. Interference

- 1. Crops, trees, & flowers do not grow well when crowded.
- 2. So our spiritual growth will be hindered if allow others to crowd our spiritual life.
  - a. People may get so busy with **work** that they don't attend to God's business.
  - b. Some may get too involved in **recreation** that they forget a mind set on the world is not set on things above.
  - c. Young people may get so busy with **school work and activities** that they forget the importance of studying God's word, praying, and godly works.

- d. Sometimes **friends and family** play a part in pulling us from our Father and our spiritual brethren.
- 3. Jesus warned about the choking effect that would have
  - a. **Mark 4:18-19**

## II. *Suggestions for continuing your spiritual growth.*

- A. Immediately begin a program of regular private devotion
  - 1. Spend time each day, alone if possible, reading, praying, and meditating.
    - a. **Psalm 119:15, Psalm 143:5-6**
- B. Begin an informal Bible study group
  - 1. You don't have to know everything to lead a study group.
    - a. In fact, the whole group will learn more and become closer to one another in the process!
    - b. **2 Tim 2:22**
- C. Become more active in good works
  - 1. Individually or congregationally, there's always something to do to.
  - 2. Be a "youth minister"
    - a. Not a paid, official church officer, but a person who ministers to young people!
    - b. Encourage them, help them, take them out for a treat!
  - 3. Call or visit a sick or discouraged member
  - 4. Prepare a basket of food for a needy person
  - 5. Volunteer yourself to a bible Class teacher
- D. Become involved in leading people to Christ
  - 1. Recognize opportunities & plant the seed
    - a. Leave the church's card at public places
  - 2. Memorize the plan of salvation
  - 3. Who knows what good you might do in another's life simply because you planted the seed at the right time?
- E. Practice constant self-examination
  - 1. Scrutinize your relationship with Christ
    - a. **2 Cor 13:5**
  - 2. Am I more or less knowledgeable than a year ago?
  - 3. Have I helped someone who needed it?
  - 4. Is my attitude and disposition more or less Christ like?
  - 5. Am I the example to others that I should be?
  - 6. Do I show evidence of my effort to grow?
    - a. **2 Pet 1:5-11**

### **Conclusion:** *Spiritual growth, like physical growth, doesn't come overnight.*

- A. Yet to mature and stay healthy takes constant attention and discipline.
- B. Sad but true, too many Christians have just enough religion to be miserable.
- C. It's intended to be an abundant life of joy, happiness and hopeful expectation.
- D. Let it be for you as you grow, step by step, in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.
- E. **INV**

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